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Tom Mayers grew up and still lives on the north end of Longboat Key at a marina his father started.

Interview with:	**Tom Mayers**
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My name is Tom Mayers. I was born in Tampa, Florida, August 25th 1951. My mother and father were Fran and Frank Mayers. My mother was born in Tampa in an old Tampa family, and my father was born in Barbados.

So I live at the north end of Longboat Key, at a family property called Land's End. It belonged to my great uncle John Saverese, who had the first passenger-carrying boat to go from Tampa to Sarasota on a regular basis in 1900. He had a fish house. It wasn't just a fish house, it was one of the biggest industries in Tampa in that time period. He had over 500 people working for him at his fish house. It was the biggest fish house in the southeastern United States. He had 150 boats fishing out of the fish house. He had *The Mistletoe*, which was the first passenger boat to go from Tampa to Sarasota on a regular basis. The importance of *The Mistletoe* was like the importance of Cancún getting an airport that allows jet planes to land. All of the sudden, what used to be a hazardous trip from Tampa to Sarasota, what might have taken a couple of days by horse-drawn carriage or by horse… Back then they had snakes, Florida panther, still had Indians. So it was quite an adventure to go from Tampa to Sarasota. Imagine inclement weather, and the road may have been bad. And so to have a boat that you could sit down on… a boat, and eight hours later you would be in Sarasota… All the sudden, that opened people up to coming down to Sarasota: all the business people that would be coming down—surveyors, bankers and merchants. It was a scheduled trip that they would take on *The Mistletoe*. So that was my Great Uncle's boat.

He has an interesting history in that he came from Italy and he came to Savannah. And he and my great-grandfather had the biggest fish house in the southeastern United States in Savannah, and then they moved. John Savarese left Louis, and Louis was my great-grandfather. John Savarese's brother came down to Tampa, and started a fish house that was bigger than the one in Savannah. It was all a coincidence because he was very bright and successful businessman, but it was a coincidence because the railroad came to Tampa at the same time, around the late 1800s. And what that did was gave somewhere to sell the fish to, because Tampa was a small place. But with the railroad, all of the sudden the fish could be popped up to population centers and it

became a big business. And like I said he had 150 boats fishing out of his fish house plus he had *The Mistletoe*. He had about 500 people working in the industry, plus he had spinoffs.

My grandfather was a ship's chandler. He worked in the ship's chandlery business, was he worked for Uncle Johnny. He was shipwrecked in the Cayman Islands when my mother was a little girl. So the family has this history of being a maritime family. My grandfather founded Tampa Yacht Club, and had this passenger-carrying boat. And my grandfather had the ship's chandler business. And got on a load of cotton that he had, that he wanted to be sure he knew where it was going, and got on the boat and the boat got shipwrecked and he was gone for several years, just disappeared, because of who knows what. But that's part of the maritime tradition and people sort of just take that in their stride.

My father was from Barbados and his father was an Episcopal priest, and was a Caribbean scholar, and he was actually the director of education for the Anglican Church back in the late 1800s and as a young man he sailed through the English islands in the Caribbean and went to the schools and made sure the schools were being run properly, the Anglican schools. Because that was the Church of England. So the Church of England had a lot to do with the Caribbean today, the fact that they are well-educated. That they had these church schools that they did.

But they came down to Land's End back in 1935. John Savarese had lost his fortune in the Depression. And my mother and father got married and they came down here. They wanted a place they could go on vacation from Tampa. And so they found this piece of property that Uncle Johnny owned and they bought it for back taxes. And there is some confusion as to how much they actually paid for it. But they paid somewhere between 50 and 500 dollars, which is about four acres of property at the north end of Longboat Key right at the pass. So it's a real pretty piece of property, and it was just real fun to think of them pioneering back then, coming down as a young married couple, and getting a good deal from Uncle Johnny while he was still alive, because he had misfortune, lost his money in the Depression.

So they bought this property and they built a little cottage on it and from the cottage they just kept adding to it. So from 1936–37 they had a structure, and after that they just kept adding to it. Now it's a real comfortable, unique house perched over the water. They bought the property from John Saverese. He, back in 1913, had built a house himself here, and the house was further out, and that house was lost in a storm in 1921 and it completely destroyed the house, and it was out another 100 or 200 feet. And the house was destroyed, and so then my parents built a house a little further, thinking they would build it back because of that happening. And now the water has sort of eroded so that we are right on the edge. So the next hurricane could take this property away, but I guess it is well-named Land's End.

I have two sisters: I have one sister, Joan Bergstrom, who worked in real estate and sold property and made money by buying and selling property, and selling other people's property for them. And she works for my other sister Michael Saunders, and Michael Saunders has a big real estate company and she has about 500 people working for her. And it's funny to think about John Saverese, back then in the 1880s–90s with 500 people working for him, and here's Michael Saunders for the last 20 to 30 years she has had the biggest independent real estate company in the area, and now she has 500 people working for her. But we all share the same upbringing.

And to give you an idea of what it was like in the old days, Longboat Key… Back in 1960 there were less than 1000 people on Longboat Key. So I try to tell people that Longboat Key was less than 10% people and 90% wilderness. There were vast areas and we never comprehended that we would see the end of the vast wilderness areas. It was just not something you imagined… that there would be a time when there weren't areas with too many sandspurs, or too many mosquitoes that you just couldn't get to. And I remember abandoned houses and playing in them and looking for bottles. So it was a really great way to grow up. Before 1960, before the bridge which was built in 1958… One of the reasons they called it Land's End was because it was literally the end of the land. Before, if you wanted to go from Tampa to Land's End you had to go through Sarasota and the bridges that existed and the north of the island and then you just stopped. There was no more. You couldn't go any further because there was no bridge from Anna Maria to Longboat Key. That's the reason they would call it Land's End. And they would come down here and when this bridge went up the most common way of dogs dying was rattlesnake bites. So that was the most common way of dogs dying: rattlesnake bite. And we had a couple of dogs that died. And after 1958 it was cars hit 'em. And that just sticks in my mind as the transition, all of the sudden there was a loop; it was just no longer the end of nowhere.

I guess you could call it the "end of nowhere" as far as Land's End. But it is really quiet and nice here. We try to encourage the local animals, because that's how we grew up. We have birds. We have an osprey that lives over here. We have our own blue heron that comes here on a regular basis. We catch fish off the dock, and the birds are more interested than I am in what I catch, because they eat what I clean off of them. But we have a real interesting way of living, we can catch all the food we need to eat.

Back in 1958, my dad decided he wanted to turn our family home into a marina. So the big thing… If I was to point to one point of time that was a transition for Longboat Key, it was when this bridge went in, in 1958. My dad stopped thinking of it as an isolated get away. He thought "When the bridge comes there's going to be lots of business" and "When the bridge comes we need a business so we can cash in on all the traffic." So we started a business here back in 1958. He had a marina here with a small restaurant. We would cook hamburgers. I remember the hamburgers were 45 cents, the hot dogs were 25 cents. Candy was a nickel. Sounds like one of those good ol' days type things. But it was a great place to live and if anyone got hurt badly they brought 'em here because this was sort of an outpost.

Because we were open to the public, if anyone caught a big fish we would see the big fish. I remember them bringing turtles in. It was more of an oddity. People would catch a turtle and bring it in and we would look at it. I guess we ate a couple of turtles but that was a long time ago. Mostly we just fooled with them and let 'em go. At one point we had a cage on the dock where we had sharks in the cage. It was just for fun, we did it just for fun. For people to have something to look at when they came to the marina. We had big sting rays in there—turtles, sharks. Like I said, it was a great place to live because we always had fish. People would bring 'em by, and people would catch the fish just cause they liked catching the fish, and just give it to us. And so between catching it ourselves, I guess we ate three or four times a week, it was just a standard thing. My dad made really good fish-head chowder, and he would take a big grouper head and cook it and use that broth as a stock and throw other things in. And he had a system for cooking things so that everything was cooked just the amount of time it was supposed to be cooked in this

broth. And it was really good, and we would sell it along with the hamburgers, hotdogs, and smoked mullet. He used to smoke mullet.

As a kid I grew up here and worked on boats, and I got interested in boats and I've been a boat builder. I worked as a boat builder back in 1970. I went to Europe and worked with Swedish people on boats. And I've worked with a wood boat builder, restoring a wood boat, and I needed some money so I got a job building a fiberglass boat. And I came back here and the people I worked with had connections so I started working with a racing sailboat builder from New Zealand. And he was very successful and we won lots of sailboat races; we won a couple of championships building racing sailboats, building high-tech… Back in those days, all-out racing boats that were made to win. But my interest in boats started when my dad built some fishing skiffs back in 1958. And I worked on those. We used to have Sunfish rentals here. And I taught people how to sail Sunfish. We had an Optimus pram fleet here. And I sailed Optimus prams as a kid. So that is some of my boat-building background. I'm still building boats. I'm building a big cruising boat for myself, a 54-footer, designed by the guy who designed the Optimus pram. It's a real nice boat.

When I went to new college, I went to FSU first and I had some classes in ecology and that was a new subject back in 1969 it was one of my favorite classes. We read *African Genesis* by Robert Ardrey, we read *The Population Bomb* by Robert Ehrlich—some real thought-provoking things. And that was one of my favorite classes. And I was accepted in New College, which always had a good reputation as being a good scholastic college. And so when I was accepted to New College, I thought I would work with something in the field of environmental studies. And John Morrill was the environmental studies person and I talked to him a few times and found out he was interested in mangroves, and I thought that seemed like an interesting subject. And so I started working with John on mangrove studies. And so we did tutorials where it was just one on one. And he gave me a classic New College introduction to the subject. He said, okay… and this was on the first day of class and it was just the two of us talking. He says "I want you to find all the books you can find on mangroves and write them down, and I want you to take that bibliography and see what books you can find here in the New College library" and his library, and without having to order them. And that's how I started studying mangroves: making my own bibliography, and finding all the books I could find on mangroves, and it's a finite subject. Back in those days, you could find everything ever written on mangroves, and some of them you couldn't get and some were out of publication, and there was a little fraternity of people studying mangroves.

And there was a guy from DNR [Department of Natural Resources]… His name was Tom Savage, and he came here and we went around looking for mangroves together. And we went to University of South Florida where DNR has its station, and I watched him and he wrote some important papers on mangroves in the early days. And so I worked with John Morrill. I did mangrove studies all the time I was in New College. Each time I came back I would go to John. I went to New College for 20 years, on and off. I never flunked out—I just dropped out and was accepted back; they always let me back in. And, finally, they graduated me. And I did my thesis on Sarasota bay mangroves. And it was 170 pages. And John started calling me up and asking me if I wanted to work. And I said Sure, I can work. And he had me working for some scientists doing biomass studies. And it had to do with the development of Longboat Key. So I did that and worked with a Ph.D. on those things.

And then he got me trimming mangroves for people that were stopped by the state for trimming mangroves. And so I helped people who either wanted to trim legally, or didn't want to get stopped for trimming illegally, and so what started out as a good project. I just worked a little bit. When I first started out I was doing Australian pine removal, Brazilian pepper… and I started getting 10 dollars an hour using this guy's chainsaw. And I figured out that if I bought my own chainsaw I could charge 25 dollars an hour, and it didn't take long to figure out if you had your own tools and were a professional, coming in knowing what you were doing, you could make a lot of money. So I did that and hired friends to help. I would do the cutting—all the cutting—and had people haul out. I had projects that were half a mile long. We would work for months trimming the mangroves in front of these things. We came up with our own law; there wasn't a law at the time. We came up with our own guidelines that were adopted by the state for trimming mangroves. John Morrill helped me with that. I ended up trimming about 10 miles of shoreline along Sarasota Bay. That was my accomplishment: at some point or another I trimmed 10 miles of shoreline along Sarasota Bay. I worked for some of the big developers. Some hired me because they were in trouble; some hired me so they wouldn't get in trouble.

People will tell me about my sister and say "You're an environmentalist, an environmental consultant, and your sister is in real estate. Isn't that an oxymoron? Your sister is selling all the property around here and you are trying to save all of the property around here." And I say, "There are different kinds of real estate people. Some people realize that the value around here is the wildlife and if you preserve the wildlife you keep the value but if you destroy it, it is not so valuable." **S**o that's how I explained what I did. And so it was contradictory that I wanted to save the mangroves, but ended up cutting them, and I cut more mangroves than any other person on the Sarasota Bay. But I did it to save them from being destroyed. I've seen devastation. Where they would cut 30-foot trees—cut them down to knee-high, because it was comfortable to hold the chainsaw there. And they wanted the trees short, so that is how they did it. That was how I got comfortable doing environmental studies. I grew up with the fish and wasn't afraid of nature.

