

BOBBY SHIVER
Boat Builder - Eastpoint, FL

* * *

Date: March 23, 2006
Location: Mr. Shiver's Home – Eastpoint, FL
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 2 hours, 11 minutes
Project: Florida's Forgotten Coast

[Begin Bobby Shiver]

0:00:00.0

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for the Southern Foodways Alliance on Thursday, March 23rd, 2006, and it's about four-thirty in the afternoon. I'm in Eastpoint, Florida, with Mr. Bobby Shiver. And Mr. Shiver, would you say your name and also, if you don't mind, your birth date for the record?

0:00:20.0

Bobby Shiver: Well, I'm Bobby Shiver and I'm—I was born July 29th, 1939.

0:00:25.1

AE: Were you born here in Eastpoint?

0:00:25.9

BS: No; I was born in the western end of Franklin County at Thirteen Mile [which is thirteen miles west of Apalachicola, Florida, and where Thirteen Mile Oyster Company operates today].

0:00:31.3

AE: Oh, you were born out at Thirteen Mile?

0:00:32.3

BS: Uh-hmm.

0:00:32.8

AE: Okay, all right.

0:00:34.1

BS: Sure was.

0:00:36.4

AE: With the Ward family and all—

0:00:37.2

BS: Yeah. Buddy Ward [with his son Tommy Ward] owns that place now. Dewey Miller owned it then [when it was known as Miller's Fish & Oyster Company].

0:00:43.0

AE: And Dewey Miller is the father to Martha Pearl, is that right?

0:00:46.7

BS: Right. Martha Pearl is one of—and one of them is named Fannie Pearl. They was pretty girls then. [*Laughs*] I remember them as they grew up.

0:00:57.9

AE: So your daddy worked out there at Thirteen Mile, then?

0:01:00.5

BS: Right. Dewey Miller was the one that got my dad started here.

0:01:04.4

AE: What was your father's name?

0:01:04.8

BS: Jimmy Lee [Shiver]. And I'm Bobby Lee [Shiver].

0:01:10.5

AE: So what was it like when your father started working out there?

0:01:15.3

BS: Well according to what he told me it was—way back in [nineteen] thirty-one—1931 when he came from out of Georgia and come down there, so right—right in the Depression, you know. He just got started. So this was the best place to be at that time—the seafood—because it was hard everywhere else. But personally, I don't never remember living at Thirteen Mile. We moved to Eleven Mile, and I remember living there. He brought me over here when I was two years old.

0:01:51.3

AE: Was your father married when he came down here from Georgia, or did he marry when—?

0:01:54.1

BS: Not to begin with. No, he come with his mom and his daddy. They came out of Georgia. He—he came and the uncles came, and they went back and got the family when they seen they could do better there with the seafood—oystering and fishing. So they went back and got the whole family. Of course, back in them days they took the family—wherever one went they all

went. So they came in [nineteen] thirty-one and done gill net fishing, the seine fishing with Dewey Miller. [*A seine net is a large fishing net that hangs in the water and has weights along the bottom edge.*] But they said Dewey Miller was a friend to our family.

0:02:30.3

AE: I understand back in the day they had about sixty or some-odd families living out there at Thirteen Mile.

0:02:33.9

BS: Right. There were little houses. But my mama and daddy told me that the house that I was born in was—it didn't have any floor in it—just a dirt floor you know—was made with some kind of felt around it. Most of the houses was just little huts. We were—I guess they were about like migrant workers or something the way they did, but along the way they began to change the housing, though. Dewey Miller built us a new house along about—I guess, I was eight or nine years old at Eleven Mile. And it didn't look no different than the rest but it was new. [*Laughs*] But they had floors in them.

0:03:11.8

AE: So was that the arrangement for the—the people who were affiliated with the—the oyster house or the seafood house that the house provided the housing for the families?

0:03:20.3

BS: Right. They—whoever owned the—the seafood house, furnished houses for them people and they—they lived in their little houses and worked for them. What—what we did when we moved to Eleven Mile, my dad bought some property over here on the beach; he bought a piece of property and paid 200 dollars for it, when I was about two or three years old. And I can remember it real well; he built a little wooden house on the—on the eastern end of Eastpoint, and we lived there for a good while. And he sold that piece of property for 800 dollars. Which it's worth probably 400,000—400,000 or 500,000 dollars now. But that's been fifty, sixty years ago. Probably over sixty years because—no it was really about sixty because I'm about sixty-seven [years old] now—close to it—and he—he sold it when I was seven years old.

0:04:24.6

AE: Wow.

0:04:26.5

BS: But to him—200 dollars and he can get 800 dollars, he thought he got rich, anyway.

0:04:31.8

AE: Heck, yeah.

0:04:32.7

BS: We moved on this road I'm on; we moved over here on the Ferry Dock Road in—in [nineteen] forty-seven. We moved over on this road and we—we—he raised us here. I've never been off of this road other than moving to Eleven Mile in the—in the winter. And after Christmas time he would move us out of that house that we had here, in the one-room little houses that Dewey Miller owned over there, and we stayed there 'til school was out. And the oyster season would go out, and he'd move us back over here in our little house. It wasn't no difference in the houses. The only difference was we owned the house—two—two rooms, twenty-four-foot by sixteen, and it was split in the middle. And there was thirteen of us youngin's and Mama and Daddy.

0:05:17.2

AE: Thirteen [children], my land.

0:05:18.8

BS: And there was a bunch of us. And we were all in there with no lights—just lamps. And then when we got electric—electricity to put in that house, there was two lights, and Daddy put a

string to the cord and he had the—he had the light and all of us—he kept us under toe, him and
Mama.

0:05:36.9

AE: When y'all would come back, according to the season, back and forth from Eleven Mile to
Eastpoint, did you have a car?

0:05:42.0

BS: Right. He would do—he would do the season over here and around this end of the bay in
the oystering, and then after Christmas he would take—he would move us to—back to the
western end, on back to Dewey Miller's place at Eleven Mile and—and we'd stay there.

0:05:58.8

AE: How did he cart all of y'all from place to place?

0:06:00.3

BS: That was amazing. Me and my mama was talking about that the other day. I said, *Mama*
you always stuck all of our stuff. I mean we looked like Ma Kettle or whoever, you know, that
moved their stuff around. We had a Model-A Ford, a little old—it looked like a station wagon. It

wasn't a coupe or anything, but it had four doors, and they chocked open the back, and she'd stick everything she could and poke us in and take—because it seemed like it was miles to go to Eleven Mile from over here. But we'd be in there, and she'd stuff it all in one of them old houses, and we'd move in. She'd be set up before my daddy could get in from work that day. She'd have the stove going and a fire, and all of us would be in that house. She could move us in no time.

[Laughs]

0:06:48.8

AE: You got practice with it, huh?

0:06:50.0

BS: Yep, that was amazing. I wouldn't take nothing for it.

0:06:54.4

AE: Did y'all go to school as children?

0:06:56.2

BS: We went to Apalachicola School then. We didn't like it, but we did. It was a whole—it was different from the Carrabelle School. The people were different, and they treated us different.

We—of course, we was—we was from Eleven Mile and that wasn't too—that place was probably about the lowest—one of the low—low places in this [Franklin] county. Whoever was the poorest lived there. And we didn't like it because they did treat us different. Carrabelle was working about—Carrabelle, you know where that is?

0:07:30.0

AE: Uh-hmm. Yes, sir. [*Carrabelle is a town about twenty-two miles east of Apalachicola, Florida.*]

0:07:32.2

BS: It was about the same way we were. We were about the same. [*Laughs*] We were—we were on the same scale. We was—we was poor and didn't know it. We didn't even know what poor was; we didn't know what anything else was; we just made it.

0:07:46.3

AE: Poor but rich in other things?

0:07:48.7

BS: We was rich in family because we was close, and we had a good mama and daddy, who worked hard and kept—kept, you know—they provided for us. It wasn't the best in the world but they—it was the best they could do.

0:07:57.8

AE: What's your mother's name?

0:08:00.0

BS: Eloise.

0:08:00.8

AE: And did she shuck out at—?

0:08:03.7

BS: She—she shucked oysters. He [my daddy] would catch them, and she would get us off to school. She would go to work, and she—she would come back, and she'd fix a supper for us. And my daddy would come back in and unload the oysters until we got big enough to go with him, and then we—and when we wasn't in school, we was on that boat with him. Every one of us learned to do it. He learned—he taught every one of us to do it, but he never taught me to like it.

