

**FRANK ROBERTS**

**Lady's Island Oysters, Seabrook, South Carolina**

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**Interviewer: Sara Wood**

**Transcription: Shelley Chance**

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**Project: Charleston Food + Wine Oral History Bus**

**[Begin Frank Roberts Interview]**

**00:00:01**

**SW:** And I'm going to have you if you wouldn't mind, if you would hold this in front of you.

**00:00:06**

**FR:** Can I say action?

**00:00:06**

**SW:** You can say action. And will--

**00:00:15**

**FR:** What does that mean?

**00:00:17**

**SW:** Action. Well I recently learned this. When you--they click it because it's--it's a cue for when people are syncing up the video with the sound they know when to start it together. So that's the--

**00:00:28**

**FR:** Everyone is in--on--on--in sync?

**00:00:32**

**SW:** Yeah, okay; all right thank you Frank. All right; so Frank for the record will you say hello and introduce yourself and tell me who you are and what you do?

**00:01:06**

**FR:** Hello; I'm Frank Roberts. I own the Lady's Island Oyster Farm in Beaufort, South Carolina. We grow oysters.

**00:01:15**

**SW:** Can you tell me where you grew up?

**00:01:18**

**FR:** I'm--my family is originally from the Chesapeake. We've been there since the early 1700s. And family farmed there right on the river; spent the summers at my grandmother's farm. And that's where I learned about oysters.

**00:01:37**

**SW:** Your grandparents farmed oysters?

**00:01:39**

**FR:** No; they didn't farm them. They were just something that was in the area, something that we did. Oysters and crabs were just you know part of the--part of everyday life.

**00:01:47**

**SW:** And what part of the Chesapeake; was it Virginia?

**00:01:49**

**FR:** It was on the Maryland side, the Wicomico River, Little Wicomico.

00:01:55

**SW:** Okay.

00:01:55

**FR:** And from there I went to--we moved to Connecticut. Again there's oysters there. And I spent some time in North Carolina, again they have oysters, too. And I came to Beaufort when I was 18 and about seven--eight years later I was able to start putting together a plan to actually come back to Beaufort because I saw how good the oysters were there and the--the environment, the conditions in which they grow are really good. There's no industrialization. It's just a really good pristine area to grow oysters.

00:02:31

**SW:** And can you talk a little bit about the area where you are like in terms of the bodies of water? Is it--do they have to do in terms of you know talking about the--the water and the quality--?

00:02:41

**FR:** It's everything about the water. I've seen this location and the Coosaw River, the--the Beaufort River, the McCauley Creek, the Whale Branch River, all converge at this one spot and the--the way the water current, the way the currents flow is just an area that's really conducive for--for good oystering. And it's also up against the Ace Basin, the west side of the Ace Basin which is protected area. There's no development; there's no threats from man to the water quality. Yeah; and it's just--one thing that's really unique about Beaufort than any other place in

the country for example, Long Island Sound, you got a salinity of about 14, you've got all kinds of rivers, massive population on the shore side, again there--there are multiple rivers that flow into that body of water passed by many towns and cities. And all the affluent and pollution and all that stuff is carried there.

**00:03:43**

The Gulf is the same. You've got the Mississippi; you've got a large volume of fresh water. The Chesapeake, Alleghany River you got huge volumes of fresh water entering that--that area. And the salinity is usually around 14, 15, 13.

**00:03:58**

**SW:** What does that mean when you say--?

**00:04:00**

**FR:** Salinity that's the salt content in the water. Ocean salinity is standard 35 parts per--per 1,000 PPT. Like I said Chesapeake, 14 PPT; Long Island Sound, 12--14; it can go even less. It's good for growing--oysters do well in it but where we are it's not unusual to have ocean salinity where we are. And the difference is in Beaufort, it's called the Low Country 'cause it's--it's a collection of islands that are--that the ocean flushes with salt water twice daily. We've got a seven and a half-foot tide. All of our rivers, we call them rivers but they're really--there's--there's no head waters. There's no fresh water coming into those rivers. It's the ocean currents going in and--and coming out. So our oysters have got a really briny salinity to them. That's the first thing people notice. And the fact that we're getting that good ocean water into our oysters it's clean. It's got--it's loaded with phytoplankton, zooplankton so the oysters are eating well, they're living well, and that's what really separates us from the rest of the oysters in the country.