Snakes… My dad was an expert at catching rattlesnakes. We grew up in a house with a dad who liked animals. We raised 'coons. A lot of these 'coons you see walking around the property were relatives of babies that I raised as a little boy. I tell people we were so poor we had 'coons as a pet—it was a joke. But a lot of natives around here had 'coons as pets; it was just a logical thing. As things were developed and people cut trees down, there would be orphans. People would shoot the adults, and these babies would show up. And they are as cute as a kitten or a puppy, and if you see this little defenseless thing that needs help you find yourself going to the store and getting baby formula, and they can take of themselves once you help them out a little. It's funny how many natives… And I tell people that the first pet on Longboat Key was a baby 'coon. And I know that because when an Indian came over here and killed a mother 'coon and the baby showed up, the kid had to have them for pets.

It was a great place to grow up and my dad not only wasn't afraid of rattlesnakes, he was an expert at catching rattlesnakes. We used to go looking for rattlesnakes. People came to look for us when they found a rattlesnake. They would say "Frank, come quick!" And he was a showman, would always put on a show and would use his bare hands even if he didn't have to. And the reason he was good at it is because he was a professional and when he was in school.

And he went to Andover, Phillips Academy. He was on a working scholarship and when he was a young man was like a horse-whisperer. And my grandfather was an Episcopal priest with a great education because he studied with people from Cambridge and taught Latin and Greek. And my father benefited from the contacts he had and one of the contacts was the head of Andover, who got him a scholarship to work with animals. And so when my dad went to Penn State to get a forestry degree they asked him if he would work with rattlesnakes. They had a program where they were studying venom and he said sure he would rather do that than shovel horse manure.

As a kid growing up, it was a magical place. We had a mysterious otter that I never saw. I never saw him and he got hit by a car or something. There are still otters some places and I saw a manatee just the other morning. There are manatees that live here and it's so sad to see them… Because they are beautiful when they have no scars, but then you start to see the same manatee over and over, and you see he has one scar and then boats hit 'em… He has another scar, and it's just sad to see them. And I don't look forward to the day that I don't see manatees. But it's like that with the otters. But we have a resident manatee. It's a magical place to live and I try to do what I could to help the environment.

I do consulting work and get 100 dollars an hour. It's a good job for me and it's difficult for me to believe I get paid for what I love doing. But it's difficult at this period because there are a lot of people who trim illegally and get away with it. All people ask for is for someone to fairly apply and enforce the law. And that's everybody's right and it hasn't ended up being that way. People get away with it and people have problems trimming legally. I still do the environmental consulting work and I have a good service. For example, if a condo association doesn't want to have problems they hire someone like me and I do it so they don't have problems. I still see John Morrill.

I like going out in the boats. I build my own boats. I like sailing. I was a racing boat captain for a while. I won a lot of races. I have problems with skin cancer which makes you less excited about going out in the full sun, so I go out in the evenings. But definitely racing wasn't such a good idea, because you go out in the full sun and there is just no way to get out of it. So I quit racing sailboats and now I just have fun cruising. I work on other people's boats. I work on my boats. I had a marina here all these years. I have a couple of patents that I've applied for. See the ball with the spikes on top of that mast? It's an invention to keep birds off the top of masts. Birds will just sit on top of the mast and just defecate all over the boat. And so when you go out to use the boat it's unusable because it's so dirty and it's no good. So I've never really had problems with birds, but I had another boat where I had a big problem with an osprey. And I swear to God the excreta was something like concrete. And I thought it was cool until I realized he was just making it a terrible place to be. So I didn't want to hurt him, and I couldn't find bird deterrents that I liked, so I came up with my own one. I haven't sold a lot but I have a dealer distributing them and have maybe sold a dozen. And another thing I came up with is a motor mount for sailboats, and I have a friend who is a patent attorney and so I have a patent on the motor mount. The other one is just patent pending, but this one I actually have a patent on. And it's just interesting for me to do things related to the water and to try to solve problems. I tell people that building boats is like designing a puzzle. Taking all the parts and then putting them together. You start with an idea and then you have to figure out, and then you come up with a boat. So I found that interesting, and the environmental study things interesting. I am still fascinated when I

pull a net around here and see the things that are in the water here. You get all kinds of neat fish and it's just fun. It's still exciting to be here. But the sun… I was a lifeguard. I was a captain, and then a racing boat captain, and that was just too much of the sun. When they start cutting your face open, you start thinking about it. When they cut your back it's not such a big deal, but when they cut your face it's a big deal.

CASEY SCHELHORN: What do you have to say about fish populations?

TOM MAYERS: There are lots of fish here, and it's such a complicated thing. I've heard people say that there are no fish here anymore. And these are people that don't know, and you really shouldn't say stuff that you don't know. But I've heard teachers in classes say there are no fish in the Sarasota Bay. There are lots of fish here. But if you come here in the middle of the night… If you come here during the day they just go away, in the day they kind of had. But at night, this thing is just alive with fish. And we have phosphorous in the water which is really fun. Phosphorous is little microorganisms that live in the water and if you disturb the water, the water that you disturb causes them to light up. And they have bioluminescence which when they are disturbed cause them to light up. So you can actually put your hand in the water while you're swimming and it makes a trail, and so it's a fun thing to do and we go swimming and look at the phosphorescence. Like I said, there are fish everywhere. There are so many snook and so many fish this past week. I saw a perfect day and those kind of perfect days just appear. You don't know why or when. It was crystal clear and there was bait everywhere, I threw the cast net on some bait and each time I threw the cast night I must have pulled up ten pounds, and that was all I needed. There were 40 snook that I counted and then I stopped. So to say that there are no fish is kind of a crazy thing. It's sort of nihilistic, sort of abandoning hope, and saying everything is lost. Well it's not all lost.

And I'm happy to have had a part in trying to help with the environment to help people trim mangroves legally and to try to encourage people to be thoughtful. One of my big accomplishments. And you only do that in retrospect. Looking back and saying that was an accomplishment was I wrote some letters to local politicians and asked that they turn that into a no-wake zone. I thought boats were going too fast through this pass here. If you don't tell people what to do, most people will do the right thing anyway, because they are smart enough to know. But there will be some people that will come through here with a fifty-foot boat going forty miles per hour, and I looked at it and thought, man, this is dangerous. You lure people out in kayaks and swimming and then all of a sudden this idiot comes through here with a boat that goes too fast… that probably is on some recreational drugs while he is doing it, and it's just a dangerous situation. And I put it in a way… And I said, if somebody gets hurt here it's going to be your fault, because you didn't put a no-wake zone and you allowed it to be like a wild-wild west where anybody that wanted to go as fast as they want could go that way. And they put a no-wake zone here, and they actually made it bigger than I imagined it being. It goes for almost half a mile this way and I'm sure it's much to the consternation of a lot of people that are unhappy with having to slow down. But at the same time it really has been good for the area. It's nice to see the manatees and to think that at least we are trying to preserve them, and doing something to inconvenience ourselves.

That's at least one of the things I am trying to do, is I try to tell people if there is any time, when are you going to decide that the wildlife needs some areas to exist? At what point in time are you

going to say “Hey, we need to protect the wildlife.” So my suggestion to Longboat Key is that you cannot undo what has already been done. There have been a lot of things done that haven’t been done right, that have been ignoring the wildlife, but at some point in time why don’t you declare all the little wilderness areas like a park, and try to treat them like a park, and instead what they do now is take those few areas that wildlife has to go, and they let dogs run there, and so what I’m trying to do is let people respect the environment by realizing that there were things here.

And I’ve seen in Longboat Key in the old days everybody used to say “What are they going to do about the gopher tortoises? There are gopher tortoises all over the island. How are they going to develop the island when they have these gopher tortoises everywhere?” Well, the gopher tortoises are protected. Well, the way they did it is they completely ignored everything about protecting the gopher tortoises and they went ahead and did whatever they wanted to do. And my suggestion is that at this point in time everyone should realize how precious the wilderness area is. And because I’ve been here such a long time I’ve seen it go from 90% wilderness area to less than 10%. If we have 10% wilderness area on Longboat Key I would be surprised. I’m guessing it’s more like 1%. It depends how you define it. But that’s what happened on Longboat Key, and I’ll tell you what happened on Longboat Key is that they took studies that I participated in and they said well okay, we’re not going to call it wilderness area. We’re going to take what offsets the development, and instead of calling it “wilderness area” we are going to name it something else. And by naming it something else that’s what allowed them to say, okay, well we can put a golf course there. And instead of leaving it like a wilderness area to offset a building, you have a giant building that’s 10 stories tall and you have a parking lot, then there should be an amount of land that offsets that in environmental planning. Well what they did is they got a lawyer involved and what they said is well, we’re going to say a golf course is going to offset this development that we’ve done. So instead of leaving large tracts of land for the wildlife, they built a golf course. So now talk about between a rock and a hard place you have these animals with little place to go. You have these isolated parks on the island and no connection. And you have all these advanced theories of how people should act with the animals and the best I’ve heard is you have to incorporate them with what exists—there is no place left for these animals.

So that’s my point about Longboat Key and about Florida, is we need to respect the wilderness areas and we need to go back to basic planning, which is to offset development with wilderness areas, and not call wilderness areas… Well now, we can use a lawyer to say Okay, now we can build a tennis court in the wilderness area, and so that’s what happened to Longboat Key. If you take an aerial photograph of Longboat Key or Anna Maria Island you’ll see it’s nothing but houses, there are less than 1% parks. And unless you include the mangroves—and the mangroves are getting what I call attrition—the mangroves disappear, the seawalls move in, and nobody says anything. All the sudden mangroves are cut down and nobody says anything. I’d like to see people… I thought it was a matter of time, the same work I was doing with the mangroves, other people would be doing with the uplands, but nobody worked to save the uplands. Nobody worked to say “Hey, you have to be careful what you do and leave some nature areas,” and it just wasn’t done. And I guess it’s the value of the dollar, and I guess everybody doesn’t see the value. There were developments from the ‘60s and ‘70s that were more progressive than what’s being done today. Everybody is just giving up hope. They scrape a place clean and then they build all these houses. And they come back and plant the trees because it’s easier to do it that way. If you go back to the developments from the ‘60s and ‘70s they left all the trees they could

they set aside wilderness corridors and all of that seems to have been forgotten, and it's not as though we have more of those areas left.

CASEY SCHELHORN: Super-connection with the land in Florida from the past is no longer….

TOM MAYERS: There are more people that don't have a history here. They come from New York City and they say Hey, compared to New York City this isn't crowded at all. I see the most peculiar thing you see on TV here's a raccoon in New York City and they have the police out and the TV crews and they have this poor raccoon in New York City that they've found and so it's just one of those things. Like me and the fish fry… Like me trying to explain that the reason for the fish fry historically was because the mullet were plentiful and the way that that has gotten twisted around and they say, well, people don't like mullet, so instead of mullet we're going to serve grouper. Well, that got so bad that when I first got involved with the historical society they were serving grouper from Indonesia, and people were complaining that the quality of the food wasn't any good. And I said Well, you need to get food from here, local food. And it's part of the thing… it's part of the heritage of… People should have respect for this area and the history, but a lot of times it's been pushed aside. It's convenient for people to think of Longboat Key as a blank slate without history. It's good to superimpose whatever kind of history they want to accomplish goals. But there are issues that come up like oil rigs offshore—that's the latest—and they ask are they going to allow oil rigs offshore. And everybody says well, the economy is bad and so we need that boost to the economy, so people are actually considering things they never would have thought about years ago. We would have said "Oh no, this place is too special. The tourism is too important." But it's strange what kind of bedfellows the bad economy makes, and people try to scramble around to try to align themselves with whatever is going to be next. But like I said there are lots of fish here.