I didn't like—I didn't like the seafood world. I had a building—there was something in me that wanted to build something, and I started building little things from the time I was big enough to do it. And I was the only one out of the bunch; the rest of them loved the seafood. But I loved building, and I'd just take some nails and hammer and that's how—that's how the building got into me, little old toy boats and things.

0:08:59.6

AE: Did you start doing that as a youngster?

0:09:01.2

BS: Yeah, I'd make it out of a piece of tin and I'd—I'd bend it around and then fix it up and put tar and stuff—stop it from leaking and get in it and run it up—float up and down the bay. But I was fascinated with the boat building. I hated that oystering. I didn't like that.

0:09:17.0

AE: Well before we get too far away from the—from Thirteen Mile, I've got some copies of these pictures from Tommy Ward [who operates Thirteen Mile Oyster Company and is son to Buddy Ward.].

0:09:23.9

BS: Uh-hmm, I know Tommy.

0:09:24.9

AE: That are from way back when, and I wonder if you know these folks or if some of your family is in these. Here's this one of these women shuckers up top there; he thought it was from the [nineteen] forties sometime.

0:09:41.7

BS: That—that right there looks like my Aunt Marie.

0:09:44.7

AE: The second from the right on the top, okay.

0:09:47.6

BS: Yeah. And I can't hardly see good enough to—to really tell. That—that one—I know my mama would probably be in there somewhere, but I can't really—I can't see.

0:10:03.9

AE: Yeah.

0:10:05.9

BS: Let me get right there where that light is.

0:10:07.8

AE: All right.

0:10:25.8

BS: I tell you, the only one that looks like—it looks like my Aunt Marie right there. She was married to my—my daddy's brothers, but I'm sure there was all down there.

0:10:33.8

AE: How about this one—you remember that? That's a truck that says *Miller's Fish and Oyster Company* out in front? That one is pretty dark. You can't really tell—

0:10:42.8

BS: Yeah.

0:10:43.2

AE: —but I understand that this is Mr. Hicks, James Hicks's daddy.

0:10:50.0

BS: Uh-huh, yeah.

0:10:50.2

AE: —and James Hicks' brother over there.

0:10:52.5

BS: Right. The Hicks was all down there at Eleven Mile. I don't remember nothing about Thirteen Mile, as far as living there. I remember it was there, and there was some families down there, but we—I remember Eleven Mile more than any. And I didn't like that place, either. The Hicks was down there, the Boatwrights was down there, Alfie and Billy Peters was down there, and the Marshalls was down there. The Moses was there. My Uncle Jessie Polous was there, and the Pauls, they were just—they was families—they had big families just like us. But we were just boys, and it's kind of hard to—to remember all of the names and everything because we got

away from each other. But it was just a big old family down there. Everybody was in the same class, and nobody was better than the others. It did make a little bit of difference—those on the north side was usually a rival with us on the south side of the road because we kind of fought—we was just boys, youngin's like. It wasn't—really, it wasn't nothing other than just games, mostly. But Mr. Dewey and Miss Jessie, they had that store there at Thirteen Mile and at Eleven Mile and them girls, Martha Pearl and Fannie Pearl, they—when they was not—they went off to school, I guess, somewhere else, but they were in that store, and us as little boys, you know, we could—they were a lot older than us, but they were pretty girls, I could tell you. **[Laughs]**

0:12:24.9

AE: Now by store do you mean like a commissary or—?

0:12:28.1

BS: Right, it was a store. It had—yeah, it had just like any other little old store, country store; it had things in it that you could get, but it didn't stock a whole bunch of stuff. Now down at Eleven—Thirteen Mile, that had gas down there and sometimes we—if you got any gas, you'd have to go there to get it because I didn't—I don't remember any gas pumps at Eleven Mile, but there was some gas at Thirteen Mile. So if you got it, you'd have to walk—you'd have to walk about two miles, which seemed like—at that time, we were young boys. To youngin's it seemed like it was fifteen, twenty miles away, but it's not. But it's kind of hard to remember the—everybody that was down there. There was one man down there by the name of John Strange and

he—he had a sailboat, and he worked that sailboat. He built a sail for that thing on that shell pile out there where that oyster house is, and I watched him cut that thing out and sew that thing around them ropes that goes up into the rigging, as a little boy, and I talked to him about that. He said he was going to leave with that and sail it away from there and he did—never seen him again.

0:13:41.9

AE: Really?

0:13:40.9

BS: He took that little boat and put that sail up on it, and he got that thing rigged out, and he sailed away. I don't know where he ever went to. But we would give—get us some sails sometimes, us boys, and fix them with croaker sacks—them old burlap bags—and we'd sail around out there. There was no motors. And I remember the first motor that my daddy bought, as far as an outboard motor, was a 3-Horse CB, and it wasn't as big around as that light up there [*or approximately one foot in diameter*]. It's just a little old bitty motor that seemed like—but it was a CB, and they don't make them anymore, but we thought we had something powerful to get that 3-Horse motor. [*Laughs*]

0:14:25.9

AE: So back in the day—the early days of Thirteen Mile and Eleven Mile out there, was it really a self-sufficient operation where like there was a tong maker there and there was a boat builder there, or where did those things come from?

0:14:41.5

BS: You know, I don't really know, but I'm sure they was—they was—they was all that but I don't—I was so little. I wasn't really thinking about all that stuff. I was climbing trees and playing in the water and doing other things but I—I'm sure there was because I had all that stuff and—I don't remember any boat builders, but I'm sure they were there. But as you can see, I was—let's see, I was about in third or fourth grade the last time I moved—lived there. And then we moved back here [to Eastpoint], but I remember all the [oyster] bars and things. We'd go down there, and we'd work on—out there to Bayou Flats. Now they—they had—Dewey—and I think they still own—Buddy [Ward] has still got that Big Bayou. It's what—they called it Big Bayou even there in the—in the [nineteen] forties and in the fifties. But they had that Big Bayou then, and it was a lease, and there was a fence across that thing. There was a pylon across there and they had Roland Evans and Miss Ceta Mae Evans they—they stayed on a houseboat over there. And they guarded that thing. It kept people out of there that wasn't supposed to be. I think Buddy Ward got some lease down in there, and I don't know if he's still got that Big Bayou or not.

0:15:55.0

AE: I believe they do. I want to say they do.

0:15:57.5

BS: But it's always been a part of that—that operation. But I think that was at Eleven Mile, now. Thirteen Mile, I believe the Shellises owned that—Eleven Mile—if they haven't sold it. Roland—I believe it was Roland Shellis—Eldon Shellis, that's who he is. Roland is his brother. But Eldon Shellis owns that place now, and Roland Evans would stay over there—him and his wife and his two boys would stay with us in our house and go to school just like we were. They didn't—they couldn't stay over there because he couldn't get them back every day, so they'd catch the old school bus going back to Apalachicola in the morning and my—Willard Vincent was one of them, and he got to be the County Commissioner here one time. And he talked—I was talking to him, and he said, *I'll tell you, your mama could make the best biscuits and fried oysters that I'd ever seen.* And he still says it—and lima beans. Because you had—well, the way we lived, we—Mama had one pot. It ain't like my wife does; she had it cooked in a pot and poured in a pot and put it on the table, and I couldn't understand that. **[Laughs]** And then set a table with a spoon and a fork here [on the table]. We had just one spoon and that's all, you know. Peanut butter mugs and stuff—glasses or whatever. It wasn't nothing magic, but I'm getting away from—the raising. Because my wife was raised differently than I was and it was—always just totally backwards from her. They had all the—the utensils and things, and they lived like we're living here then, and I—I lived in a little old shack and the things where no plate was the same, no spoon was the same, and we used whatever we had—cook in a pot and put it on the table. She'd cook it in the

pot, pour it in a pot, and put it on the table, and I couldn't understand that. **[Laughs]** Why are you messing up all them pots?

0:17:58.5

AE: **[Laughs]** What else do you remember your mama cooking growing up?