And that's what people remark; the first thing they say is boy. You put just the right amount of salt on these. I tell them you got to sneak up on them when they're open.

**00:05:22**

And they're--they're a bright, clean, fresh-tasting oyster, very sweet with a really clean finish. There's no mineral(ly) or metallic aftertaste. They're just a briny, clean, sweet oyster with a--a clean finish.

**00:05:40**

**SW:** So Frank I want to back up for a second. So you were talking about--I'm pronouncing it--the Alleghany River?

**00:05:46**

**FR:** Alleghany.

**00:05:47**

**SW:** Is that the river that your grandparents--was that near where your grandparents lived?

**00:05:49**

**FR:** We--we were on the Wicomico, the Little Wicomico River.

**00:05:53**

**SW:** Okay; and did they have leases and they just--they did--?

**00:05:56**

**FR:** No; well it was just you know--to be honest with you I don't know whether we had leases or not. We just went out and got them [*Laughs*] just like everybody else. And we had 400 acres right on the--right on the water, so I believe, you know when I think about it, we had Kings Grant, King George; that's what they were.

**00:06:16**

**SW:** And now did your grandparents, did they just do it to have, you know something to have for dinner or did they do it--did they sell the oysters?

**00:06:24**

**FR:** No; it was just part of the everyday life.

**00:06:27**

**SW:** And so you moved to--you moved down here when you were 18 you said?

**00:06:31**

**FR:** Correct.

**00:06:32**

**SW:** And then you said something along the lines of you left for about six or seven years and you always had a plan to--?

**00:06:38**

**FR:** To get a job and make more money. [*Laughs*]

**00:06:40**

**SW:** So you--that's why you left?

**00:06:42**

**FR:** I did; yes.

**00:06:42**

**SW:** And what did you do?

**00:06:44**

**FR:** I was a police officer.

**00:06:44**

**SW:** Where were you a police officer?

**00:06:46**

**FR:** In New Haven, Connecticut. I worked nights and I fished during the day time.

**00:06:51**

**SW:** Now you fished recreationally?

**00:06:53**

**FR:** Commercially.



00:06:54

**SW:** So you did both?

00:06:55

**FR:** I did lobstering and oystering.

00:06:59

**SW:** Wow; now what brought you to New Haven?

00:07:01

**FR:** Money, the job; that's it. That's the only reason. *[Laughs]* And as soon as I could I had--I went back, came back to South Carolina because that's--that was the objective. I knew I had to get back here.

00:07:15

**SW:** Yeah; did you--I just want to ask you one more thing about your family growing up in Maryland. Did you go out--so you went out oystering with your--did both of your grandparents oyster?

00:07:27

**FR:** No, no; it was--it was my father and--and his dad.

00:07:32

**SW:** Okay; and you went out with him?

00:07:32

**FR:** Yeah; it was purely recreational. We weren't commercial.

00:07:36

**SW:** Do you have any memories around that of going out with them that you--?

00:07:39

**FR:** Oh yeah; I remember my dad when I was about six running an oyster knife right through his hand. And that blade came right out the backside of his hand and he just taped it up and went back--went back at it.

00:07:51

**SW:** He was shucking?

00:07:52

**FR:** Uh-hm; correct, yeah.

00:07:53

**SW:** I've heard someone once told me that you know you're going to have to stab yourself once, but I've never heard of anyone--

00:08:00

**FR:** Yeah; well the Maryland--every--every community or every state has got their own style of oyster knife. And the Maryland knife is a dagger with like a cue ball handle, so if you miss you're getting it. It's really--it is a very sharp pointy oyster knife, very unique. I do not use that

knife. I use--I use ironically the New Haven style knife and the Providence knife as well as the Boston style knife.