We still need to protect the environment. We still need to enjoy the environment. Just be careful of the sun. I've had some bad experiences with the dermatologist over the past few years. They certainly try to help you out, but it's not a fun thing. And be nice to the birds and the animals. This idea of not being nice to the animals is just incredible to me as they are diminishing. It seems that people would appreciate them more and more. But there are manatees out here. I saw a whole school doing some sort of mating ritual. I was out in the hammock—we have a hammock at the end of the dock out there. And I go out there sometimes at the middle of the night. And I got up at the middle of the night… I had heard there was a full eclipse of the full moon, and I thought I might get up, and sure enough. About four thirty, five o'clock, the moon was setting. It was beautiful. This big round moon… The eclipse started and I'm sitting there watching it and it gets eerie, and all of the sudden I hear this big noise like a splash, and it was right after I heard about the girl getting bitten by sharks. And I thought this must be sharks after Tarpon. And I look, and I saw this group of manatees, and there must have been a dozen of them and they are sitting under the bridge doing some sort of mating ritual… and how beautiful to think that I was sharing this moment with this group of manatees and as they came by the dock, they were sticking their heads up out of the water and articulating their heads. So they were taking their necks and turning their heads, like this, and looking at me. And I thought this is really wild because you don't think of manatees as being able to turn their heads on a neck, because their heads blend into their bodies. And it was just really a magical thing, and I would just say that here, there are so many magical events that have happened to me over and over and

you just say, wow, that is so special. When I did my video component to my thesis at New College, I did a video footage of a dozen manatees. I had my video camera and I was doing footage and I got up on the bridge and video on top of them doing an elaborate choreographed thing where they were kissing each other, putting their fins up on top of each other. It was just really beautiful to see, and other times when I've gotten fish offshore here, and there is great diving—really good scuba diving.

And there are great fish here. I spear fish, and I've seen more fish here than I've seen anywhere else. I got stone crabs one year and stone crab season is coming up and I went out and got lots of stone crabs—50 or 100 claws. It was just amazing to me. It was after a red tide and everything seemed like we could abandon all hope, the red tide had been here a couple of years and it was just disgusting. It wasn't nice at all. And then all of a sudden it just started clearing up. And these crabs weren't affected by the red tide, and you would just see them by their hole with these fish in each claw, like alright… and they say what's bad for some things is good for others. You have a bumper year of crabs because of the red tide. But this is a magical area. We used to fish for sharks off the bridge. I know there are still sharks out there, I just don't fish for them anymore. I fish for things that I eat. I spear fish and throw the cast net. And I catch a lot of fish to eat. I eat fish two or three times a week, but you go to Wal-Mart and you see fish from Indonesia and pen-raised fish and it's just not the same as being able to catch fish here. But we have such a good place here, but it would be nice if people had respect like the Dali Lama says. Respect. And Katy Couric said people have to have respect, but respect is what this thing is all about. If people had respect, if they slowed their boats down, it would be a lot nicer for people. It wouldn't solve all the problems but it would be a lot nicer if people would just try to know what's here. What kind of birds we have… what kind of fish we have. But that's all. But I don't have a lot more to say than that. It's been a nice place. There are still fish, despite what the New College professors are saying. It's just not true. It may be a lot harder to catch, but there are cycles, things we don't even understand. Just as we were on the verge of working with the commercial fisherman to have an understanding of what was going on, we put them out of business. We took the people who knew the most about the fish and put them out of business, and said thank you very much. I saw it all happening and I couldn't believe it.

We had an anthropologist from New College who was working with the State, Joan Braggington. And she came and they had a festival over here, a fish fry, telling the people in Cortez how important they are and how much they meant to the local area. And the next year they have a law and they put them all out of business. It's pretty incredible. It's like saying we don't like doctors. You're not a doctor, I'm not a doctor, let's put them out of business. Now let's go after somebody else. How about real estate agents—I'm not a real estate agent. Let's put them out of business. It's a bad precedent and not a nice thing to do. When I was writing my thesis there was all sorts of stuff saying that in parks you need to keep commercial fishermen. Because they knew the most about it. And what we've done is told them they are no good, we don't need them, they are bad people. And if you keep doing what you're doing we are going to put you in jail, so I don't think it was the right answer, and don't think it was a good thing to do. Certainly to have the anthropologists come and tell everyone how important it is to have that heritage and then to put everyone out of business is not a very wise thing to do. That's one of the things that happened here that was kind of shocking. I grew up around fishermen and they were nice people and you certainly could have done it in a lot of ways. You could have just had to have smaller nets, which would have kept them in the business and kept the big guys out. But they are trying

to keep a culture alive. You know my great uncle had one of the first fish houses in Cortez so they all knew me from an ancestor a while back. Well they fished with nets, with cotton nets, they didn't have monofilament nets, and they didn't have such high-powered boats. But it got to be a thing where the boats got bigger and the nets got bigger and it got to be a problem, and they just didn't address it in the right way. They just took the easiest way and said let's just ban commercial fishing, which isn't such a big deal if you're not a commercial fishermen, and it's devastating if you are a commercial fisherman.

They used to take the fish down to Cuba. Miami, back in 1900, had 30 people. Tampa was a small town. And they had a place called Fort Brooke. I have pictures of ancestors outside of Fort Brooke. Fort Brooke is where they went inside of a stockade to protect themselves from the Indians. That was around 1900. Between 1850 and… I don't know when Florida became a state, but it was like a territory. And John Saverese was from Italy. It may have taken after the Civil War, but just think of the dynamics of what was going on after the Civil War—the North and the South and carpetbaggers trying to take advantage of the locals, and all the things that were going on. It may have taken someone from Italy to be a success. He wasn't from the North. He wasn't from the South. He was a little bit different. He was fair to everybody. So, you know, it was interesting… They had a guy calling from the Tampa Yacht Club who wanted to know if I had any pictures or history of my great uncle. He was an investigative attorney, so he was really a bright guy and just had a lot of material that he had gotten together on the early days of sailing and it was the centennial, and they were doing a book for the centennial. And he was providing information. And that they had a sailboat race and two captains… And one captain, John Saverese, was the committee boat, and the two captains that were racing, one had to be wrestled down to the deck because he had pulled out his shotgun. He had been drinking all afternoon and as he had come across the finish line one guy had done something to make him mad, so he pulled out his shotgun to shoot the other guy. But I think it's incredible to think of how fun and freewheeling that must have been back then, to be drinking all day long. And that these boats were work boats, and to think that my uncle was the captain. John Savarese was the committee boat because he probably owned the boats that were racing. Because he had the fish house and had a lot of sailing boats.

But that's some of the fun history, and to think of the carriage trip, what an onerous sort of trip that must have been, going from Tampa to Sarasota, not knowing whether you were going to get robbed, attacked by Indians, have a wildcat attack you. And my dad coming down here and he was in paradise. And all of the sudden rattlesnakes everywhere. We ate them. He wasn't any real conservationist. He would catch them. I remember him getting drunk and saying I could catch rattlesnakes with my bare hands—two of them. And they would take bets, and he would go out and catch two rattlesnakes with his bare hands. Nobody would even imagine that he could do that, but those were the days and he could do that. They used to have bombing runs on Longboat Key where they blocked the road off, because they were practicing bombing. That was during WWII. I have all sorts of pictures to show you the old days and would be happy to do anything more. I'm trying to give you the background. Growing up I never knew, my dad was from Barbados. He had this seafaring thing. And then I went to Barbados and it was this island in the middle of nowhere. And I sailed there because I was on a racing sailboat, and I got to Barbados and I could see, and it all started fitting together and I could see that they got nothing. They are in the middle of nowhere. But they are one of the most cultivated islands down there. They have the Queen of England, Mick Jagger, The Beatles, and hotel rooms are fancier than around here.

And to think that mother was raised around here in Tampa and the kind of things she went through. She was here when she was two years old with John Savarese and then she lived her whole life here and died here.

She worked at New College. She was a secretary. That was one of her dreams come true. She was always real bright but never had a chance to go to college because it was during the Depression. She got married and had kids. And was always interested in poetry. And when she got to New College she would help professors write books. She would type the books and proofread them. It was a dream job for her. And it was really little during the old days. You know the social science building, that's where she worked—same building. I used to go there when I was in high school. I would go to the Walls and the Palm Court Parties. I had tutors from New College when I was in high school. I was having trouble with Spanish and I had some cute girl that was my tutor. I think it's a great place to be and can be a great place in the future. People just need to respect it.

There are still fish here. They need to limit some things. They need to go back to old environmental principles of a certain amount of land. They need to offset buildings. But I was thinking about this stuff earlier. I was reading some environmental planning during the '70s where one building was a city and then they would have all of the wilderness around as a park, and they would have the people go out as an alternative to sprawl. But in basic principles the houses need to be offset by natural area. And once you get away from that, it just goes awry. What they are doing is not working. They need to go back to square one. You know they have a piece of property, whether a mile by a mile or a hundred feet by a hundred feet, half of it you can build on the other half has to be left natural. That doesn't mean the other half is just a vacuum that needs to be filled. Right now you have people building tennis courts, parking lots, golf courses. And that was supposed to be set aside. And that's where something key went wrong. Where people didn't hold to that idea that density needs to be offset by something like wilderness area. So I really think people need to go back and think about it.

And say, really did we lose our way when they decided to change wilderness area to some other name and said all the sudden we can use this wilderness area as a golf course, and then all the sudden you have the building that's impacting the area and the golf course that's impacting the area. **A**nd so you'll know what the study was that I participated in, Arvida hired me to work with them to do studies that got biomass results from the shoreline of Arvida, and then those biomass studies got compared to that of golf course in different areas and they said there was more life in the flophouse than in the areas that we had done biomass studies. And so, therefore, if they put a golf course in they would be doing the environment a favor. And so you take that and you can see what can go so incredibly wrong with environmental studies because the best people have PhDs and they get behind people with money and then they can say whatever they want to say.

Well, what they had me doing was core samples inside of peat bogs, and there wasn't much life in the core samples in the detritus matter. It's just like a bag of fertilizer… That bag of fertilizer is periodically being released in the bay. It's like going into a bag of fertilizer and saying, oh well, there is nothing here, when in fact it is the basis of the bay. I have felt a need to go back and tell people about this because they don't realize how fundamentally everything went wrong, because people manipulated everything to their advantage. And then they bring in geese and then

they bring in ducks, and they we have to get rid of all the raccoons because they are eating our ducks. The other birds have no problem getting away from the raccoons; they live around them.

But that is what I'm trying to do with the historical society, is build up what was here on this island originally. I did a video on it, trying to describe the native vegetation that was here. What was on Longboat Key was it was first found. When people first arrived here, but I think it's interesting that people don't have a concept that there used to be deer and bear. You know, I talked to a guy who worked for a forestry service… He was a PhD and traveled here and in the Caribbean and he said, well, what they say is they log. Even in the earliest days in Longboat Key there was logging. They were people interested in logging and timber, so at the same time as they were logging, all they would do is bring over a barge with some mules and some kids and they would bring it across the bay and float it over to a mill and do it. So the earliest incursion into Longboat Key, aside from Indians and there were small groups of Indians. An archaeologist who is real good is George Luer, and he can tell you about the Indians. But aside from the Indians, and the little bit of development that they did, were loggers. So they actually changed the island. So the island never was this kind of virgin place, but it was a very nice place. You can imagine 90% wilderness. It was a really exciting place to live. Like I said, we didn't even see much of it. We just didn't have an idea of it diminishing.

I've done a lot of interesting thinking about Longboat Key and what happened… You see this little bay right here? Well there is this series of little bays along the island that used to exist that were old passes. So whenever you see in the pictures isolated bodies of deep water and you think, "How did that get there?", well, it may have been a pass at one time and it closed up as an embankment and I'm sure that's not the most earth-shattering sort of deduction ever made but I don't think many people really understand it. Like this bayou is a natural bayou my great uncle dredged back in 1913. You say they didn't have big dredges in the 1800s. And when my uncle came it was already there and it was deep. You say, well, how did it get there? Well, it was a pass at one time that land accreted and encapsulated and then moved on. And this is what is happening here. You see this piece of land here. So that is just an ongoing process, and I don't think people realize that it's just one of those things… That's how these islands are formed, and that's part of the history that they move. They are not meant to stay in one place. They are talking about putting jetties out here to keep land from eroding. Well, the most changes I've seen here have been since they've started doing this beach renourishment. And the more they renourish the beaches, the less stable the passes seem to become, because of this free sand going into the suspension and being deposited. Like that spit of land if you look as far as you can see into that little corner there, 10 or 15 years ago that's all that land was, and now all of that has grown where there was just water. Well, that's pretty fast. It's beach renourishment. It washes away and where does it go? Well, right here.