0:17:59.3

BS: My mama cooked—she would cook chicken and rice. She—she would take them chickens—we raised them chickens in a pen, and on Sunday she would go out there in that—in that pen and pick out what she wanted, and we'd watch her—all of us youngin's because we knew that chicken would be coming over that fence, and she would **[Gestures]** throw him over the fence. She'd wring his neck and get out there and she—she would boil water and fix that—scald him. I don't know how she did it but she—really—when we was coming up, she had a different thing for every night. For every meal, she had a different thing or a different type of meat, and I didn't eat beef tripe. And I didn't eat liver. But all the rest of the youngin's were glad of that because they would get extra something and—but Mama would fix that and—and chicken and something. It was always a meat and always fixed oysters, always cornbread or biscuits because she knew how to do that, and then there was always tea—no coffee. They drank coffee. We wasn't allowed to, but we drank the tea. But it was—and my mama would turn the plates bottom-side upwards every time, and I was beginning to think—I thought it was some kind of religious something but it—I found out, and I asked my mama one day, I said, *Why do you turn*

these plates, and we can't turn them 'til we get down and ask the blessing? Because they would do it every time. We'd ask the Lord to bless the food—or Mama or Daddy one would—and then we could turn our plate over. And I said, *Mama, what kind of religious thing is this?* She said, *It's nothing; it's just to keep the flies off of the face of the plate 'til we go eat.* **[Laughs]** And she—because we didn't have any screens—just wooden shutters. But we grew up that way, and I guess you probably know some folks—maybe some of yours did, too, years ago when—when they come up. You just didn't know any better. You just done with what you had and got better along the way, if you could afford it, and that's what we've done here on this place at—forty-seven years we've been here. And I've raised all that bunch of youngin's you see right there in that picture. *[Points to a group of framed photographs sitting on the coffee table.]*

0:20:06.6

AE: That's a handsome family.

0:20:08.8

BS: Yeah.

0:20:09.3

AE: And a lot of them.

0:20:10.5

BS: That's the oldest one right there in the red shirt, and that's my oldest grand-daughter and her husband and that baby.

0:20:16.1

AE: Wow, so you have great-grands?

0:20:17.1

BS: That's a great-grandson and yeah, I've got a great-granddaughter. I've got eight grand-youngin's.

0:20:22.9

AE: Wow.

0:20:22.9

BS: And that's my whole crowd all over here. But Mama and them raised—there was—there was thirteen of us born in that family, but one baby died on the old place on the beach at six months [old]. Back in about [nineteen] forty-five or something like that. And then I had another

baby brother that got killed—a shotgun blast hunting doves on the other end of Eastpoint. And I've got a brother—a sister that died a few years ago and a brother that died two years ago—my oldest sister and my oldest brother—and the rest of us are still here. There's four gone. And I'm the oldest boy now. And my—I got a sister just above me. So there's only two of the older ones, and then right on the down to my sister June, which lives in Arkansas. She's the baby. So I think she's fifty-something. And we're all pretty healthy. But we was raised off of beans and mashed potato soup and stuff and—and chicken and rice. That was about the main three meals we had.

0:21:34.7

AE: Was there ever anything down at Thirteen Mile or Eleven Mile that was like a—if you had a big oyster harvest, there was a big kind of community dinner or—?

0:21:43.8

BS: Not that I can remember. I don't think they knew anything about that. If anybody had to cook dinner they—if they would—if anybody was around they could help us eat it, and it didn't matter. Of course, about any house you went to, if they was eating we'd all—the youngin's, we'd just make ourselves at home. But I don't believe it's nothing like it is today, where you could come to the end of a season and have a big—like we do here sometimes. Or they do in Apalachicola or Carrabelle—have a big fish or a summer feast. We have family reunions, and they would do that, I guess, but I can't remember much luxury, any kind of good festival days or

anything like that until on up in the [nineteen] sixties, as things began to change, the economy has changed, people began to prosper more and—and parties.

Now I'll tell you, my wife—they had birthday parties. I never seen a birthday party or heard of that until I married her. And that's all the did; everybody got a birthday. They had a birthday party, and they wrapped up the—the presents, and I couldn't understand that—at Christmas either—with them. They'd buy all that stuff and wrap it all up and tie it and put big things on it. My mama and daddy didn't do that. We didn't know about Christmas until that day it was coming. We had two days: Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. And you knew—didn't know anything about it. They would just go and buy something, and when we got up in the morning, we'd strike matches or—or if we eventually got power in our house, we'd—but mostly matches and we'd see, and it would be one thing. There was so many of us, and we'd look at it—whose name was on it would get it. It wasn't like it is today in my home. Today, that whole house is filled up with a big tree here now and they—that's a big day for us now. All come together and get in at night and—and enjoy that.

0:23:41.8

AE: What's your wife's name?

0:23:43.1

BS: Barbara.

0:23:43.7

AE: What year did y'all get married?

0:23:46.5

BS: [Nineteen] fifty-nine. She wasn't very old. I was twenty years old, but she wasn't very old. She wasn't but fourteen years old. But I was talking to her mom this morning, which she didn't—she didn't like me too good because I was—they were in a different—a different whole level. We were down here in this poor thing, and she didn't like me. *[EDITED FOR CONTENT-Approximately thirty seconds]* I said, *I know—I've got a goal in life and going for it. I'm just one in a bunch, and the rest can do as they please, but I know which way I'm going. One day we'll have a brick house, I'll tell you that. That is my goal. And we will have central heat and it'll—it will be warm. It won't be cold.*

And this took a lot of years, but I didn't do it in the seafood work. I did it right out here in this boat shop. Right out here. I had a twenty-two-foot trailer house made out of masonite when we married and bought it from her mama. And that was over here, and that was in [nineteen] fifty-nine, and we lived in that for five years and—and built her—and I bought a fifty-seven-foot by ten Fleetwood trailer, brand spanking new. I was coming up in the world, and I was doing in a different way. I was working dredge boats then—Two Mile channel that's over there now, you know, where they got the breakwater all out there with the trees? That was in [nineteen] sixty-four, I helped dredge that out with a dredge boat. That's when I changed and got away from the seafood and started getting financially better off.

0:26:07.3

AE: So you saw that opportunity with the dredge boat as a way to get out of the seafood business, initially?

0:26:12.1

BS: Well, yeah, I—I guess—it got me working—work that was off of that bay and then I seen—but that was—that was in [nineteen] sixty-four when that channel was dredged there at Two Mile out from Apalachicola down through there. But Thirteen Mile was—I don't even like to go there. I don't like Eleven Mile. I don't even like the western end of Franklin County.

0:26:38.5

AE: Why?

0:26:39.3

BS: Just so much I didn't like. I didn't like to live down there when I was poor. One reason because Mama and Daddy on a Saturday, they would leave us all down there and come over here or come over to Apalachicola to those stores that were there to get our supply of groceries for the next week, and we had to stay, and it was like you was in a prison. You were down there, and

there was nowhere else to go. You was just there. And for me as a boy, I thought it was—Mama would never come back and they—they would leave us there, and if they didn't come back we would just *be stranded*. And it was—in my world, I didn't like it. And I told everybody, *If I ever—if I ever get to where I can make a decision, I won't oyster, and I won't work in that bay, and I will not live at Eleven Mile. I'll find me something on the hill*. And I told—he said, well you've always been this—my daddy, he said, if you couldn't oyster, if you didn't like that you was about sorry. [**Laughs**] I thought he knew and hey, if you don't do that then there's nothing else you can make a living for. You just can't make a living off of that bay. That was his thought. He—you just couldn't do it. You could not make your way, if you did not work on that bay. But I found a way. And you want to get to the boat building?

0:27:54.9

AE: Yeah, let's go. Tell me about when you were a little kid again and—and when you were tinkering—tinkering around.

0:28:00.5

BS: Well, I do that. I get on the beach, and I'd find a piece of old tin off of one of them houses, and I'd get a piece of board for the bow, and I'd fold it up and throw it around and put a piece in the middle. I'd fold that old tin up to where—and put the old tar and stuff I could find somewhere, and I'd fix and nail it together and stop it from leaking. And I watched the—the Jones boys, which was way back there and they build the—the Boatwright boys, they built boats,

and anybody that would build a boat, I'd watch as a kid. And I loved the bay, I loved all the—I loved to be around the oyster houses, but I hated the work in the bay. And about I guess it got on over in about the [nineteen] sixties, I started building the boats just as a hobby for people to work on oystering and—and fishing, and I'd just do it. And I did get some lumber, and I'd bring it up here in the yard, and I would just get out here in the yard under a tree and cut out the boards and the—and the sides and then build them a little twenty-three-foot boat or something and put decks on it, and they'd paint it up, and they'd go with it. And I'd—I just enjoyed doing that. And then I did that for a long time and—still trying to work in the bay. And I was a carpenter. I—I got to where I liked to build houses. I liked—I got jobs doing it in the summertime when there's no oystering. I would go and find—it was a contractor that lived up in Sumatra up—you know where that is? [*Sumatra is approximately twenty-eight miles north of Eastpoint, Florida, up Highway 65.*]

0:29:36.5

AE: Yes, sir.