**00:08:28**

**SW:** Can you explain the difference between those?

**00:08:30**

**FR:** The New Haven knife is unique to--amongst all of the knives. It's about three inches, two and three-quarter inches long. And it has a bent tip which is used for popping the hinge on the oyster. The Providence is two and three-quarter straight blade, not--not a dagger, but a straight blade and the Boston is a half-inch longer than the Providence.

**00:08:54**

**SW:** Why is that?

**00:08:55**

**FR:** It's the style that was unique to that area.

**00:08:59**

**SW:** Did you mostly--and this is kind of a--I'm nerding out a little bit here, but when you shucked oysters in the Chesapeake did you all shuck from the hinge or did you go in--?

**00:09:07**

**FR:** The side or from the bill.

00:09:10

**SW:** From the bill?

00:09:10

**FR:** Uh-hm.

00:09:10

**SW:** Now do you do that--that way here with your oyster--?

00:09:14

**FR:** I do--I do whichever way the oyster presents itself. If it looks like it's easy to shuck from the hinge, I'll do the hinge. If it looks like the shell is a little--little deteriorated or a little rough I'll do--go from the side. And if you're shucking oysters for pint or raw oysters then you just bill them, you knock the bill off because you're not worried about the shell because you're not half-shelling it. So presentation doesn't matter. You just want the meat and the liquor. So just knock the bill off and cut it and--and dump the meat into a bucket.

00:09:48

**SW:** Whereas with the hinge it's more of a presentation?

00:09:50

**FR:** Exactly.

00:09:52

**SW:** Interesting.

**00:09:52**

**FR:** It all matters; in a restaurant presentation matters.

**00:09:56**

**SW:** So Frank tell me a little bit about how you started oystering, like you came back and you always wanted to come back, the plan was to come back. Why did you decide to--to do oysters? Is that what happened when you got back?

**00:10:08**

**FR:** Yeah; just--well sometimes I wonder. It's just something [*Laughs*] I'm--I'm attracted to. I have no idea why. I love growing them. I love eating them. And--and they're--they're just a lot of fun. Maybe it's the environment, being out in the water and that's--that's got a lot to do with it.

**00:10:26**

**SW:** And when you started--oh I'm sorry; were you--?

**00:10:28**

**FR:** No; go ahead.

**00:10:28**

**SW:** I'm sorry. When you started did you start your own oyster company when you came back here?

**00:10:34**

**FR:** I did; uh-hm.

**00:10:34**

**SW:** Was it always Lady's Island.

**00:10:36**

**FR:** It was; uh-hm. Yeah; I met an old-timer years ago and he was telling me about how Beaufort had some of the best single oysters around and they're very hard to find now. And essentially he said basically everyone ate them all. And he says--I was telling him about how I wanted to grow single oysters. And he says, if you can grow them you'll sell them; he said I guarantee it because Beaufort has got the great oysters. And so I set out to do that very thing and we grew 2.7 million last year.

**00:11:08**

**SW:** Two point seven million?

**00:11:08**

**FR:** Two point seven million.

**00:11:10**

**SW:** Wow.

**00:11:10**

**FR:** And then we're going to sell them all.

**00:11:13**

**SW:** So I wanted to go back; when you started the oyster business here did you start--did you start by--you were talking about dredging a little bit.

**00:11:22**

**FR:** Uh-hm; yeah we--we--we un-netted drag-dredging here so you have to pick them by hand, so that's why I started picking by hand and I quickly realized that all the single oysters I was selling--I was getting I was selling and it wasn't long before I was running out. So I knew I better learn how to grow my own oysters pretty quick. And that's just what I set out to do. And that's what we're doing is--otherwise, we--we'd sell out in no time.

**00:11:51**

**SW:** What was the process like for you to learn to--to learn mariculture as opposed to doing--?

**00:11:56**

**FR:** There's a lot of research. And I found that there was a fair amount of research back in the late 1800s, early 1900s but then it all disappeared. There's about a 40--60 year vacuum. The oyster industry collapsed--pollution knocked out the oyster industry and disease. And so there was a void but then it starts again in the '70s. And I actually went to some of the first growers of

oysters, Frank Flowers in--in Long Island, New York. They started growing oysters in the late '60s, early '70s, spawning them. They saw the same scenario I did and we're going to run out of product.