When I was back in school, they had two theories: one was retreat, the other was renourish. The one got drowned out and the renourish people are the ones that have taken over, and it's like an industry, they have sold everyone into buying over there. My dad used to say, only a fool builds on the Gulf. Lots of people have watched their houses wash away after building on the Gulf. So my dad says, only a fool builds on the Gulf. Because that is just part of living on the Gulf. They had a house that had washed up into the water here on Longboat, and we used to go over there and it was like a fun house. The foundation had split and there were sea oats growing in the living room and all the windows were out from a high tide during the hurricane. It was an

abandoned house and we used to walk through it as kids. And we used to say wow, they just lost their house, isn't that incredible. We used to walk through it all the time going to the beach. And then they built condominiums out from that 100 yards, and they are saying they have a hard time keeping beach out in front of the condominiums, and you say, wait, there was no beach there originally. Now you are saying you need to restore beach that never was there.

I don't know, the older you get, the less you seem to know. I don't know much about foreign policy and don't know what we ought to do about it, but you hear the people on TV and they know everything. And I try to tell my daughter—I have an 18-year-old daughter—and I say the more you think you know what's going on, the less you know, and the more you realize how little you know, the more you probably know and she looks at me like, "You've totally upset my whole hierarchy of learning and getting smarter." And I say, well, it's only a fool who thinks they know everything. I just am surprised every day about how little I know. But I've found a nice home here. I've been all over the United States, I've been to Europe, I worked as a captain in the Mediterranean I worked as a captain in the Caribbean, and if you need someplace to go in a sailboat, you hop on a boat and go out the pass and go anywhere you want. Go to Australia if you want to. It's a neat idea, but as a kid, when I was fourteen years old, I had a nineteen-year-old girlfriend, and my parents told me to get on a boat and go somewhere. So I got on a boat and took off to the Keys with a guy, and he didn't know how to sail and that was the first time I became a captain. I knew more than he did, and by default the one-eyed man was king, because he didn't know anything. But we made it down to Key West, and that was the first time I was a boat captain. And the moment I became 21 I got my captain's license, because my girlfriend told me another guy had gotten his captain's license, and because he had gotten his license I ought to be able to get mine. Back in those days you used to have to go down to Miami to get your captain's license. So I went down to Miami took the test and got my captain's license. At 21 I was a big boat captain. And that was nice… Do the mangrove trimming, do the boat captain thing, do a little bit of this a little bit of that… It has all been a nice thing to do.

And it's not the only place in the world, but you can't be two places at once when you're not anywhere at all. I have the mangrove thing. It's been a good thing for me. I know how to catch the fish here. I've got birds that are on a first name basis with me that I actually feed. I've got little baby raccoons that I raised that come around all the time. I even caught a rattlesnake here, videotaped it. Because my daddy taught me how to do it. I caught a lot of little snakes and then all of a sudden there was this four-and-a-half-foot, healthy rattlesnake right in our yard. They developed a piece of property over here and when they bulldozed the property all the animals that were on this piece of property came over here. At least some of them did—this rattlesnake, box turtles. Anyway, it was a fun thing for me to do to catch the rattlesnake and videotape it and I said, okay, that's it… That's the end of my rattlesnake catching. Because my dad told me it's just a matter of time. He says you're going to get bitten if you keep fooling with them, and he taught me some things that were really important to know, and I know those things and I just say okay, that's enough. And I do catch one occasionally, but it's not something that I want to make a lifetime thing out of. Because he was bitten twice and he did not recommend it. He said it was not a good thing. The more you watch the TV programs, people say it costs them something like 50,000 dollars in hospital bills to get bitten by a snake, and I'm going, "Forget that!"

But anyway, like I said, it's been a nice place for me to live, for my family to live, and I wish it the best for the future. I just think that nobody has been listening to me all these years. I've tried

to help. I've tried to participate. But it just gets that you're not involved, that a lot of these things everybody is paid that's at the meeting. And then they disregard you if you're not paid to be there, so what are you going to do? But there's big hope. I've got a plan. Over there is big shoreline north of New College. There's that whole shoreline to be developed. And I've got a development plan for that, I recommended in my thesis. And I tried to get it to the developers to say, hey, here's your opportunity to do it right, but it seems that people really aren't all that interested in doing things right, or trying to learn from the past. They just keep making the same mistakes. So I don't know if I have any hope that they are going to do anything good with that property, but there are ways of doing it. It's just choices. There are ways of doing, if they do it in a reasonable way.

Interview with: **Tom Mayers**
Date of Interview: **October 20, 2009**
Interviewer: **Casey Schelhorn**
Subject of Interview: **Longboat Key**
Transcriber: **Casey Schelhorn**
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Well, my dad worked for a metal sales company. He worked for a company that sold metals, and we had an aluminum boat and it was kind of unusual back then, and I grew up with a stainless steel slide and it was the biggest slide in the neighborhood that the kids used to come to. And we had, as a little kid growing up, these little wheels of metal that he had as samples and different grades of aluminum. So as I go working with butts and masts later on in life, it was kind of funny because I was familiar with different grades of aluminum and different amalgams of metals to make different materials and the different qualities of these because that's what he did. So that was the early days and there weren't many people around here then. We mostly had family coming down here on the weekends. And coming down to visit and it was just a real remote, nice spot.

And we had a screen porch that was out over the water and we had hammocks. Everybody enjoyed the hammocks. They were just a real nice addition and as kids coming down—would be coming down on the weekends—and we would argue over who had dibs on the hammock. You know, we said "I get to use the hammock first," because that was such a key part of living here on the island, and they would sit together. We had no… probably no telephone, no TV. They spent a lot of time drinking and singing songs and visiting and it was just a nice atmosphere where the adults and the children would all sit around in the evening. It was a small apartment, a small house, and we all were just right there enjoying the time together.

Always at the marina we had big fish. If ever anybody was hurt badly, if there was a turtle that someone was bringing in or anything, we were isolated on a point of land so people would come by. We had lots of fish to eat, lots of amazing stories, and it was nice to see that variety of things coming in.

And my dad had a monkey, and we got it for him because he was a character and he always liked animals. And we just thought it would be a nice present for him. And when we went to give him the monkey—we bought it as a surprise—and when we came in the room my sister, who knew the monkey and had been visiting with it so it would be familiar with the family… when we

brought it home, she grabbed the monkey and brought it in the other room. And the monkey that she was protecting him from my dad. So all of a sudden this monkey couldn't stand my dad. And my dad loved the monkey and they were constant companions, but the monkey really didn't like my dad. Because the monkey was frightened, because he had a beard and he was different looking 'cause he had a beard, and the monkey was just a nice addition and he went on the dock. The monkey was a fun addition. I told you how my dad worked with different animals when he was at Penn State and how he was a horse whisperer and he milked rattlesnakes. So in his older age, we always had animals around the house and the monkey was his monkey. So when he went down the dock, the monkey was on a tether and the monkey would pull his arm out to get as far away from my father as he could, and I always felt sorry for him because here was his present and the monkey was afraid of him.

And we had a business, we had dances on the roof which was really cool. At the marina we had some old rental boats—we started off with boats that my father built. He really wasn't a boat builder in fairness to him, but he built about a dozen boats and they kind of leaked. And they were wooden boats, nice little wooden skiffs, but they leaked a lot. They had a washboard bottom, that where the beam goes across the bottom of the boat and you stuff cotton in there. Well, you know the boats leaked a lot. And I used to be a good wrestler in high school and college and I always attributed it to bailing out leaky boats as a kid. But as we grew up we had half a dozen boats all the time that it was my job to take care of. And I was always painting the boat bottoms. We had a roof, a flat roof. It was one of the first fiberglass roofs in Florida. And when they built it—they really didn't know how to build it—but they had dances up there. As a kid growing up we had dances with a hundred to two hundred people dancing to rock and roll music on the roof to music. And it was just a real nice place to live… fun variety. You saw a real lot of people, a lot of social interaction. We had a small, nice little business that everybody enjoyed. We had a sign out front that said "Ring ship's bell for service." I always greeted people in the yard: "Can I help you?" And I still am that way today, just growing up in that environment.

And my dad used to be a raconteur; he would tell stories. He had an interesting life and was known as a storyteller. And people who came to the marina usually got something good to eat and got some interesting stories.

The dock was built by a company in Tampa. We borrowed money to have the dock built. And we had a good dock company come down from Tampa to have the dock built. And we had the dock built up to fifty feet long. And the same year that we finished the dock they built the bridge and they built the jetty and it changed the flow of the water so that all of a sudden water that had been deep for like thirty years became shallow within a year. So this dock that we built to hold fifty-foot boats was shallow just like we saw today. You saw how shallow it was. Not only could you not get a fifty-foot boat in there at low tide, you had a hard time getting any boat in there. It was just sort of one of those things, it was funny—they built a marina to service all of these big boats and then once they built the 200-foot dock it sanded in because of circumstances. It was just sort of a coincidence that they built the jetty and the bridge at the same time and it sanded the dock in and it ruined our business. But it made it a nice place to live. We enjoy it—we just weren't able to let big boats into our dock.

People would bring in fish that they brought. Tarpon was a popular fish back then. They would bring in all sorts of fish. And Tarpon was just one of the sports fish they would bring in. We had a scale that people would weigh fish in when they came in. It was just one of the things we did at the marina.

Again, my dad was just real casual. When he came in he let his driver's license expire. So he couldn't leave. He couldn't drive anywhere. It's sort of a coincidental thing that my dad quit his job without getting retirement which was really kind of foolish. But he was fifty-eight years old and just quit without getting retirement. But it was a coincidental thing that within ten years he died of cancer. It was kind of a foolish thing to do, but the way it turned out, wouldn't it have been sad if he had just kept his job and never been able to fulfill his dream which was to have a marina. So that was his dream was to come down to the place that we had as a beach house and to turn it into a marina.

And it was fortunate that he had that opportunity to spend with his children and with his family.

But we had a nice big fireplace, and old paintings with stories. They used to call it the old curiosity shop, because we had a lot of antiques. We had a big house in Tampa and when we moved down we brought all of the antiques. Well… not all of them, but some of them, most of them. We had a house full of conversation pieces, antiques that were from different areas.

And we had family here. My dad came from a family of ten children. Most of them lived in this area in Florida. And most of them would come down and visit. We just had a real nice childhood with an extended family of my dad's brothers and sisters.

My aunt told a story one time. Her father was an Episcopal priest and her mother and them were always inviting people over. They were like missionaries from Barbados. She went to Vancouver and had a church, and came to different places in the Northeast and lived. But they had people over their house for dinner, and my aunt one time said it wasn't uncommon to have a dozen people over for dinner. And I said to the aunt if you just had the children and the mother and father that would be a dozen people. So to have anybody over would mean a dozen people for dinner. But it made for really interesting people who were used to being in a large extended family like that.

Grandfather had a story where he used to say he was one the few people who preached to Teddy Roosevelt. And my grandfather was an Episcopal priest and when he would go to different churches… there was a church in Alexandria, Virginia, where he said a service and gave a sermon in Alexandria, Virginia… It wasn't that far from Washington DC, it was right on the border there. And apparently Teddy Roosevelt came to one of his services and he said he was one of the few people to preach to Teddy Roosevelt. Anyway, it was just an interesting extended family that they came from and they were always joking, and telling jokes and stuff.

I was at a very young age out crabbing and fishing. It was like Outward Bound, we were always told to just go on out and have fun. We were taught to swim at an early age. My mother used to walk down to the water's edge and get about knee-deep in the water and put my face in the water until I turned blue. My sister Joni learned how to swim because she fell out of a boat sailing and

no one could get to her so she was just bobbing in the water. You know we were raised in a beautiful environment and it was very pleasant and you know it was just nice memories.

And we had a business that my father made. We had hamburgers and hotdogs and he would sit behind the bar all day selling beer and sandwiches and would just enjoy talking to people, telling stories.

There were always just funny things happening. I used to wrestle in high school and I was fairly good, and I came home and there were all these people who were drinking… and I got home from high school and there were all these people sitting at the bar waiting for me to show up, and when I got there he had arranged for me to wrestle with a professional wrestler. And they were all waiting for the show, because his son was coming home and he was a wrestler and this wrestler was going to wrestle me. And sure enough, we were down there by the water's edge wrestling in the shell. But there was never a dull moment and it was a fun place, open to the public—anybody who wanted to walk in.