0:29:37.4

BS: His name was Bob Bass, and I—and I worked with him and—and he taught me a lot about building and about how to—how the trusses and things—square up houses, and I was just a laborer but I got tired of that, too—toting boards. I wanted to be something besides a toter. I wanted to do something and let somebody tote something to me. And I began to. And he told me,

he said, *I'll teach you, then*. And there was another builder that was here on boats that was Charles Raffield. You may have heard of him over this—along the way. A lot of Raffields live over there now; that was one of the brothers of them people. He lived right down here [in Eastpoint], and he was building boats, and I watched him. But the main one that really taught me, and I liked his boat—his way and his style—was Mr. Joe Lolley. You heard of him?

0:30:29.8

AE: No, sir. And what's that last name? Lolley?

0:30:31.9

BS: Joe—Joe Lolley.

0:30:34.8

AE: How would you spell that?

0:30:35.4

BS: Huh?

0:30:35.5

AE: How would you spell that?

0:30:37.2

BS: I don't remember. Just Lolley—L-o—something like that—l-e-y. But his name, but he was an old man, and he was building the boats. And that's before I got married. And then I would hang around his place, and I'd watch him and he—he was trying—he wanted me to come there as a young boy, and he wanted to teach me, but I wouldn't stay put long enough for that. I mean, I wanted to look, but I didn't want to get tied down as a young teenage boy. But I liked his style of boat. They called them Lolley boats. And I'm telling you, they were beautiful boats. You may have seen some around that sits way up in the bow rolling. And I thought—I've built hundreds of them since then, all the way from Brownsville up to the South Carolina—every state when I got into it. And he helped me. Well, the first one I built is in the south and Charles Raffield helped me. And I built it right out here in the yard. Just got under the trees and—and got a steel saw, a hammer, and a square—that's all I had. No power saw—no other power saw, but he helped me build—that was twenty-eight-foot. I—that was my boat. I used—I kept it for years, and I was shrimping on it and oystering on it until [nineteen] seventy-one, and my whole life changed.

[Finger Snaps] It totally turned around.

0:32:06.4

AE: What happened?

0:32:08.0

BS: I got saved. And my wife was already saved, and I'm going to tell you, the whole truth now. You can edit any part of it you want to. But you're talking about God putting me—putting something in my life that I wanted so bad. Just buildings and all here and there. I had Charles Raffield and Bud Seymour—you've heard of him. He's dead now, but he built a beautiful boat. And—and Mr. Joe Lolley was the three of my mentors. I'm talking about I—I loved—they were boat builders. I didn't fool with just peon people that build one here and there; I wanted to be—I wanted to watch them and ask questions.

But in April the twenty-third of [nineteen] seventy-one and I—my life turned around. And—and I didn't have this house. I was living—I was living in the trailer because we got that in [nineteen] sixty-four—that big—it was a big trailer, but not now it's not. But I was over there on the top of a house building, and my brother was putting a roof on it, and I was rebuilding the house for a man. I've done that; I love that. And this man came and asked me to build him a Lolley boat. That was about two or three months after I had accepted the Lord and began to work for him. I'm a Pastor now. Been a Pastor for twenty-five years. There's a little church down here—the same church. But he come and ask me to build him a Lolley boat, and I said, *I can't do that. I don't know how. I can build you a flat-bottom boat, but I can't build a Lolley boat.* But he said, *Leroy Langley said you could build that boat.* That's my neighbor down here. I said, *Well Leroy don't know;* he—I said, *Go to Mr. Joe Lolley and get him to build you one.* He said, *I went there twice, and he turned me down; he will not build me no boat.* I said, *Well, I work—I—I might ruin your lumber and waste your money.* He said, *Here's the money.* Now this is the facts.

I'm up on the top of the house putting shingles on with my brother, and I'm talking to him on the ground. He said, *I've got the money right here, and I'll lay it down right here. If it's wasted it's wasted. But I'll leave it there, and all I want—if you build a boat, it's over.* I said, *Leave it laying there. I'll go to Mr. Joe Lolley, and I'll ask him what to do and how to shape that thing.* Because I knew he'd do it because me and him was close friends. And I went down and I took his money, and I went down there and asked him that, and he told exactly what [to do]. I come up here and got in this yard—no shop, no nothing—just out in the yard just like I did, and I built that boat, and it's never stopped.

It wouldn't stop today, if I was physically able to do it. They call me all the time. And it went on from then right on up to about three or four years ago when my back is in such a shape now, my knees are all gone, it started I've built houses, too, and I built this house. I built the house next door. I built the house down there. There's another one right down there, and I've got houses everywhere and built these boats. It just turned around, and I got me a job right here in my yard, fifty-foot from my door. We moved out of that trailer; we built this house. We moved out of that, and we built right here—three times right here, and every bit of it was done right there. And any time my kids needed me, I went to that school, I was right there. It's just like you was in heaven. I mean, it [business] was coming from Brownsville, Texas, all the way out to South Carolina and every state right on down. And I don't know how many [boats] that I built.

0:35:58.9

AE: How did they hear about you, just word of mouth?

0:36:01.9

BS: Word of mouth. I've never advertised or nothing. Word of mouth and my—my business was this way: I got half of the money for the boat when I started and they were—the product was finished. They come and got it, and they paid me for the rest. It was just that simple, a simple operation.

0:36:19.4

AE: How did the price of your boats change over the years?

0:36:22.7

BS: Hmm?

0:36:23.3

AE: How did the price of your boats change over the years?

0:36:24.3

BS: It changed—it changed drastically over the years and it—and in the—in the middle [nineteen] seventies—it stayed about the same for about two or three years—just a few dollars

on the plywood and the nails and the glue and the stuff that I had and the—and the timbers I framed them with. But then when the gas prices in the [nineteen] seventies, when Jimmy Carter, you know, when he was the President it—everything was like it is now—just shot up real high. Well when gas prices rise, everything raised, most—especially building materials and sometimes it—it would jump twenty-five dollars for a sheet of plywood—marine plywood—that was three—or a half-inch or whatever size—whatever I used. I would figure about—the price that I last did, and when I'd go to get it, it would be 100 dollars more. And it was raising so fast, but where I would have absorbed whatever it was, because once I told that man that price, I don't care if I lost on it, I was going to build that boat for that price, and I've done that. Because I had—my word had to be my bond, and if I didn't—if that didn't get it through, then if that failed, then I was out. So that's the way I did it until I could get the prices and—and call, once I got a telephone, that I could call them people to find out what the prices of material was, and then I could kind of level it off. But to start with, we didn't have that.

0:37:54.7

AE: Was it relatively easy to get your hands on materials when you started?

0:37:57.9

BS: Never had a bit of problem. Never had, because I found some places up in Blountstown that's called—let's see—I can't remember the name of the place. I can't remember much no more. It's hard for me. I can think about it, and then I can forget it. But it was a place in Blountstown;

Lattie Williams [?] was the manager of the place and—and he kept me supplied. He told me, he said, *You buy it from me, and you'll never have none like it.* And I could go there and just pick through it and get what I wanted or then it got eventually—he got—again I could call him, and they began to bring it to me.

I had a place in Jacksonville called Jacksonville Fish and Supply. And I found this man had come through here and he come by to see me, and I told him the same thing. And he said, *I'll supply everything you need from nail to glue to paint—whatever you need.* And so I got set up that way, and I'd just call them and they—tell them what I needed, and they'd bring it to me.

It changed over the years but it never changed—the shop never changed looks. Along the ways of doing things, it stayed the same; I never got fancy with nothing. I just stayed—and it still is—that ain't the shop—that's the third shop. One—one burnt down; two blew down with tornadoes. But that was has stood so far. And—over the thirty-five years.

And no, I've never had no problem with getting materials. And I always used a Double-A marine [grade] plywood for them; I wouldn't use anything else. I wouldn't substitute no lumber. I made sure that I kept the very best because you could get in trouble trying to get cheaper, trying to do it with a cheaper grade of lumber. You'd get in trouble. And then you was the one that was going to have to—no matter how much you told them it still—it didn't work out right—you was going to have to be—take the blame for it. So if it went wrong when I did it my way, then I'd take. I didn't mind it at all.