**00:12:34**

And I learned quite a bit from them and just really meeting and speaking to other people who grow oysters. Every year was unique. Every year has its own peculiarities and trial and error. Four years later I'm pretty confident we can grow good oysters.

**00:12:53**

**SW:** So it took about four years?

**00:12:54**

**FR:** It did; a lot of head-scratching.

**00:12:57**

**SW:** Were you ever at a point during that time--I mean this is not a job for someone who is impatient I imagine, so was there ever a point where you maybe thought about throwing in the towel?

**00:13:07**

**FR:** No; no, no, no I don't quit.

**00:13:10**

**SW:** So--



00:13:13

**FR:** There was days I was wondering what the heck I'm doing. [*Laughs*]

00:13:15

**SW:** What's that?

00:13:16

**FR:** I was wondering what the heck am I doing, but it's Mother Nature. You can't--you can't fight her; you got to work with her.

00:13:24

**SW:** So how did you acquire the space or the--? I mean does it work by leases?

00:13:28

**FR:** It's leases. Correct; it was a lease that was available and it had that same configuration of confluence of the rivers that--that met and there was no oysters on it and I asked DNR and they said it was available. And they--they said why; you know why do you want an oyster lease with no oysters? I said well I'm going to change that. And I explained to them what I wanted to do. And they said how may we help you? And I said well can you give me any tips on--on how to approach this? And they said we were hoping you'd tell us. So, we worked--we wound up working together on a--on a project and getting it going.

00:14:08

**SW:** That's really interesting. I feel like I just interviewed some fishermen and there's always-- there's--not always but there seems to be contention sometimes between the DNR and the way people fish and you know just regulations and--.

**00:14:21**

**FR:** Yeah; they're regulators. There--there can be times when--when it doesn't always work out but I can honestly say I enjoy working with them. The biologists are great. You can call them up and ask any questions and I have the same policy. You know come visit me any time you want. You know we need them especially on the biology side. Regulations, they're regulators but they got a job to do too.

**00:14:49**

**SW:** Yeah; so I just--I don't mean to keep asking about the process but I'm just interested because you know you grew up oystering and doing commercial fishing. You talked about lobstering and all of that good stuff in New England. I'm wondering though I mean how does it work? When you all came to the table together, the DNR, you, and then there were biologists involved, I mean was it--did you draw upon some--because I know that people talk about the West Coast doing oyster farming, but did you draw upon somebody who has been doing it here or in this--?

**00:15:22**

**FR:** No; I'm the first one.

**00:15:23**

**SW:** You're the first one?

**00:15:24**

**FR:** Yeah; yeah so it--it was the first time for all of us. [*Laughs*]

**00:15:30**

**SW:** How did people perceive that here?

**00:15:32**

**FR:** They were curious. Yeah; a lot of people they're still curious now that we grow(ed) over 2 million oysters last year and grew I'd say close to 1 million the year before that. You know now there's a lot of people curious. And we've gotten some amazing accolades. We're in the best restaurants in Charleston, the best restaurants in the country want our oysters; we just don't have enough of them. We've gotten some of the best reviews by *New York Times*, food critics, Frank Bernie, said it's the best oysters he ever ate. Roland Jacobson's book *The Geography of Oysters*, he gave us real good reviews. He's been to--he's been to our farm, so we're doing it right. We're doing it right.

**00:16:19**

**SW:** Did you--did you do this--okay you're working with the DNR, I mean did you have help from your family, like or was this something that you do all on your own?

**00:16:27**

**FR:** Pretty much on my own because I quite frankly didn't know what I was doing a lot of times, so you know [*Laughs*] I was just trying different things.

**00:16:35**

**SW:** I think it's interesting you were talking about people who were farming, there was a man up in Long Island who was--who was doing mariculture in the '60s and now you think about it, I mean when you--when you talk about oysters here and on the East Coast people always talk--when they talk about mariculture you know there's no--there's really not a lot of people who are still doing it the old way. Do you find that that's true?