I remember when I was a kid, this guy—kind of a strange guy—came and rented an apartment from us and he wanted to cash a check. And he was asking people if he could cash a check, and I was old enough that I had earned some money, so I said I'll cash your check, because nobody wanted to cash his check because nobody trusted him. Well, it turned out that the guy was like a drug addict who had stolen a prescription pad, and was injecting like morphine or something, and of course I never got my money back but it was a good lesson: that nobody else would lend him money or cash his check because they didn't trust him, and I didn't know any better. So anyway that's the type of experience that you have when you deal with the public. You never know what you're going to get, so… In the early days, you know, they would go out and do the simplest things and most of it was based on fishing. In Florida, it's nice here, because the temperature is nice at least 50% of the time if not 75% of the time. It's probably too cold a few months and too hot for a few months and the rest of the time it's a pretty nice temperature. So the rest of the time is just swimming and group picnics and fishing.

There was an island right off of here that we all enjoyed called Jewfish Key, and there was one house on the island, and we were friends with the people on the island. And my father used to go over there because they had rattlesnakes, and the dogs kept getting bitten by rattlesnakes and he would lose dogs. I remember going over there and there were three or four graves and there were stones piled up. And my dad said, "Well the damn fool, he likes raising quail." And that's one of the things that I talk to people around here and they miss is the quail. And when there were lots of open spaces there were quail, and the quail had babies, and you could see the quail running across the street or the road or you could see them out the corner of your eye. My dad used to say they were the size of a silver dollar. Well you don't really have silver dollars anymore but it's about two inches in diameter, or something like that, and they would just run around and they were as cute as they could be. And this guy raised quail, and apparently rattlesnakes love quail, and my dad said that they came from all over to go to that island to get the quail. So there were a number of rattlesnakes on Jewfish Key. So we always had a sort of mystery island to go to. As a kid, it was always a great buffer to have someplace you could go to where there was nobody, and there was, like, mosquitoes and as I got older I would bring girlfriends over there and we would go exploring. And it was a lot of fun, and as I said on the weekends we had a variety of people

that would come down and use the house if my family wasn't here. Like I said, we moved down and built apartments and had people stay in them.

And you know, there were big sea turtles. My father was from Barbados, so he was a seafaring person and he was used to being around the water. He had a good recipe for fish stew. And I don't know whether we ate any turtles or not. But back in the good ol' days people did eat turtles sometimes. I don't really remember it that clearly, but it's not out of the range of what we might do. I remember one time someone bringing a turtle in tying a rope around its fin and tying it to a piling and the turtle just was there for a long time. And in retrospect you think it was cruel and unusual punishment. But back then it was just something that we didn't really think about. It was just a practicality of a way to keep the turtle, and what we did with the turtle after that I don't know, we could have just let it go. It was just a curiosity for people to look at.

My great uncle had *The Mistletoe,* which was a really great boat. He bought it, I think—and I say "I think" because we've looked into it and nobody can come up with the actual history of *The Mistletoe* and nobody can really figure out. I've called the Smithsonian and talked to people, but *The Mistletoe* was a 54-foot boat, as far as I can find, it was built in a city that does not exist anymore or nobody knows about. And it was a 54-foot boat that they actually cut in the middle and stretched it out to a 75-foot boat. So that's a way that they do even today is to make a boat longer is to take the stations in the middle. The stations are the cross-section of the boat in the middle where it's similar. And you just cut it and stretch it out and then you have those stations in the middle of the boat stretched out so you have it twenty feet longer. So that was the history of *The Mistletoe*. And it was just a real practical boat. If you had *The Mistletoe* today it would be a nice boat. If you look at it, it's two stories. You could probably walk on the top of the roof of the second story, so you could really get a nice view. It almost looked like a paddle-wheeler. It had some sort of an architectural feature that looked like a paddle-wheeler. And people used to call it a paddle-wheeler. But it wasn't really a paddle-wheeler; it had a propeller. There is actually a museum today that has the propeller on display. And it was a boat that I am only assuming it would carry fifty to a hundred people if you had to. So *The Mistletoe* was a boat made for shallow-draft water that went up and down the canal or channels here. And there weren't many dredged channels, so it was important to have a boat with a shallow draft. So *The Mistletoe* made a trip from Tampa to Sarasota in relative comfort in about eight hours. So it made stops along the way. But in those days it was quite an adventure to go from Tampa to Sarasota. You were in bad weather or rainy season, they had snakes, panthers—Florida panthers—bears. I think people don't really realize that bears and Florida panthers were a big factor at the turn of the century.

The old drawings and things that show the features of this place in the old days. It had a canal behind it. It was this peninsula and a lot like Florida is a peninsula that sticks out. This property has a lot of shoreline. This little beach house that we had, there really weren't many beach houses around it was just real nice quiet place to be and come on the weekends. They came on the weekends because… and planted Australian pine because they wanted a fast growing tree. I'm an environmental consultant today, and I have people with the same exact request. They say how can I get a tree that will grow fast, because I'm not going to live forever. I have a neighbor who built a house next to me and are looking right at me. And I have to agree with them that Australian pines are one of the fastest growing trees. That's what they used to do in the old days. I remember my mother said that John Ringling was the one who imported most of the trees in the

early days. That was part of his plan for civilizing the area was to have Australian pine trees. He actually built a row of Australian pine trees along the road all the way down the island. They used to call it the canopy road because the trees would arch along the road and you used to go. It was nice shade. I still like the Australian pines. I'm an environmental consultant and I did Australian pine removal for a long time. But a lot of animals do enjoy them and they do provide shade. It's a nice sound when the wind blows through them, and they have a lot of nice qualities, and I think they've been maligned a lot simply because they've fallen out of favor. It's like bell-bottomed pants. Everyone wants to cut the Australian pines down.

But we really are on a precipice right here where we built Land's End. You sort of have an ephemeral existence, where you realize that at any time a hurricane could come and wash the house away. My great uncle lost his house and we've had water in the house several times and we're right on the edge of the pass. So it gives you this sort of character to watch your house and everything you have almost wash away. And I wouldn't recommend it, but it's just been the life we've had all these years. And it was a cute house—look at the old pictures of it—it was just not you normal house. It was sort of a storybook house… You expect Hansel and Gretel to come out any time. it's a house that we all have fond memories of and we all worked on and it was something that everyone would pitch in and do what they could. You know, there was just a lot of open spaces between us and the Gulf. There really wasn't anything there. There were a few open spaces but there really wasn't much. I used to hunt across the road. And I tell people that and they just couldn't imagine. But my dad he grew up hunting and he was a forester so he had a lot of experience hunting and using guns, so he wanted his son to do it, and I shot quail and I used to shoot dove, and I shot rabbits, and I didn't mess with rattlesnakes because my dad taught me not to. He said "Look for them, but don't mess with them." There were really a lot of wide open spaces. And we were right on the beach and the way it was was we had sea oats and sandspurs and not much else. And we had Australian pine trees. And my parents planted Australian pine trees and they grew around the house, and Tampa Bay area is one of the third largest thunderstorm areas in the world. And as far as thunderstorms it's like Nigeria, Thailand and then Tampa Bay. So it's been notorious for having these lightning storms. And as kids we would get in the house and these lightning… When it would strike, the whole ground would shake because it was so close. And now, when we look at all the ground around our house and they all have lightning strike, you know, dead wood around the trees. So you really think that having all of these trees may have saved the house, because it really sat on a point with nothing around it. And the fact that they planted all these Australian pine trees may have saved the house. And why they had a fireplace, I don't know, but it was a nice addition and the only source of heat as I grew up. And we really didn't have space heaters until I got to be a certain age, but they had one in the kitchen and one in the bathroom… But my dad would wake up early, and he would have a fire going, and we would all stand in front of a fire and warm our clothes and get ready to go to school. When we had a business I don't know any better place you could have been raised any more fun. My job was filling the drink box, and it was just like we would get out in the morning, put a mask on, go swimming all day and come back at lunchtime, have somebody make you a sandwich or make your own sandwich and go back out. Like I said, it was a great place to spend my childhood, for my father to spend his last years and for the kids to be raised.

And Michael and Joni became water skiers. Michael is about ten years older than I am, and Joni is about five years older than I am, and they both were very good looking girls. And everybody

would come by the marina with their water ski boats, and they would get asked to ski, and they got quite good at skiing, and I never got quite good at skiing myself. I was more interested in the boats. I was interested in what made boats run fast. And back in those days, a boat with a thirty-five was really considered to go fast—a thirty-five was really considered a big motor. And I used to drive the boats for my sisters while they skied. I always would drive the boats for my sisters while they skied. My sisters were invited to ski at Cypress Gardens. And it really was just a family affair, and if mother wasn't cooking sandwiches and my dad wasn't cooking sandwiches, then the girls were cooking them so that was the way we lived.

So we were right on the water, so there were funny stories. There was this one guy who was kind of a dandy. He was a nice guy but was kind of a little fancy. He had a new car and he always dressed well. We were sitting at the bar and we had these windows that looked out, and this guy had his car next to the house. And he came in and he told my dad he has this new car, this convertible. And my dad says, "You mean that one that is rolling in the water right there?" And the guy didn't put his emergency brake on and it just rolled into the water, and there is nothing worse you can imagine than having a car being immersed in the water. But it was just kind of funny. And that, and having two hundred kids dancing on the roof. We had a few problems with kids who were selling alcohol out in the parking lot. And they got in trouble because they were caught for doing that. And it was just a crazy kind of atmosphere to be raised, but it was fun.

And they just took the old beach house—when daddy decided to build the marina—they took the old beach house that was the cottage, and he just built a marina around the beach house. And so we took the building, and it was funny… I used to go Mexico and look at the ruins. And they would take the old temples and encapsulate them inside of the new temples, and so that's what happened to the beach house, is it actually got encapsulated inside the beach house while we were working on it. So you can say this is what was the original house. We have a certain reverence for the original house. We try to keep things the same and when I do any repair work I try to keep the same wood. I try to do everything I could to keep the memory of the past because it was such a fond memory for me. So inside of the house are encapsulated our little beach house that we grew up in and we liked, and the monkey was just a funny addition, and you can see the boats… we have lots of boats around. And the monkey was just… People would give him what was left of their beer and he would get drunk and fall of his perch. And I tell people that how we know that humans are related to monkeys because Joe used to get up there, drink beer, and fall out of his perch when he was drunk.

That's part of the band, the group that used to go up on the roof and dance on the weekends. I'm mixed in with a bunch of teenagers and the music was quite nice. The Beatles music was just starting, and it was all the rock and roll and Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley and we used to have the groups that came in and they would be all dressed in outfits. You know Little Minute Men would be one of the groups that would play music. And I remember my mom would say "You have to go to sleep, Tom," "You have to go to church tomorrow." And I would go, "We have two hundred people up on the roof dancing and you're telling me at ten o'clock I have to go to sleep?" You can imagine the noise of two-hundred people dancing on your roof on your bedroom.

See the first Australian pine trees they planted. It was in the very first stage of building that house they planted Australian pine trees. And everybody tells us we ought to cut them down but

I was a professional, cutting down other people's Australian pines. And my sister Michael really didn't want to cut them down, and I really didn't want to cut them down. Pileated woodpeckers in them, corn snakes in them, Eagle landed on one. So, at some point you are sitting there looking at them. There's an island over there, Sister Key, where they did an extreme Australian pine removal where they wanted to cut down every Australian pine. And I went down to the town of Longboat Key and said, "Can't you do it in stages? Can't you do just a few of the Australian Pines—10% or 20%—and leave? And why do you want to do this radical change?" And I went over to the island just the other day to visit and we saw that they left one tree. And we saw in that tree there were three osprey sitting there, because it was the only place that they wanted to be, because there used to be all of these nice Australian pines. It's like this environmental consulting thing: at some point you get disgusted with some of this stuff that you have to deal with, people with this attitude. My uncle said… One of his greatest quotes, when he was on his death bed someone asked him what he wanted to be during his life. And he said "Well, I thought I wanted to be an intellectual, but it just didn't work out." But he was a very bright and funny guy, and he used to talk about the guy who lived upstairs who was *a very modern guy*, and he would stress the "n". And it just makes you laugh. With each generation these people who think they have all the right answers and the right thought. You just sometimes get steamrolled by a culture who's just on their way to nowhere and doesn't have a clue.