But the boat building was a—was my life for the last thirty-five years, plus the homes that I built for people along the way with my son-in-law, which is the building inspector now here—or one of them. That's Robin Brinkley; he's right over there [*points to a photograph of him on the coffee table.*]*]*—which I trained him. He married my oldest daughter, and that's

them—not—that's their daughter and son-in-law, but over there is my oldest daughter. She's dead; she's been dead eleven—going on—over—going over eleven years now. And she died with breast cancer. And that's her husband [Robin Brinkley], but he's—he—I trained him. He married her, and then he had just got out of high school and didn't know how to even dig a ditch with a shovel. Got fired from it, to tell you the truth. And like they was having a hard time and she called me and said, *Daddy, we're having a hard time*. I said, *Tell you what you do. You ask Robin if he wants to work in the boat building and—and we can build some houses, and I'll teach you if you'll do it*. And he said yeah, he'd do that. But he was one hard one; I'm telling you, he was a hard one. He hated boat building, but he loved to build houses. He began accelerating with that. **[EDITED FOR CONTENT-Approximately twenty seconds of audio]**

0:41:12.4

AE: Did you ever make—draw out plans before you made a boat, or was it all just kind of by feel and—?

0:41:17.3

BS: Don't have any plans. I got the plans from the person that wanted the boat, and once they transferred their thoughts in my head, that was it. It wasn't never drawed out. I—when I built a house, I'd just draw a little—a little floor plan and draw it out like that, and the people would tell me what it was. And they'd say at this, I want this, and I want that, and I'd just draw a little piece of—I could draw it on something big as that [piece of notebook paper] and still do it.

0:41:42.3

AE: So what kind of things would people come in and request that their boats be?

0:41:45.7

BS: Well, they basically liked the boat, but they'd have a different width, different height, different motor—different motor that maybe they'd have a [dog] house on the back or a [dog] house on the—on the front [*the dog house is used to protect the owner from the sun and weather when they're out on the bay*]. And whatever they wanted to change on that boat. Basically, the boat would be the same. They would just change the width of the boat, how much the bottom would be—the V-bottom, you know. Hardly ever, I build a flat-bottom anymore after I started that; it was always a V-bottom. And it had—they would want it a little deeper, a little narrower, little less V-bottom in it, wider decks, narrow decks, no decks—just combing [*which is like a deck, but small enough to just be an edging*]. They may want the decks to run all—. I'll show you. [*Shows Xerox copies of photographs that were downloaded from the Internet. The photographs are from the mid-1980s, when Bobby Shiver participated in a Maritime Heritage Survey project through the Florida State Archives. Fieldworkers documented his boat building technique from beginning to end.*]. And this you can get your stuff off of that Internet thing and this is—this is one of the people and they think—everybody looks at that—they say that's a woman. That ain't no woman.

0:42:46.6

AE: Oh, okay, yeah, long hair.

0:42:48.0

BS: It's not a woman. No, I told them, I said, *I know when women come here to talk to me.*

[*Pointing to photograph*] That was me—and that little boat there, my boy built that. I only got one son, and he built that little model boat right there.

0:43:00.9

AE: It's beautiful.

0:43:04.4

BS: But this is—this is one of the—these are black—now how I got this off of there—and I didn't know what was on there [on the Internet]. I had no idea. But one of the girls from—well you can get that thing right there [*pointing to the Internet address that is listed at the bottom of the printed page*]. See, you get all that stuff.

0:43:16.2

AE: Okay, yeah.

0:43:17.1

BS: But one of the girls—that's one of the boats right there that I was—I was finished with. He stayed with me 'til I built this boat and—and—

0:43:25.0

AE: Yeah, this looks like that Maritime Heritage series.

0:43:27.2

BS: Right. That man right there, he stayed here and took pictures and—and I mean lots of pictures and this—I was going to show you. This is—for the sides, this is how it got set up, and that was the old shop there. That ain't the shop that's there now, but it's just—. I was going to let you see—see that's—see that's one—see how that thing—got laid up there?

0:43:51.5

AE: Uh-hmm.

0:43:51.9

BS: That's the sides; that's that Marine Plywood.

0:43:54.6

AE: Bent around.

0:43:54.3

BS: Yeah, bent around there and it just keeps changing.

0:43:58.9

AE: Now what is it when you said, if somebody wanted no decks just combing—is that what you said?

0:44:02.0

BS: I'm trying to—of just what I'm going to show you, if I could ever get to that place. I got these [photographs] out. I forgot when that other lady came. I didn't know where I had them at. And they were right there in that shop in some—in some places. [*Pointing to another image.*] Now that was the transom. These are the timbers that come in, and after you get it laid around, you go about putting the timbers or putting the sides up, and then I put the timbers in, and then I

put the keel in. And it's just backwards because most people build them—most people make a frame and then put the plywood around it. I build it backwards; I made the boat first and—I'm going to see if I can get the right thing. It's just—every one of these is just from start right up here to the finish of this boat.

0:44:50.8

AE: These are wonderful to have.

0:44:53.4

BS: You can sure have them if you want them—of these right here. I don't care.

0:44:53.6

AE: No, I can get copies of them.

0:44:54.5

BS: You can get all you want of them and that one lady—which is at our church, she's a Supervisor of Elections, and she's over in our church, and she found this, and every time they get to looking they find this. They don't know nothing about it because I don't say nothing but they'll—here they'll come. *My goodness alive, Uncle Bobby.* Because all of my—that's what they

call me—most of them. *We didn't know you was on no Internet.* I said, *Well I didn't either, to tell you the truth* but this was way back then. But anyway that's—I got it, and I'll show you—I got the decks, and I'll show you how the decks will be. But see, that boat is finished, and I turned it over. This is the—this is the—the boat is finished, and we started the cabin on it, see. And the little decks are already on. That's the—starting with that little cabin, that goes on the front. This was a crab boat, and it was going up to Houston—I mean to Brownsville, Texas, and that's the little frame that goes up back—you get the little cubby cabin, and you come up with a little canopy on it, and you see here—now, this is where it's going to—all taking kind of shape.

0:46:05.1

AE: Is that a Lolley boat there?

0:46:07.2

BS: That's a Lolley boat. Actually, it's a Shiver boat. It started from a Lolley boat, but these are what they—that's what they looked like.

0:46:12.6

AE: And the thing that sets that apart is that shape of—

0:46:17.0

BS: The Lolley boat looked just like this. The difference in these boats was the beefed up plywood. He would only use three-eighth [inch] plywood; I went to half-inch plywood, and he would only use one-inch timbers. I went to two-inch timbers, and he wouldn't use but a two-by-four keel in that thing, and I went to a two-by-six. I done doubled everything he had because the people were beating these little old boats to pieces and they were made for Twenty-Horse motors and things, and they were using 150 to 250—200-Horse motors on them boats. So that's—see, that's the front end of that boat. And the decks is surely somewhere right here close.

0:47:00.7

AE: [*Laughs*] That's a lot of pictures.

0:47:01.9

BS: All right. Right here—this is the back part. Now this boat right here was going to have a—what they called a stern drive in it. And these decks went all the way out to the back, and you'd sit that motor inside and put that—that stern drive. That was a transom and that foot on the back of that transom. And this is the open part of the boat right here. And I don't know, that—that—

0:47:30.8

AE: So how long—

0:47:30.6

BS: Now see, he is watching me here with that [in this photograph]. I was showing him something here. He asked a question and all these things about the boat and so—. Now this is my old car sitting right there.

0:47:44.2

AE: [That's] your father?

0:47:45.4

BS: That's him sitting and my nephew sitting here, and I wasn't paying no attention—I had an old wood heater sitting over here, and they was just sitting there talking. And, you know, didn't pay people no mind. There's the deck, you see. I didn't go—.

0:48:03.0

AE: So how long would it take you to build one of those boats?

0:48:05.3

BS: It would take me two weeks.

0:48:05.0

AE: Is that all?

0:48:07.5

BS: Two weeks to build one of those boats with the cabin and all on it and get it out. That was the difference in me and Mr. Lolley because he—he was a perfectionist, and I—I wanted to get to be strong and—and doable. He wanted it to be classy—I mean look good. It didn't look like a workboat. I knew these workboats and I could—he'd take him a long time and use hand planes. I'd use electric planes. I changed the whole thing, and I told him, I said, *How do you get this doing—looking so?* He said, *You'll change it; you'll change in time. You'll slow down, and you'll use hand planes, and you'll begin to use sandpaper around certain areas and when you—because that way you'll make it look nicer.* And—and he stayed with his way of doing and he kept building boats just like he never—never—I never slowed him down—because people was wanting that boat because he was good at it and he was—right until he got real old, and he couldn't do it anymore. Well I thought I'd never get too old or nothing, but I got there, too. You see, we all get there, and we get there faster than what you can think. Time passes fast when you're doing things you like and you—and you love it, and you just keep at it and directly you—you forget about time, and you just keep going and directly you—you wear out, and you can't walk no more and you can't hardly get—you can't keep going like you did and directly, you just

stop. He said, *I can't do it no more*. It's like building these houses. I'd loved it better than anything—and building a boat.