**00:17:00**

**FR:** In South Carolina it's still being done the old way. There's--there's maybe three or four people doing mariculture now. I'm still the only grower where we spawn, have a hatchery, nursery and grow them out. But everyone else there's well over 200 people oystering--are doing it the traditional way.

**00:17:20**

**SW:** And without going into the complicated information, I know that you have so much information about how to do this in your head, could you walk through the process of how you grow your oysters?

**00:17:30**

**FR:** Sure. There's about April we start eyeballing the oysters, checking their meats, their gonad development essentially is what we're looking for. About April is when the natural spawn occurs

in South Carolina, and we shuck oysters quite often, so we can see the development. When we start seeing the gonad development we know to get the hatchery fired up and real quick we-- there's two ways we do it. We either will take the oysters and put them in a container and raise the water temperature up; when it hits about 80-degrees they're start spawning. That's their trigger. And we identify the males and the females and we take five males and put them with one female and we--we gather these oysters specifically for their cup size, their fan size, and their general shape. We want a good-looking oyster because that will--that will go on to the--to their next generation.

**00:18:26**

And when that water temperature hits 82-degrees we let them spawn and when they're done spawning we wait about an hour and we put a sample of that water under a microscope. We start seeing cell division then we know we've got fertilized oysters. Then we continue to feed those oysters with zooplankton, phytoplankton for 21 days. On day 21 oysters naturally go to settle. I mean they swim to the bottom of the water column and attach to another oyster shell. That's how you get your oyster rakes. What we do is we take silos with crushed oyster shell and when--day 21 when they're ready to settle we put them in these silos with this crushed oyster shell and they swim down to the bottom of the silo and attach to that oyster shell. And we just start pouring the water to them, sea water at that point because it's got all the natural ingredients in it already and just let them grow. And the bigger they get we put them in bigger meshes, bigger containers, and within a month or so they're out in the wild in these grow-out units where they stay until they're ready for harvest.

**00:19:33**

The other way we do it is--is we actually open the oysters and we cut them open and we put their--their gonads under the microscope. We look for mature eggs and mature sperm. And

once we identify five females, one male then we put them together in a five-gallon bucket with filtered sea water. We wait an hour and if we put them under the microscope, again we get cell division; we know we got fertilization and now we carry them for 21 days in the hatchery and then we--we do the same setting process. And that's the thumbnail; you can get in a lot more--a lot more detail trust me. But that's how it works.

**00:20:14**

**SW:** That sounds like a very laborious process.

**00:20:16**

**FR:** It is; yeah and you can lose the whole batch if you're not careful. And we--we--we hope to get when we get fertilization 30 to 40 million larvae and after--by day 21 if we have 4 or 5 million left that are good size and mature we're very happy. And that's the--that's the hardest part right there those 21 days.

**00:20:39**

**SW:** So I just wanted to go back. I have a couple questions for you just to make sure I understand. Are you putting these oysters, are they out in the river somewhere?

**00:20:48**

**FR:** They are; yeah they're not in a pond or in a containment area. They're in natural--that's their best environment. They grow the best and then we get the best quality, you know get them back out there quickly as possible.

00:21:01

**SW:** And you were talking about the mesh and then you mentioned another kind of unit. Do they seem--are they in like a mesh bag?

00:21:08

**FR:** They're in mesh bags. The bigger they get the bigger the mesh. They start out on a one--one millimeter mesh, or actually they start off in a 150 micron mesh and by the--within a month they're in a 1,000 micron mesh. That's about the mosquito screen size. And then after that they're in 2 millimeter bags and then from there they go to a half-inch bag and from there they can go right to market or three-quarter inch bag where they also go to market.

00:21:35

**SW:** I was talking to a couple guys who pick oysters out for Bowens Island out by [Inaudible] and there's this whole process of like picking the oysters with a cat claw and like--looking for them out there and there was a guy who is pretty young, he's probably like 30 and he said you know I don't expect to be doing this for too much longer because the way people are picking oysters this is all going to be gone.