Fishing was great—that was another past-time here, was just fishing. And it was more fishing… You know, people just really… I don't remember even to this day… We seldom freeze fish. I remember fresh fish and we had people bringing fish all the time. So fishing was just a way of getting good food. And I go down to the supermarket and I look at fish from China and Indonesia and a lot of the fish is treated with chemicals, I guess to keep it from spoiling. But it has a nasty taste. So for me to be able to go out here and catch fish, I do it as often as possible.

And the erosion at different times—it looked like we were about to lose our house. It's like being on a precipice or something. My grandfather from Barbados—my great grandfather from Barbados—actually chose to be buried on the edge of a cliff. So he's at a graveyard at the edge of a cliff that's eroding and everybody just… He gets more attention because of his grave that was built at the edge of a cliff. And on his gravestone it says "It's by the grace of God that you are saved, not by that of your own doing." And he was Samuel Luis Meyers, and his brother Joseph Briggs Meyers went down to French Guiana and started a plantation down there and made lots of money and came back and built a big mausoleum. And so, in Barbados at the same graveyard, Joseph Briggs has this huge mausoleum—not huge, but big—the size of the room of a house. But he doesn't get the attention that poor little Samuel Luis Meyers has, just because he built his grave at the edge of a cliff. But that's what I think of Land's End being perched at the end of a cliff, with the erosion just taking the sand away, where you feel like you're just sort of getting a lot of attention because you're at the edge of falling in the water.

It was just a real relaxed lifestyle. My cousins would come down, but I was just one boy with a lot of girls most of the time. It just ends up that way. I don't know why, but it was a nice way to be raised. I had a good time and it was fun.

I used to get a lot of cuts because of going barefoot all the time. I used to get a lot of cuts on shells and oysters and that was one of the things that happened to people here.

We had a variety of boats. I used to call them “none of a kind.” We didn’t have any two boats after my dad built half a dozen boats. Wood boats… I don’t think people understand that wood boats are meant to last a short period of time: 10 to 20 years. And only really well-built wooden boats that people take care of last longer than that. So after 10 or 20 years it’s time to build some more boats. It’s sort of like that’s the time. But we were always working on boats and bringing in boats. We sold boats, so it was fun for me to have different kinds of boats and grow up around them. And my dad had me painting the bottoms of boats and fixing worm holes and doing little carpentry work, and I remember coming in with red paint all over me and my dad says it looks like you got more paint on you than you did on the boat, but that was the atmosphere. And it was a nice thing for me and I wasn’t the best boat builder and they weren’t the best boats. So it was a match.

Just a sweet little house. And most of the furniture was handmade and what wasn’t handmade were antiques. And people don’t realize that in the old days when you had a place out on the island, you didn’t want anything that people would steal. If you had a nice brand new refrigerator you might come back and find it gone. So we always filled the place with stuff that we thought nobody would steal, and it was just a simple lifestyle. And all windows would open up. And of course screens, because mosquitoes were bad.

And the ancestors were brought down—the old grandmothers—and they all enjoyed seeing the pioneer atmosphere. They were the original pioneers but they enjoyed see this young couple putting down roots, just like a tree. You start with nothing but a lot, and you start building a house from scratch. And it was just fun for them to see. And you always see boats. There were boats everywhere. You can’t live without boats with all this water.

They brought in rocks to try to stop the erosion. And they built a fireplace out of rock, but most of the house was just wooden house, and they used cypress and pine because there is an old adage that you use lumber that comes from the area where you are going to use a boat. It’s the same thing with a house. If you use lumber that comes from the Northwest, like Oregon or whatever, and you bring it to Florida, well the barometric pressure is different, the humidity is different—it actually causes wood to rot. A lot of people brought western cedar here, thinking it was the wood to use, but actually houses built with cypress and pine are still here and good. And the cypress— it only makes sense—has some natural repellant and the pine to termites. Because the termites are from here. So you bring a wood from somewhere else and they don’t have what it takes to repel the insects that naturally occur.

And it was just a real quiet spot and we would come down on the weekends and just unload and have our weekend and load the car up and we would go back to Tampa. There was no bridge, so we were just isolated on the point. Our next-door, he lived on the bayou, was a Coca-Cola heir and he, I guess, retired and built an estate that was like landscaped and had fountains. He had a barbeque area, he had a pool, he had a nice little boat place with a dock house on it. He would bring people he used to do business with down, I guess, and entertain them and I guess that’s why it was there. I don’t remember him—that was before I was born—but I hear stories. The property just gradually overgrew. He died and sold the property. It went to a trust and New College ended up buying it, and then we ended up buying it from New College. So it was donated to New College, I guess, and we ended up buying it from New College, and made a development over there. And I did all the tree-work, the tree trimming.

But that was our nearest neighbor and everybody liked the water and it was just a lot of time swimming in the water and fishing. And kids had a great place to be. It was safe and we all got to be really good boat people. Both my sisters could run a boat really well. Swimming in the beach. You can see what a cute little place it was. My parents had Doberman Pinschers when they came down. They were the first people in Florida to have Doberman Pinschers, and they were a dog that really was a product of breeding in Germany. And I guess Hitler made them famous. He used them as attack dogs, but my father had some of the first Dobermans in Florida. You can imagine what a striking couple they must have been, this man and woman with a couple of young children and these big dogs. They used to call them devil dogs because they had these pointy ears and they were black and they were intimidating. We all loved animals.

My mother and grandmother were from Barbados—the oldest family in Barbados. I was in Barbados and talked with the head of the historical society of Barbados, and he was a relative of mine, and he said that his family came to Barbados in 1629, and when he came there my family was already there. So that was back in 1627 that Barbados was founded, so between 1627 and 1629 is when the family came to Barbados. And then it lived there all the time. And then they left and we never knew why they left. He was the director of education for the Anglican Church as a young man. He was a Greek and Latin scholar. He was somebody whose family lived on the island all those years and we never figured why he left. And then I talked to a relative from Barbados and I said it was always a mystery to us why grandfather and grandmother left Barbados. And he said your grandfather—and this was my distant cousin—he said your grandfather, the last thing he did before he left the island, was he said a funeral service for their grandmother and they said their grandmother was his sister, and they said she died of scarlet fever. So maybe that's why they left Barbados with nine children. My father was raised down there and he said they had servants—lots of servants—even though they were with the church they had lots of people helping. And my father said he didn't even know how to tie his shoes until he came to America. He had someone who would tie his shoes for him,

And they would all just swim—it was just something you would think that they had to have been from a place where there was lots of water. And I don't think you can find a place that has as much water as we have here, as Barbados does. Barbados is an island that's 15 miles by 20 miles and it's surrounded by water, and they always would go for a nice swim—"a cool dip," is what they used to say. Always swimming and always family… It was just a nice isolated place for people to come. They called it Land's End because it was the end of the land. It was kind of isolated.

We had an aluminum boat with a Mercury motor on it. We used to use that; it was our boat. One time before the bridge was built, I remember my dad forgetting to tie the boat, or he pulled it up on the beach without tying it up, and it was floating away and the lightning storm was coming in. And he was swimming after the boat because he felt stupid that he had not tied the boat up. Of course, it was nobody's fault but his. So, as the boat was floating out the pass, my father was swimming out, and one of my earliest memories of my father as a kid was sitting out on the porch with all the family members, watching dad swim out after the boat and my mother screaming "Let the boat go, Frank!" But he wasn't going to let it go. That was our only transportation. That's what we had in the early days, was one boat—an aluminum boat with a motor.

And a big beach out front… At times, as it eroded away, sometimes the beach would build out and we would have a hundred feet. In front our house would be a big beach. And the next thing you know, it would wash away and it would be right out in front of our house. It's sort of like a pulsing.

And the women who came down all enjoyed sunbathing and swimming.

Lots of sea oats and lots of fond memories of boats and kids.

My mother was from a cultivated family. Her great uncle was John Saverese and he was a very successful businessman in Tampa. He had a fish house which was one of the most successful businesses in Tampa and they lived on a street. Right now it's part of the historic district in Tampa—one of the areas they've set aside and they had a house there—809 South Willow—and it looks today like it did back then. Because it's part of a historic district, the whole street looks the same, and I actually went in the house where my mother was raised and I told the people I was part of the historical society. I offered and did give them lots of pictures of the house where my mother lived. But it was a very nice house in Tampa. Back in those days it was probably the latest thing, these wooden houses with the porch in front.

The aerial photographs are interesting to look at because you can see how fluid it is. Everything changes. How the sand bars and all the land forms are changing.

And the women back then, they had lots of money and they just dressed up to the tee. If you see some of the pictures of my ancestors on my mother's side. I inherited some things that came down from them. For example, if they were having a dinner party—a very nice dinner party—they would have silver rings that would hold the napkins. They would have something inscribed on them that they would give out as party favors. So that was one of the things, and I would ask my mother what they were for. And she said they would just give them out so people would take home their little silver napkin ring with their name on it. And they had big hats, and it was funny… I was going through these pictures and they said it was not usual to have pictures like that. Because back then, you had to have the photographer take the pictures. And most of them were staged and they were all dressed up. It's just fun to see.

Big family on both sides. My mother, her family was entrenched in Tampa and also Savannah. They came from Savannah and were Italian immigrants who moved to Tampa. Her family was all from Tampa and big family.

Just the outfits you see them in were just incredible. And that's from Savannah. Just picture them all dressed and at the local photographer.

And Aunt Eni—Aunt Irene—she was beautiful when she was young. She had some nice features, very Italian looking. And she married a ship captain. And his name was Charlie Wilkinson. And Charlie Wilkinson was a very successful ship's captain. He had a ship that used to sail from Tampa to New York, and this was back in the days when they sailed. And he looked like a real robust character. And he went up to New York and had a couple children with her and then started fooling around with the showgirls in New York. And then he… I have a dresser in my room that he bought for a hundred dollars in New York City, and brought it down to her on a boat, or who knows how… Probably just to cover the fact that he was seeing a showgirl. And

then he finally left her for a showgirl, and I remember Aunt Eni being in a nursing home. And you would go see Aunt Eni—Aunt Irene—and you would never know when you see somebody in a nursing home—it was a sweet little nursing home—but you would never imagine that she was such a beauty when she was young. And that she had this history of… I like to think of her as Helen of Troy, this woman who launched all these ships. But there are pictures of her launching the ships and that's one of the ships there. You can see the size of the ship. That's one that would sail to New York and you can see Charlie Wilkinson, he was a scalawag and a scoundrel to leave her with two children and to run off with a showgirl in New York. I guess that's the way it was.

That's just people… Relatives, I grew up with these pictures. My mother would thumb over and look through, and had them in a box, and would hand them to me and tell me who they were. And it's just a fun history to have.

And that's me swinging off a swing in the bayou in the canal. We had a bayou and they would periodically dredge it and we had a rope swing out there. And it was a great fun thing for kids. And there used to be clams, lots of clams in that bayou, stone crabs, and I remember getting a washtub of stone crab claws. You go to a restaurant now and pay fifty dollars and can you imagine getting a washtub of stone crab claws? That's not the crabs but just the claws, that's hundreds of claws. That's me swimming. It looks like I don't have pants on but I actually have a bathing suit. And just beachcombing. We sort of originated. I used to tell people… I'm on the Longboat Historical Society… I'm on the board of directors, my mother is the founding president of the Longboat Key Historical Society… and I used to tell people… Well, you know I dress extra casual when I do a presentation. I say "You can thank us for your relaxed atmosphere here because we all let it go a long time ago." We wore bathing suits and t-shirts and nobody put any pretensions. When you have that beach atmosphere it's kind of a nice thing. That's one of the charming things about Longboat Key that people need to remember—is that one of the nicest things about it is that you can go to the nicest restaurant on the island dressed in a bathing suit. You had to wear shirt and shoes, that was the main thing. But the casual part of Florida is one thing. And you see people coming down from the city and they are so used to being dressed up in the layers of clothes and the fancy outfits. And it's nice to go to the simple things. And that picture is ancient, of people boating. So we came from a long line of boaters. Everybody, everything revolved around boating.