0:49:42.4

AE: Do you miss it?

0:49:42.1

BS: I miss it bad. I miss that, and I miss this bay out here, too—these oystermen. My old brother was up here just the other day, and he's still a salty. He's next to me [in age]. He looks—he is a rugged looking fellow. He come up here to check on me because I—my knees are bad. Mama told him, said, *Your brother is in real bad shape*.

[EDITED FOR CONTENT-Approximately one minute of audio.]

[Regarding working on the bay,] if it's rough, you don't know it 'til you go out there. A lot of people says it's too rough to go. My daddy says [that] you don't know 'til you get there. He said, *Boy, get the boat in*. We'd have to go out there and get that old boat—cold water—get that old boat and bring it in there and him get on it and we had—we had to swim or wade or however we could get it. And I said, *Well, Daddy said it ain't rough*. You won't know that 'til you get there. Necessity—I said necessity? He said that's what we got; we got a necessity. He said necessity drives us. **[Laughs]** I didn't know that then, but he had a flock of youngins. That old man said, *Let's go, boy*. Cold water flying all over the boat and wet all day with the salty water. I hated it. And that old men just kept plugging and you did too because he—he had a way of

making you work. You were going to work, and he done it too. He was eighty-eight years old, and he's still talking to me right on up 'til he died that night, saying, *Don't stop. Don't quit thinking, keep counting, keep talking. You'll lose it if you don't.*

0:51:44.5

AE: What did he think about you building boats?

0:51:46.2

BS: He loved it. Whenever he seen—and I built him three. I built him a shrimp boat and put a motor in that thing and fixed that thing with a new diesel engine. He used that thing for years, and then he sold it. He—he got—he said, *I want another one.* I built—I quit all the things. He asked me something, I stopped. Oh, yeah, he didn't think I was much, you know, when I was going to get off that water because he didn't think you could make it. But once he seen me build a house and he seen me build a boat and he seen I was making it, it turned then. He'd sit and watch me. I could call him, and he'd come help me do anything. You just—sometimes you have to just go and do to prove. The proof—the proof, I guess, is in the pudding, ain't it?

0:52:31.3

AE: Yeah.

0:52:33.2

BS: I mean, if it's there it's there and I left, you know, what the difference is? I can go down this road now, and I can look at this house, and I can look at my house I built for Barbara's mama, and you see, I built her home right out here. This big—it's bigger than this one. The one that was going to fill this palmetto bed full with youngins? I only got three kids. I got eight grand-youngins. And I've been right here. I've not moved. I've not run. I've worked, and I've stayed with it. I talked to her this morning, she was coming back from Meridian; she—her sister lives out there—right in Meridian, Mississippi. She lives up in Sumatra [Florida], but I've got my home, and she's had a home—not a tarpaper shack, and that's what she said, *You'll get a tarpaper shack, an old shack, and put you in it and have youngin's.* **[Laughs]** We started out in the thing. I got her—we moved in that; we moved in this; we ain't moved nowhere. We've been right here—forty-seven years, right here. She was wrong. She didn't know my head.

0:53:36.6

AE: You proved her wrong.

0:53:38.1

BS: My daddy didn't know my head. He knew I had some building ability, but he didn't think you could make a living at it. Now he thought you'd starve to death but—but the—the whole key to being successful is having a goal and staying with it. And then when you get God in your life

you cannot fail; it's impossible to fail. Now, we'll all die—everybody. Now that part you can't change. You can't help getting old. You're going to do that, but you can't fail out here with them ingredients. It just don't happen. **[Laughs]** I just didn't know it 'til I was thirty-one years old, and then I got everything, went and there it was—it's still there I can still build a boat. I've still got the tools. Everything is there because of my kids—to use. My grandson has just left here with one [boat] I built him. I rebuilt it, and I just got it—sixteen years old, and I wouldn't do it for him. I told him, I said, *Son, look at me. You do what Paw-Paw tell you. I'll build the boat. It's old. It's got to have a transom in it.* It had to have glass in it—had to clean it out and fix it. He just left—just before you come up. He'd get—he said, *This is too hard.* I said, *[It's] not too hard.* He got mad. I said, *Don't—calm it—stay calm. Never lose your cool. You stay calm. You're flustered. Wait and you'll just do things wrong. You picked the hull—and hit that thing because he couldn't get out the wheel bearing on there.* And I said, *Hold it just a minute and calm down.* **[Laughs]** I said, *You'll never—when you do that, you're fixing to mess up everything, and you will hit—well that's the whole key wherever you go.* I wanted the brick house, and we got the brick house, and we've been in it for now close to thirty years.

0:55:27.5

AE: May I ask you how much that first boat you built—how much it sold for?

0:55:29.9

BS: I got 185 dollars material and all for that first one. That's what the man—I didn't know how much it was. He laid 200 dollars down there [on the table]. And I said, *I'll build it for whatever Mr. Lolley said [he] does*. He built it for materials plus labor—whatever it is, and we matched it. I said, *What did he tell you?* He said, *He said you would do it for 185 dollars if he could do it*. He wasn't—but he wasn't going to do it. He just totally refused it. I know now why he totally refused it because it was just a—it was—God has handled that. He stopped him to put him where I was at, and then he started something going out to where it's at. I'm a firm believer there's an ordained thing to be done. There's a divine purpose in things, and when it's set, nothing can turn it, if you're willing to walk with it. And—and that was 185 dollars, and when I got through, I don't even remember if I made anything off of it; I don't remember. I really don't. But all I know, at the time that I got through with that one, there was another person wanting one. And by the time I got through that one, there was another person wanting one. I seen it was going to be—and it just kept on. I said, *Well I don't know how long this will last*. And I'm thinking to put me a shed up here where I can be out of the weather and get me some tools. And then we did and then my old pa, well the building right here, see—well what he said wouldn't work, he began to help me put up things. **[Laughs]** Oh, yeah, I'll tell you, he was all right. Once he seen that I knew what I was doing.

0:57:04.0

AE: How much—when you were at the end of your boat-building career, how much was the boat selling for?

0:57:10.0

BS: That same boat that I built was about 185 dollars, I think that I got 2,500 dollars for that boat—the last one, which was a little boat. It was not one of those twenty-five-foot ones. I was getting around 2,500 dollars for a 2twenty—I got 100 dollars for the foot is what it really amounted to, when the material and the labor was—really amounted to about 100 dollars a foot. And if it was twenty-five-foot, I would usually get about 2,500 dollars for materials and labor. I never made over twelve dollars an hour building houses. And now then the people, the laborers get from—from fifteen to twenty dollars now right here in this county. I can't—but it's been—it's been—it's been—well, ever since my daughter died, and I haven't been—Robin didn't build another house, and we was getting about ten dollars an hour then and we—we'd figure the house and now then the houses—Schwoo, my—you can't believe the prices. And we built a little old house for—three bedroom and two baths and all that stuff with a carport on it, and it would be about 56,000 dollars labor and all, and they would put in the carpet, turn the water on, the sink, the cabinets. You can buy that house now, and it would cost you 200,000 to 300,000 dollars. And he's inspecting them.

And the plans—let me tell you about the plans with him. He—he took a little bit of college over there in the—the Panama City, that little college. I guess it's part of Florida State because he was pretty—he was—see, I don't have but a seventh-grade education. That's all I went and never went no further. And that's all I ever had, and I guess I'll ever have. But he had a good education and boy, he could write stuff just like you—like that. I can't do that. I can't hardly write nothing. And how I've Pastored that church for twenty-five years and—and—but the people help me. They know it, and I don't hide nothing. Now they know and I told them when I

went there, I don't have any education. I just know that book [the Bible]. I don't have no other books; I just got one book. I don't want nobody else's stuff. I get mine. I've got the book.

0:59:41.1

AE: What church is it that you Pastor?

0:59:42.6

BS: It's a Baptist Church, an Independent Baptist called United Baptist, you know. But he had an education, and he could read that book. I'll be reading and he'll say, *What's that? What you reading?* Then I'll say, *I'll finish the chapter I'm reading just at dinnertime.* I can read and—and I love to read. He—I said, *You want to read?* He said, *Yeah, I'll read.* I said, *I'll try to explain.* I said, *Well, you read it to yourself.* Because I wanted him to read it. And he quit. I said—I said, *You ain't read that.* He said, *I read that.* I said, *Then tell me what you've read—because I don't—you can't—ain't nobody can read that fast.* And he explained it to me and I said, *Man, how do people do that?* It takes me a while.