00:21:59

**FR:** He's got a very good point. They're under a lot of stress. South Carolina is on the map for having great oysters and everyone wants them and they're getting picked over pretty good. That's the one good thing about what I do; I've got 16 square miles of natural oyster rakes and by growing these single oysters it takes the pressure off those rakes. I--I've been letting them go and letting them grow. So we don't--we don't hit them nearly as hard as we used to; we--we still

sell wild oysters, but we--this gives us time to actually maintain our wild oyster population. We work it; we rake them down. We--we create beds. We put bamboo out; bamboo recruits oyster--wild oysters and we're actually increasing the size of our oyster operation or population because we can grow our own oysters.

**00:22:51**

**SW:** Do you--I know this is kind of--it might sound like a silly question but you know I've heard stories of where there are oystermen who do it the old-fashioned way and there are oystermen who are into mariculture and they're like there are some people who think no, you can't grow them; you must do them wild. And I'll never grow them but you've--you do both. I mean--

**00:23:09**

**FR:** We do both, exactly. One helps the other.

**00:23:14**

**SW:** Can you talk about Frank some of the places that you, you know you mentioned it out there but I wanted you to do it for the videotape, you know who--who do you sell your oysters to? How do people get them?

**00:23:25**

**FR:** We--we target restaurants that are chef-owned or chef-run, the chef has the say. We--we stay away from the corporate operations that are just looking for--to count numbers. As a chef-owned restaurant he can be much more particular or she is going to be much more particular



about what's going on the table, and those are the ones we target. They want--they like--what's really big is sea to table, food to table movement. People want to know where their food came from. You see these massive recalls of industrial operations of beef, salad, whatever and we--we're a small family operation. And we move--we speak to the chefs, the staff knows us; most of them have been to our operation. They see exactly how we do it. So they can in turn speak intelligently to their customers and the customers really appreciate it. Someone who knows where that oyster came from, who grew it, knows that it's fresh and safe and that's really, really important.

**00:24:29**

**SW:** Can you talk about some of the restaurants that you--?

**00:24:31**

**FR:** Oh okay; we're--here in Charleston we're at The Ordinary, Cypress, Fleet Landing, [Amen] Street, Peninsula Grill, Leon's on occasion, Husk on occasion. In Beaufort we are at the Old Bull, Foolish Frog, [Saltist], Wind it Up, and there's about 40 other restaurants that would like us but we don't have enough oysters to supply them yet but we're--we will this--this coming September.

**00:25:00**

**SW:** Is it kind of hard; I mean you said that you are--and you're working on it and that you are you know you're going to have more than 2 million, 2.7 million?

**00:25:08**

**FR:** Two point seven.

**00:25:09**

**SW:** Is it kind of hard when you see people's demand grow and you know there's only so much that you can do?

**00:25:14**

**FR:** Well it is what it is. We can only do what we can do. And--and sometimes that's--well there's not much we can do about it. [*Laughs*]

**00:25:23**

**SW:** And you said it's a family operation. I mean is your whole family--?

**00:25:25**

**FR:** Well my dad helps out and my brother helps out. And the four other guys that--that work with us, we're all like a family and we all know each other very well and we're--it's just--it's a certain person that does this.

**00:25:41**

**SW:** What do you mean by that?

**00:25:42**

**FR:** It takes a--just a certain person. I--outdoors, we all hunt and fish too, we--we're just--we're much more comfortable outside. That's--none of us could sit in an office; how about that.

**[Laughs]**

**00:26:01**

**SW:** I got you. So you said you still eat oysters and you love them.

**00:26:05**

**FR:** Oh sure.

**00:26:06**

**SW:** So you haven't grown sick of them yet?

**00:26:06**

**FR:** No; no, I love them. No; we eat them all the time, all kinds of different ways.

**00:26:12**

**SW:** Is there a specific way that you've noticed people are--you know something that you have inherited you know in your years in the Low Country like a--what is a Low Country oyster to you compared to something like a Chesapeake and the way people prepare them? Are there differences?