That's my grandfather who was an Episcopal priest, his brother who was an Episcopal priest, his sister—the one who he said the mass over, who died of scarlet fever, and his mother.

Charlie Wilkinson, in front of University of Tampa, he was a scalawag and a scoundrel who left his wife for a showgirl in New York. But he looks like a dandy-legged boat captain. He carries himself in a pretty jaunty way. But that was Charlie Wilkinson in front of the University of Tampa, which I think used to be a hotel.

And that's us with the raccoons and the beagle. We had a beagle. And beagles were nice dogs, except they like to run and hunt a lot. And they would take off and run and you would just lose them. And you couldn't keep a beagle from running, and they would take off all the time and run. And the beagles would get bitten by rattlesnakes and come back. And a lot of the animals that got bitten by rattlesnakes would survive. And we raised 'coons and the beagles right next to

each other, along with the monkeys. And my dad had rattlesnakes in the back of the house and my dad would say "Don't fool with the rattlesnakes. Don't you show anybody the rattlesnakes." And of course the first thing you do is show your friends the rattlesnakes, like you knew what you were doing. And I had a rattlesnake strike one time and he hit my shirt and fell out on the ground. And I had to go out and tell my dad I had been in the cage. And he had to put the rattlesnake in the rabbit cage because… You don't want to put a rattlesnake in a rabbit cage because when you go and open the cage, he struck at me. But I'm talking about big rattlesnakes— five-footers—it was not unusual to have big rattlesnakes. But we had them in the house and we had them in bags. And he was an expert at handling rattlesnakes and it was just an interesting life. And I became fascinated as I grew older, and I caught rattlesnakes myself and he showed me how to catch them, but I don't do it very often. I don't make a point of doing it. I might do it to rescue a rattlesnake and release him somewhere else. It's an esoteric sort of talent.

And the raccoons were just part of the family. You get them as babies and they were usually orphaned and they had nowhere to go. And they were just so cute… If you've had a puppy and you've had a kitten you know just what I'm talking about. A raccoon baby is just as cute as any kitten or puppy you've ever seen. And they will follow you around and they are inquisitive. And they are fun and they make all these nice little noises, and when they get to be about three or four months they have sharp teeth and they will bite you if you try to force them or hold them from going anywhere. So after three or four months you just have to let them go, just let them out and the 'coons will come back and come in the house. And we had 'coons that would get the cookies from the cookie jar. And we sold cookies so we had these clear cookie jars. And they would have like metal caps. Some of the cookie jars have metal caps. And then all of a sudden you would hear somebody yell, "Oh no, the coon is in the house," and then the cap would fall off and the coon would grab a package of cookies. They were little packages that we sold for a nickel or so—and they would run off in the corner and start eating the cookies. And he would growl at you and act like he was going to tear you up. And you would grab the cookies from him and he would go right from being aggressive to being like, "Come on, really… Give me the cookies back. I wasn't going to bite ya." But it was a fun life having all of the animals. I really was affected by it because I really haven't changed much.

And that was my dad as a forester. That's really a cool picture, that should be a Levi's jeans commercial or something. But he was a forester in Pennsylvania. He got his degree in forestry and knew a lot about turpentine, plants… But he lost all of his teeth because he had a vitamin deficiency from living in the forest. So he must have done it quite a bit. And that's when he graduated from Penn State with a degree in Forestry. And that included milking rattlesnakes and stuff. He just was an interesting man… He had a lot to talk about and he was fun. He didn't have a chip on his shoulder. He went to Andover-Phillips Academy—I think Bush went to school there, a lot of the prestigious. Of all the schools in the Northeast, the college preparatory schools, Andover is one of the finest. And he went there because his father knew the headmaster of the school. Anyway, Daddy was interesting and was a lumberjack at some time. He loved animals. We had aquariums at various times and he had a little stingray that he would teach tricks. He had a little stingray in an aquarium, and when he would come to get the shrimp out of his hands, the mouth was on the bottom of the stingray… So the stingray is flat, like a little plate, and when he came up to get the food, he had to turn up like *that*. And then Daddy would put the food in his mouth and he would do a roll—like a barrel roll. And when people would come over, Daddy would say "Well, watch this, I've got this stingray trained." He would just hold his hand over the

thing and the stingray would just start doing these barrel rolls trying to get the shrimp that my dad trained him to do.

And there he is with a bear. So he was authentic. I'm not saying he was like the crocodile hunter or anything like that. But he was a professional snake handler, horse handler, and he worked as a horse trainer. And he was good with all kinds of animals: bears, raccoons, birds.

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That's my dad and my sister on a sunfish. We were some of the first people in Florida with the Sunfish sailboats. I tell people it was so long ago that it was when sunfish were made out of plywood. And they had a boat called a Sailfish that just kind of disappeared. But the Sailfish didn't have a cockpit. So anybody who sailed a Sunfish can imagine that a Sunfish without a cockpit is not a very cool boat. So the Sailfish disappeared and the Sunfish became one of the most popular boats ever. They produced 300,000 boats. But we had Sunfish as kids, and my job was to teach people how to sail the Sunfish. So I'm always doing sailboat rescue missions—since I was a kid, trying to help people out. I became a lifeguard because somebody was in the water drowning, and I ran out and saved her life. I saw everybody was having a hard time getting to this girl because she was in the middle of the pass. So I ran to the bridge, dove off the bridge and swam to the girl, and said "Hey, don't worry… Everything will be fine," and rescued this girl. And the next thing you know everybody… The head of the lifeguards came and said "Kid, are you the one that saved that girl?" And I said yeah. And he said "Well, you're a big kid, aren't you?" And I said, "Yeah, pretty big." And he said "We'll make you a lifeguard." He said, "You're 14. When you're 16, we have a test we call the lifesaving test I want you to take… When you're sixteen." So I was a lifeguard when I was 14 with no lifesaving anything just because I was a good swimmer. It was a nice atmosphere, family atmosphere at the business. You can just see my dad sitting behind the counter, and me sitting behind the counter with him, and Joni my sister. Joni was a runner-up to Miss Florida, and my sister Michael has always been considered striking—a big real-estate person now, but she has always been considered attractive. But I think a lot of the boys came to Land's End just to look at Michael and Joni—I mean really.

Inner tubes were a lot of fun when we were kids… Anything to be in the water. We didn't need an inner tube. I think one of my favorite stories about the water, the guy who designed the Optimus pram lived on the water. The marine patrol came in towing his son in the Optimus pram, and said "Mr. Mills, did you realize your son was out there without a life preserver?" He had a funny dry wit and looked at the marine patrol and said, "You should have seen him yesterday. He was out there without a boat. At least he had a boat to float." So I think that was kind of funny. But we were all good swimmers and the inner tube was just endless entertainment. We would just float down the pass, and fish and dive and come back with fish and crab. It was just a great place to live.

And my dad, one of the most famous pictures of him is him throwing the cast net. And it was a picture taken from down in the water, looking up. And he got with the photographer and directed the photographer and said "Why don't you get down in the water and take a picture of the cast net? It will look like I'm throwing the cast net over you." This photographer had a good camera… Actually, the editor of the local paper took the picture of my dad throwing the cast net, with the clouds in the background. And it was just a nice picture, and it won an award at the New

York World's Fair in 1964, so it won an award for regional photography. And we still have it. It's a famous picture.

And dad with the Dobermans… He probably built that chair he was sitting in. So he was handy in the workshop… Amongst with being other things, he was real handy in the workshop. He had a band saw… He gave me some tools, you know I have some tools that he left me that I use every day. But he made lawn furniture, built houses, built boats… He was a good guy with lots of good stories.

Yeah, all the family was around and the dock was just a great place to gather and have people come visit.

His brother… A lot of his brothers settled in Florida so we would have family reunions, and it wasn't uncommon to have 20 or 30 people come down for a family gathering and have a picnic and a nice time. You know my mom was a sweetheart, she was soft spoken. She really didn't talk much, but the more you got to know about her the more you liked her. The more you realized she just differed to my father. My father was the story teller—he told everything, but she had just as rich a history as he had. Not that my father talked a lot, but my mother really didn't talk about her history at all, and then to find out that she came from the family that had the first passenger-carrying boat from Tampa to Sarasota. And only because people started bringing it up and bringing her pictures did you really understand that. And she was quite a good-looking woman. My mother was raised at the Academy of the Holy Names. Her father was shipwrecked in the Cayman Islands and then came home and died of throat cancer shortly after that. So her mother had to get a job. You know, was from a fairly wealthy family and came from being from a wealthy family, and then out of circumstance her father lost a load of cotton on a shipwreck. And then didn't make it back for several years, and then when he did make it back from the islands he died, and her mother had three children and so she was raised by nuns, actually, in the Academy of the Holy Names and she loved the Catholic Church. Her religion was its own reward. She was very religious and it answered most of her questions. Whether there was a God or there wasn't a God, it didn't matter. She read Thomas Murton and that side of the Catholic Church, and it was a nice thing for her and she had a lot of nice memories of the Academy of the Holy Names.

So there she is as a child. You can tell she was from a wealthy family with the fancy clothes, and she had a photographer and the whole deal. But that was her; she was a cutie.

And comfortable in the water, out of the water, it was wash-and-wear, drip-dry, whatever. It just is almost like that Clark Mills story: "You should have seen my son yesterday he didn't have a boat." You know we were out swimming all of the time.

And the umbrella and the beach… And that's pretty much what they had going on in the early days, just a lot of good fun. They had a Doberman. It was a pretty striking couple. The fishermen in Cortez remember them coming down—this big, strong guy and his pretty wife, cute children and Doberman pinchers. I had one of the Cortez fishermen—woman fisherman—tell me "I remember your mom and Dad. I forgot my water jug and I came and asked if I could get some water out of their well," and that's how they met. And that's why people were really nice in the old days. When you're in a boat, you never know when you're going to need help… who you

were going to need help from. So people were just courteous. You wonder why boaters always wave at each other? You never know. Your motor wouldn't start… it's common that your engine wouldn't start. You don't want to be flicking off someone who you could ask for a tow. And the pass has changed completely. My dad used to wear casual outfits. He wore what they called "Fanlon shirts," with the little collar and button down half way. And he smoked cigarettes, which is too bad, but that's not what killed him. He used to wear flip-flops and khaki pants, and it was sort of like his uniform. And like I said, he was a raconteur and had an Indian motorcycle when he was young, and had an injury to his arm and was always complaining about his arm, and he would do like *that* and you would always hear it crack. And he said that was from his motorcycle contest, and of course he was training. He used to take green horses and train them. And people wouldn't bring you a horse that was easy to break. People would bring him the worst of the horses. And he said that a horse got him by the finger when he was a young man, maybe 14 or 15. And it pulled him around a little fence… enclosed… corral or whatever, and he said he thought that the horse was never going to let go. And he was moving as fast as he could because he didn't want to lose his finger. But if you look at his finger it was just masticated, half the size it should be. And it was bent and it just didn't move. And he would point somewhere and it was bent and all gnarled up. But he had lots of stories, and he looked like Santa Claus at the end. With the beard, and he died of cancer. He went in and got the exploratory examination and they said he had cancer and he said "I don't have the kind of money to pay for treatment." And that's what he did, he just went home. He didn't want to put the family to come in and try to save his life. It's just the way they did it in those days. He died when he was 68. He was born in 1900, so 68 was when he died. In those days it doesn't seem so long ago. But was so long ago that I don't think they differentiated dying from old age and dying from cancer. If you were that old—70 years old, 65 years old—I really don't think they knew that much about it, they just said he died of old age. He just died of natural causes or whatever.

We used to have pig roasts, it was a nice atmosphere, too, and people would bring… We had migrants that would come here. In the early days we had migrants… It was sort of… what do you call it, prejudice? …And people were not nice to the migrants. But my dad liked them and he was always nice to them. They would bring us tomatoes, the best tomatoes, because they were migrants picking tomatoes. They would pick the best ones and keep them for themselves—that was just the standard way they would do it. So they would bring us these beautiful tomatoes and daddy would pay them whatever the going rate was for a box of tomatoes and give them a charge thing. So they would come, and you know it was just a nice atmosphere. And farmers would bring pigs, live pigs, and my dad would butcher a pig and we would have a pig roast and they would bring milk, whole milk, and daddy would get talking at the bar about how good whole milk was… And of course we didn't even know what whole milk was. And they would bring him whole milk. That's before they would pasteurize it with the cream on it. And they would bring it to my dad. And the fishermen would come and throw fish on the dock and daddy would give them a cup of coffee and not charge them for it. So it was just kind of a nice relaxed way to be.