But anyway, we was—I was drawing these little old blueprint things, and I knew how to—I began to know how to read a blueprint when he come up and bringing them to me. I would study them at night. I'd get down, and I would study that thing through, and I would look at it, and I would search it out, and I would look at every detail in my mind. Once I put it in my mind that house on that blueprint, I would do it. He couldn't read a blueprint—could not read it and I told him, I said, *Robin, listen to me. You want to build houses? I'm going to teach you something.*

It's on a quarter-inch scale everything—where ever quarter equals a foot. It's drawn so plain here, you look at it, and let me show you something. And he had the education. I didn't, but I knew how to read that blueprint. And I got him down and buddy, he would get reading the thing and his—his mind grasped that. He said, *I can draw these things, Mr. Bobby.* And I said, *Then take you some paper and take one of them—and I'm going—I'm going to draw you out a scale on that floor plan. You go home and draw that, fix it, and put the windows and doors—everything like your mind would tell you that you would want in a house.* And he'd come back with all them papers, and I mean, everything. And that man right now today started from digging a shovel—ditches when my daughter—for eighteen years, she lived with him. That's how long she lived—thirty-three years—drawing every blueprint we made for houses and other people, too, and now he's over there in that place. He does the—the commercial part with these high, big things. He does that. He's the only one that does it. My son-in-law. But he learned that right here in this yard and on the field. He didn't go to no school. He went right here, and we did it.

1:02:14.4

AE: Well tell me how you, then, with a seventh-grade education, approached boat building. Because there's so much math and—?

1:02:21.3

BS: Well, that's simple.

1:02:22.1

AE: How so?

1:02:22.5

BS: That's the simplest part—thing the world is the—if—if—I don't—I can't explain it to you. All I know that—that I can look at something and near about tell you how big it is—how many square feet it is—and I just figured it up in my head. When I get up there like that boat, and then I just figure—I take my tape and a square [*Laughs*] and it's just so—I can't explain it to you. It's really—I can't tell you how it's—but it's so simple. It's such a picture that you get in your head when somebody is talking to you about a project, about a boat, or about a different thing until directly—your mind—my mind gets it in there until I can know it exactly. I've got something—I built a boat fifty, fifty-two-foot, seventeen-foot wide, and it was probably eight-foot deep, and I've got scale of that thing in there that I drew one night. I took the thing, and I didn't know if I could do it or not but I—then I got afraid. And was going to back out, but the man piled the lumber out there before I could get to him. And I—and that night I got up. One night I couldn't sleep, and I just got me a bit old piece of paper and—and a yardstick, and I drew that boat out. I drew it out, and I began to see it, and I got a picture in my mind of it. So I can go over there right now—[the boat is] called the *Mayme Ellyn*. That was—he put it overboard—he put that boat overboard in—in [nineteen] seventy-seven. I built that house—this house—that boat and about—I don't know how many of them skiffs I've built for people in Texas and all in a year-and-a-half. Yep, built that fifty-seven-foot boat and got a big GM diesel. It's a double-rig shrimp boat. And

then I built this house. Well, I was young. I was strong, but I was—didn't realize how—how much I was hurting myself physically. Because when you're young and strong—and I always had been—you don't think—you don't realize how your body—you need to take care of that, and it's getting—just taking care of you but—but I didn't. Let's see, I might have that piece of—if—I'll go look and see if I can find it right quick. It won't take but a second.

1:04:35.0

AE: Oh, yeah. I'd love to see it, okay.

[Short pause while Bobby Shiver looks for the boat drawings.]

1:04:39.3

BS: Some little old boats on the back of the old—a john boat or whatever, but that's the—what I come up with that night.

1:04:59.8

AE: Wow, look at that.

1:04:59.9

BS: I drew all that in one—one night, while everybody was asleep. The man wanted it and all this—cabin—and then I think I put “The End” somewhere—the only thing when I got through that night but it was—I drew it all out that night and back here on the back—well I'll tell you what I did, when I drew this part here, and I already had this. These are some little old fourteen-foot to sixteen-foot little fishing boats that you fish in the river with, and I built a lot of them. The reason why I drew all this out, because the school—now that's amazing—I—they had these school things where they have job corps. They have the Air Force and everything. Well, I built them like crazy, and they come over here and wanted me to—to come over there and set up a thing over there in that school to teach them kids—show them this kind of occupation. I did it twice for them—one in Apalachicola and one in—and I said, *My gracious*. I said, *I didn't even finish school. I didn't go but the seventh grade, and now how am I going to go over there and teach somebody who*—I don't know this much,, but I did. And I was sitting over there close to where the Air Force and the Navy and all them was right in the middle of all that stuff. I didn't say much. I just showed them—told them a little bit. It's so simple, it ain't much to tell [what] it looks like to me. See all these different degrees and things? I tried to draw it out so they would understand how to shape the boards and cut them and make—when you bend them—that's a—you must have about a fifteen-degree on that and a five-degree over here, twelve-degree over here.

1:06:58.4

AE: [*Looking at the drawings of three boat cross-sections in a row that Bobby Shiver drew on a piece of poster board.*] Are these—these three different boat designs?

1:07:00.9

BS: No, this would be—this would be the part that goes right here. [*Meaning, he drew cross-sections of the bow, center and stern or three cross-sections of the same boat.*]

1:07:07.6

AE: Oh, I see. I see.

1:07:07.8

BS: And this master timber would go right here, and this is what I called the stern board, which is the transom, and it would go back here.

1:07:13.2

AE: So it's like a cross-section of what the boat—?

1:07:17.2

BS: But to me, it's simple, but to somebody else, it looks like a puzzle.

1:07:19.2

AE: Sure does. [*Laughs*]

1:07:21.0

BS: But I try to tell them this thing: I say, you know, it's just—it's really nothing to it. And it really ain't much to tell because it's so simple. It's—most things today, if it ain't complicated and—and looks like—it looks—ain't nobody else supposed to know about it, you know. They—they are the ones—the architects and you—but I don't care what architect it is. If he draws that blueprint, I read it. That boy right over yonder [my son-in-law] can read anything. He'll do anything right now, and he didn't get it from no school. He didn't get it from no college. He got it right off—right out here in these—in Eastpoint and Apalachicola and round about and—and I taught him all I knew, and the rest he was teaching me. That boy was teaching me. He does now. He's married to somebody else [now], but he's my son-in-law, and he's right over there with the rest of them people in that Planning and Zoning in that Courthouse and I—it makes me feel good, you know. I go by there and see him, and I said, *Man, you know what?* The poor fellow, he married my daughter and, you see, there's a divine purpose for everything. And I don't know what would happen to him somewhere else, if he had got somebody else.

1:08:33.2

AE: What was your daughter's name, by the way?

1:08:37.0

BS: Robin. Robin. My daughter's name was Robin Melinda. And—but he was a Robin, too. [Pointing to photographs on the coffee table.] His name is Robin, and now my granddaughter, right—but her name is Sabrina and that boy—the little boy there, Maddox, is her son, and that's my granddaughter there. Them's are all my grandsons right there. The football—the one that's in that number twenty-one there, he just left here with a boat that I built for him, and he's going to have a big forty-Horse motor. He's worked for my wife down there and my daughter down there at that restaurant—that Papa's Pizza. That belongs to them. I don't mess with that. He works in there cooking.

1:09:17.2

AE: So you made all—you made shrimp boats, crabbing boats, oyster boats?

1:09:23.0

BS: Made shrimp boats, brim boats, fishing boats, shrimp boats, oyster boats, crab boats, scallop boats, pleasure boats. I've—net boats for them—little—what they call a bird-dog. You've seen that with the motor in front. and then the gill nets—of course, you can't gill net here no more. They stopped that. That's another thing that's—me and my buddy was talking the other day—this

morning. He was a gill netter. he's an old fellow, too. He's older than I am, but he's been here forever and—

1:09:55.5

AE: What's his name?

1:09:55.6

BS: Coleman Wilson. He said, *You know what. If the Lord would come back here today, he couldn't fish. And he got old Peter and John right off of that fishing boat, James. [Laughs] He had a business, and he got them right off of there.* I said, *Yeah, then he went fishing and he had fish and all that stuff.* He said, *But he couldn't fish now because that—these people out—up in Tallahassee and all these people stopped them because they think we're destroying everything. No they're destroying things. It's not the fishermen. They're destroying the fisherman's life. He can't make a living decently. They outlawed something that was lawful. I can understand bootlegging—.*

1:10:33.9

AE: So is there—all these different styles of boats you made, were they based on the one—one style of boat, you just modified them specific to the—?