**00:26:28**

**FR:** Yeah; we're entirely different. We roast our oysters, our clusters; we obviously have our half-shell. We cook them; we--mostly raw on the half-shell. The roasted ones are unique. We use the steel with the wood fire and the--and the burlap on top of them to steam them, soaked in sea water. That's pretty unique to the Low Country. You don't see that in many other places. And it's--oysters are a way of life in--in the Low Country. If you've got more than two or three people gathered together and there's some beer involved on a weekend there's oysters somewhere there. It's--all of our political events, social events, festive--festivities, they're all--all revolve around oysters in the--in the winter time.

**00:27:15**

During the summer time it's shrimp and crab. We're a very ocean-food oriented society.

**00:27:25**

**SW:** Do you shrimp and crab as well?

**00:27:26**

**FR:** I do not but my guys do. And I just get them from them. I just don't have time but I would shrimp and crab more often--more if I had time. We have the hatchery going full-time and in the summer time it's hard to get away. I got a bunch of dusty fishing poles now too. *[Laughs]*

**00:27:45**

**SW:** Well Frank I mean I've asked you a big handful of questions. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about or say or something that I completely just missed?

**00:27:56**

**FR:** Just it's real important to keep our waters clean. It's--you know our water system is always under pressure from population but if we're smart about it we can--we can enjoy our water, our property and still keep it clean. People over-fertilize and I'm--I'm seeing an-awareness. People are starting to learn that there is a connection between the land and the water and our food system, so that's a good thing. You know it's not like back in the '70s where everything was polluted. So we're--we're getting better at it but we just need to keep--stay on it. That's about the only other thing.

**00:28:38**

**SW:** Do you think the oysters help with that though because I've heard that they--?

**00:28:40**

**FR:** They do; they filter but they can be overwhelmed. Mature oyster filters about 50 gallons of water a day. But they're the canary in the coal mine; if there's something wrong with that body of water the first casualty will be the oysters.

**00:28:54**

**SW:** Before I forget Frank will you tell me your dad's name and your grandfather's name for the record?

**00:28:58**

**FR:** My grandfather's name was Bill Roberts and my dad's name is Frank Roberts, Sr. and I'm Frank Roberts, Jr.

00:29:06

**SW:** Okay; and your brother's name?

00:29:08

**FR:** Ross Roberts.

00:29:10

**SW:** Okay and will you tell me your birth date, too for the record? This isn't going in the--.

00:29:13

**FR:** My birthday? Mine is February 19, 1963; regarding the others--I can dial into months.

*[Laughs]*

00:29:23

**SW:** I was going to say that it's March 5, 2015.

00:29:27

**FR:** Correct.

00:29:28

**SW:** Well thank you Frank. I appreciate you coming down.

00:29:30

**FR:** Okay; good. I think my meter is about ready to expire for parking.

**00:29:35**

**SW:** Okay; let me get you out of these lights here. There we go; let me get the door for you. I'm sorry; you have to step around--.

**00:29:54**

**FR:** Yeah; I should have brought you a tee-shirt and a hat.

**00:29:57**

**SW:** Well I hope to get down and see it.

**00:29:59**

**FR:** Okay; well come on down.

**00:30:00**

**SW:** Because I think I explained to you, you know this is partly--but for the next two years I want to start--my dream is to start in Baltimore and work my way all the way around to Corpus Christy and collect stories of people who make their living on the water whether it be oystering or--.

**00:30:19**

**FR:** Right; that would be fun. I'd like to do that.

**00:30:21**

**SW:** You want to come with?

**00:30:21**

**FR:** I'd like to go.

**00:30:23**

**SW:** Okay; all right you got some stuff to do but I mean if you have a day off. Yeah; here you want a Coke to take with you? It's nice to meet you.

**00:30:38**

**FR:** It's nice meeting you too.

**00:30:42**

**SW:** Do you eat oysters?

**00:30:43**

**FR:** I love oysters.

**00:30:58**

**[End Frank Roberts Interview]**