He was an authentic character. Logging… There he was sitting on a pile of logs. I don't think that was a staged picture. That looks like he was working and somebody just took a picture of him. That's when men were men, ships were wooden, and men were iron, whatever they used to say. Can you imagine cutting those down with a thing?

That was in the early days… They had guys and they would go out fishing. It's my dad in a forestry camp.

That's my grandmother. That's her dress for a wedding. Quite the foxy… They were just from a fancy family in Tampa and they just put on the dog. You have a professional photographer take the picture… Big hats, fancy ladies, Italian immigrants… You know—big houses, fancy houses. And I think my mother was half Irish. Her father was part Irish. And her mother was pure Italian. So you had two groups that there was a lot prejudice against. My mother said back in the early 1900s the prejudice was like what there was for blacks or Indians. If you were Irish or Italian there was a lot of prejudice against people. So they were in this unique niche and she was always sort of into civil rights and all these liberal causes, because she grew up in a time when people were prejudiced against her parents and her family. So she was a nice combination of Irish and Italian. Big houses, beautiful houses built in Tampa… wooden houses.

Big ship: There's uncle Charlie with his boat. That's when he took off and took to New York with a showgirl. And Irene launching a ship… She was quite a good-looking lady. I remember sitting in a nursing home, just all by herself.

And there's Irene, a pretty good-looking woman I think.

There's John Savarese in Land's End the place that we are right now. And the little boat. I love that picture of the little sailboats that sailed out. Because the big boat could only get so close to shore, most of these bays had gradual sloping shorelines. So you couldn't go out, except for a few spots with deep channels you had to go out maybe 100 yards before you could get 3 or 4 feet of water.

Boats… And there's my uncle with a big beach and Australian pines. Australian pines, you know, are there because they grow well near salt water. That's the secret with Australian pines is that they grow well near salt water, they grow where things don't grow. There's one thing—the mangroves. I became an expert in mangroves only because I did something for a long time, which is I cut mangroves. And there is a saying that mangroves are not obligated halophytes. And a halophyte is a plant which needs salt. And mangroves are not obligated halophytes in that they will grow without salt. They have conditioned themselves to grow in an environment that other plants won't grow. That mangroves are in that niche is not that they can only grow there, but that they are outcompeted in other areas that other plants can get. So the Australian pines were from Australia and they found a niche too. And they can't grow down as far as the mangroves can in salt water. But they can grow right close to it. And mangroves are interesting in that they can respire the salt water, and they can actually— underneath the leaves—they excrete salt. So they actually turn salt water into fresh water and excrete the salt. And I think it's one of the interesting things about the mangroves that people don't understand is that they have the ability that we haven't figured out, which is how to make fresh water out of salt water, and take out the salt.

Just nice grandmother and one of her sons and one of my uncles and kids swimming with nothing in the background. That's the cool thing about these old pictures, is that there is just nothing in the background; there's not people, there's not houses, there's just nothing. So that was the environment here just local families.

That's the pass here, there's an island and trees and there was nothing then.

The monkey, Joe the monkey, always brings a smile to my face. I always liked Joe. We always got along well. I remember the electric wire. And he got hooked up with the electric wire and it started shocking him somehow and we took a stick and threw it and hit him and knocked him off. And he was burnt down to the ground.

There's a little girl with Joe, and I remember in the days… he never bit anybody. I don't remember him ever biting anybody. It's not that he couldn't, he just never did. But he used to bully little kids. If they had raisins and would give him raisins one at a time, he would just push her down, knock her down and take the box of raisins. It's funny… They are like little people. One time Joe got sick, and my sister was sick, and Joe got sick at the same time with the same thing. It was a virus, and she would sit there with her hand on her forehead going "Oh, I don't feel so good," and Joe was sitting right next to her in bed doing the same thing. And you could just see the two of them going What is wrong with this picture? But I think he had the same thing she had. But he ended up being a she. It wasn't a he, it was a she.

And my sister Joan was always considered real beautiful. She was real athletic and kind of quiet… you know, shy. But they kept funneling her into these pageants. She had to be Miss Longboat Key, and of course she won the Miss Longboat Key pageant and then she had to be Miss Manatee County and she won the miss Manatee County pageant. And then she was in the Miss Florida pageant and I guess she could have gone farther, but she just didn't want to be in any of it. And one time she was going to a beauty contest, or something to do with her beauty thing, and she was giving me a hard time and I slung a fudgesicle across the house and it hit her in the lip and her lip swoll up. And when they came to pick her up to go to contest she couldn't go because she had this swelled lip. It was one of my finest moments, because I was kind of mad at her and threw a fudgesicle a long ways and it hit her in the lip.

And Joanie had some kids she raised here. And they are grown up now and have kids of their own.

We had a lot of native people, fisherman, coming down here to show us how to do different things. And we had this guy named Horse Roberts who was a fishing guide and ended up marrying this wealthy woman from up north, and they had quite a nice lifestyle, and was just a simple fishing guide and was going to show us how the Indian cooked the mullet. And it was one of the prettiest things, where he took stirrups from the cabbage palm and then he cut them into, like, fourths and then he skewered the mullet on the forks of the cabbage palm, and then he stuck the base of the cabbage palm into the ground, and these mullet look like cobras over there in the open fire and that's the way the Indians used to smoke mullet. And I've seen similar things in the Northeast.

And that's my sister with a knife to my throat… Now isn't that a nice picture? Anyway, I think… I really believe that child services should have been brought in at an early age. And she's been doing that ever since too.

But that's the Rough Riders. That's my uncle Joe and my cousin whatever who was. They had the Spanish American War and they were the Rough Riders that came down to Fort Brooke in

Tampa to get on boats to go down to Cuba to fight the Spanish over some trumped-up war that probably had no reason at all.

And they actually built a fort on Egmont Key that never fired a shot. They just built a fort and it was going to protect the harbor, and it became obsolete before it was even finished.

That's Uncle Johnny. And you know her grandfather died early and Great Uncle Johnny was the patriarch who took care of the family. And when she talked about Uncle Johnny—who would have been my great Uncle Johnny—it was partially because he helped support the family. When her father had problems, he helped find her father a job. He had 500 people fishing out of his fish house. He had 150 boats fishing out of his fish house. He founded the Tampa American Club, this Italian-American club. Just look at the way they are dressed. That's in Tampa back in 1900, in tuxedos. He was knighted by the king of Italy as an ambassador to Italy. That was one of his positions, as he was the ambassador to Italy from Tampa. Who knows what he had to do to get that? But he was a big businessman. There he is on the property here, pointing at his wife. His wife said she didn't want to have children to keep her figure. It looks like she did a good job, and she didn't have any children. But I think that was just a gracious way of saying "couldn't have children," because she wanted to keep her figure.

And there are all kinds of stories written about John Saverese, and the real story has never been written, but newspapers wrote articles and stuff that were kind of interesting and nice. But he was quite a character and in his day he owned a lot. Mother used to say that he owned Casey Key. And mother used to say that he owned this and he owned that. And down in Boca Grande… We would go down there and in their museum they have a picture of *The Mistletoe*, so he would run all the way.

There he is in his 50s or something like that. He looks like a pretty robust guy at his home in Tampa.

There is Justine, mother's favorite cousin. And the beach house was just, you know… All these people interacted and came to the beach house. Justine… I used to get blue crabs and Justine would clean them with a knitting needle, and would say "Just keep getting the blue crabs and I'll clean them." And they would sit around getting the meat out of the claws, just to make something to eat, some dish. And we built apartments, we added on to Land's End, we built apartments. That's where the heroin addict or whatever he was that I cashed his check lived, in that little apartment. We used to rent those apartments out to people and they burnt down. We had a fire, and you can see all the boats. And that was… When I was a baby, that where I came to—that little house right there. And it's the same house, beach house. And that's Land's End with nothing on it. You can see why they planted Australian pine. It's a neat picture: the only one I have of the property before anything was built—no house, no nothing. When I was a kid with pool tables in the front room, we had jukebox, pinball machines. I got really good at pinball and I got really good at pool because I had one in my house. The older boys used to ask mother if they could borrow me to take me to the pool house to bet, that this kid could beat you at pool, bumper pool. We had, like, cowhorns that you could blow. And my mother made ceramics. So a lot of the things we had were things that Mother actually made. And of course, the house my dad made… and antiques.

Aerial photographs are always interesting. I don't understand why people don't get more into them. It's almost like people say "That's past history… What's the use in knowing that?" Well, the thing is that if you don't know history you are bound to repeat it. And there is a lot of things that can be learned by looking at what happened. So if you took pictures of the area wherever you're interested in, and you look at what happened—the earliest aerial photographs, and then aerial photographs from 1940, aerial photographs from 1960—you can tell a lot. You actually go back and say "Why did this happen? Who allowed this to happen?" And you could find what councilman, or what congressman, or whatever had done things wrong in order for that to happen. I remember driving over the Skyway Bridge and people said "Do you see this curve?" And I said "There's a curve in the bridge," and they say "that's the Bill Dean Curve." And they say it used to be called the Bill Dean Bridge. Apparently, Bill Dean used to work for the State Department or whoever built roads, and he owned some property so that the road actually took a bend and went across his property. And whether that actually happened I don't know, but things like that actually do happen. I think when the last governor went out, he worked for Arvida and Jeb Bush. And when he went out of office one of the last things that he did before he went out of office was had a road built to nowhere. And the road went right through property that Arvida owned. And you look at these things and you say *Wait a minute, this is illegal. People can't do this with public funds*. That can't reward people that are obviously rewarding them for doing it. But I honestly believe that that would be a very productive thing in this society if people would look back on these things. And I've done that myself and I'm just surprised that more people don't do it—Photoshop details and say *Look: Here's where they took bay bottom where there was no high land and dredged sand in it and made land,* and you can go to a certain point in time and say *Was that legal, or was that not legal?* And I've done that, but I haven't seen many people interested in doing that kind of work: comparing old aerial photographs and new photographs. Everything was handmade around here. If you wanted a sign, somebody says *I saw a sign made out of rope.* And you just took rope and laid it down in cursive. And you just let the rope flow around and write whatever you want—Land's End—and then you just nail nails in it. Or put stainless steel screws in it and make a sign. And we've done that ever since: the hand-painted signs up there that say whatever we did. If you look, it says "sailboat rentals three dollars an hour." But that was me, the sailboat guy, I taught people how to use the sailboat.

Just the property was a great place to be. And a lot of times only a few people around. And we had the whole property to ourselves. The drink box and the boat with only a few people around.

These old photographs are infinitely interesting. And one of my pet projects is where did all these deep waterways come? And I think they are old passes which I think is pretty interesting, encapsulated passes. But that's right here at the North End. And before the bridge, and you can see why we called it Land's End. And Beer Can Island was literally an island at one time. There was a pass that went through there.

Once the bridge was put in, the traffic started picking up and our dogs started getting run over by cars. Things changed at the north end of Longboat key.

You can see where I used to hunt where nobody lived. That's my .22, with what they call rat shot—it didn't go very far.

There are the natural forces that act on these islands. There's Beer Can Island, and it's actually an island—you can see the pass. I was telling you there were two passes in this pass, and there it is right there… And there's Beer Can Island as a separate island floating right there. So that happened at different times: new passes opened up, old passes opened up, so these island are actually changing all the time.

Pretty sunsets… I don't know how many beautiful sunsets we've seen here, but lots.

And there's the island—no longer an island, but no bridge. So things keep changing and moving around here, so it's like a kaleidoscope that someone is turning very slowly and it's almost imperceptible but it's changing and it just keeps on changing. For example, you see the dark water there? Well, that's what used to be a pass. That's an island that used to be a pass that went right there. Now if that spit of land wraps around, you get a bayou again. So the bayou that we have right here at one time used to be a pass.

One thing that is interesting—as somebody that used to be in environmental studies—is people tell you things and you go… *What? Wait a minute, that's a pretty profound thing.* One time I read somewhere that ten thousand years ago the sea level had risen a hundred feet in ten thousand years. So that's a pattern and a definite thing that they've got checked out. So if you go… in ten thousand years the sea level has risen a hundred feet, you would say that in a thousand years the sea level would rise ten feet.