1:10:41.7

BS: One plan. I had one plan. What you seen there. It was either twenty-foot—it would be fifteen-foot or it was thirty-foot. The same plane, it would just go wide and go lower or go higher, whatever.

1:10:57.1

AE: And then the customer would paint it themselves?

1:10:58.9

BS: Yeah, it was a custom built boat.

1:11:00.4

AE: Right. But then when you sold it, the person who bought the boat from you—that you made it for—they would finish it and paint it themselves?

1:11:06.5

BS: They would. I'd give—just like you seen that boat [in the photographs]—a naked wood—and they would paint it. They wouldn't want me to paint it because you ain't—I couldn't paint

nothing. I—that's another thing, I hated to paint. And I didn't paint. And I'd tell them quick, *I don't paint. And I don't even want you to paint it here. You paint it somewhere where I'm not at. And don't fiberglass, no.*

Now I did let some fiberglass. My brother lives in Texas and he's—he's got a big fifty-some foot shrimp boat and it's the lowest steel hull. He works out there in Texas—Galveston Bay. He—he oysters with dredges, which you work with tongs here. They let you dredge them when you shrimp. But he was here for a while. He's younger than I am, and he fiberglassed some of these boats. These people that's wanting these boats, and they're wanting fiberglass. And I told him, if he would come way out there on that [street] corner, he could fiberglass them, but not in my shop because I hate that stuff. Nasty. It gets on you, and you can't get it off. But he fiberglassed them boats, and there's some of them still going today—big old motors on them.

1:12:12.2

AE: Yeah. So on average, how—how long do you think your boats last? That one shrimp boat you're talking about is thirty years—?"

1:12:19.2

BS: That shrimp boat is—is—I built—he put that boat overboard in [nineteen] seventy-seven, I believe. And now, he takes care of it. It's—it's according to the person, how much—how well he maintains that boat. If they just use it and get another one—a lot of people do that. Like automobiles, they just use it 'til it ain't no more, and they just dump it—trash it. But a lot of

people do that but there's some, they'll last right on and on. As long as you maintain that wood boat, keep it clean inside, keep the bottom paint on it like it should be, keep—I say I use Coppertox. I don't know if you've ever heard of that, but it's a wood preserver. It's just the same as that—the treated lumber, where you buy a piece of treated material to put in the ground. They—they put it in a pressure thing and pressured it with—. In fact, my grandson just used some of that in that boat out there today. You take the floor out and clean it out, and you fix it—seal it with that stuff in—and about twice a year, and it will last forever.

1:13:19.8

AE: What's it called, now?

1:13:20.7

BS: Coppertox.

1:13:20.8

AE: Coppertox?

1:13:21.4

BS: A lot of people want to use that Johnson—Thompson's Water Seal but that don't work good on a boat. That's not good.

1:13:29.2

AE: Why not?

1:13:30.4

BS: It seals the water in, you see. Once it gets in there on a boat, it don't—that ain't good. This Coppertox goes all the way into the wood. I mean, it penetrates the wood. Thompson's Water Seal just coats it and covers it over. I don't like that—no good. You get out there on your porch and put Thompson Water Seal on it. When it rains, it will just bead up. You got to sweep it off. All it does is put a coat over that thing. What's underneath there is not sealed. It's not—that's not—whatever gets through will go under it and get—that's no good. That—that Coppertox is an old, old product, and it's been used. And the Boatwright's used it; old man Lolley used it; and the Jones used it. And I've watched that stuff, and I'm a firm believer. And my grandson just put some in his boat, and it's in that little boat I got there, and that boat is solid as it can be.

1:14:26.3

AE: So how does it make you feel that your handy work is spread all over the coast?

1:14:32.2

BS: It makes me feel good, you know. It makes you feel good that people will come back to you. That's the good thing—that you've got—you've done something, and they could use it, and if they needed something again, they'd come back. It's a mixture of things. You can build a good product, but if you don't stand behind what you've got and be—and do according to your word then you—you won't get to build no more for that person. It's just like buying a car. If they don't service that car like they say, then you'll say, *Oh, I'm not going back there. I'll find me another dealer someplace better than that.* There ain't much of that no more in this world.

1:15:07.2

AE: Was there much competition when your business was really high? Was there much competition?

1:15:11.4

BS: I didn't never let it get to be competition. There was a lot of people building boats, and there was some that done—I didn't try to undo Mr. Lolley. I did not undercut Mr. Lolley. I would do nothing to hurt Mr. Lolley. If Mr. Lolley could hurt me—help me, he would do it and—but I'd do nothing to—to tell anybody—I'd say nothing bad about that man or—or cut the price under him to try to get his people. I wouldn't do that. I done the same way he did. If he—I'd use the same method that Mr. Joe Lolley did. It worked for him; it would work for me, and he helped

me. Yeah, there was some people that come in here—and not just here but over in another county over in Wakulla County that—that they would—they tried to imitate my boat. Not Mr. Lolley but mine because mine was selling. And they were strong—stronger because Mr. Lolley didn't want his boat—he wanted it for a small engine. He loved it to just sit high. It was real cheap—I mean, the price of it wasn't that high because he was using less lumber. But this one fellow, he—he wanted to—he wanted to—to build them boats, so he got his brother to come up here and—and got me to build him a boat. And I said, *Sure, I'll build you a boat*. And I knew this boy was trying to build them, but he didn't know—he never did get—he never did get it like it was supposed to be. They wouldn't run on the water like they were supposed to, but I had the master builder down there to show me what to do—Mr. Lolley. But because of him cutting the price like he did, I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't tell him. I wouldn't tell him anything, and I stayed with my prices the way it's supposed to be. And there were some that come up here and said, you know, *This fellow said he could build it for this*. I said, *Then go to him; he knows what his product is worth*.

1:17:05.7

AE: Is there anybody around here now still hand-building boats?

1:17:09.5

BS: Ronnie Gilbert is still building some, if you want to see him. And—and it's a younger fellow down here named Michael J. Carmichael. Both of them people I've helped. They're good

boys. They're—they're good builders and they—they try to do good, you know, and—but Michael J., I really was impressed with him. And he's young, and I wanted to keep it going as much as I could. He's like Ronnie. In other words, he's a little older than that, but Michael J. does a real good job and—and he asked me questions like I did Mr. Lolley. And—and I'll tell him everything I can. I'll show him any way in the world, anything that can help him, I'll do it. Now I wouldn't do it with this one fellow that was—that wasn't—he didn't get no—he got a lot of boats, and I'm glad because I couldn't build them all. Nobody can do everything. But he did cut the prices on them and tried to, you know, get—he hired some people to try to help him build them real fast, you know, and get them out. And they was having a lot of trouble with them, and I'd tell anybody that comes—they'd say, *Well he said he could build it for this, and he'd do it for that*. And I said then go over there. But this is the way I do it, and I'm going to stay that way. Of course, I had twenty-five or thirty boats in line all the time.

1:18:28.6

AE: Did you always build by yourself?

1:18:29.4

BS: No, I—my son-in-law helped me, and then I had a nephew that helped me some and my son, Scott. That's him over here [in that photograph]. That is him over yonder. He's a Preacher, too, but he's at the Church of God. He's a Youth Pastor and—and good at it. But he—he helped me, but he didn't like it, either. That's his whole family over there, he didn't like boat building.

He did some. He built two or three, but he never did like it. He didn't like house building. He liked commercial fishing, and I mean, he loved to oyster like his granddaddy and his—his uncle and—and—not that I pushed him in it or nothing. He just loved it because it was big money in it then. And then—but whenever his life changed and God called him to preach, he's a full-time Pastor at that church. He does no bay work. He don't build no houses; he don't build no boats. Now I'm still kind of bi-vocational. I've been there twenty-five years, but I've never been a full—I've never been—I'm a bi-vocational—actually I'm—I'm supplying 'til they could get somebody for twenty-five years. I've been—I've been—I've tried to quit two or three—several times, I've talked about it. And I'm talking about it now—to get some younger person because I'm so far—I'm so far behind, these younger people need somebody that—that—their level of thinking, and I'm not able to physically carry the load no more, but they don't want me—they won't have it. They said we'll get somebody—a younger preacher where you can help them and make sure—they're scared of him. They're scared they'll—and I don't know what it is, but I told them I wasn't going nowhere, but if we could find a young man that loved God and loved people that's the two elements he's got to have—he's got to love—if you love him and love people, you're going to do everything you can do to help them. You ain't going to do nothing to hurt them. That's the whole key. The same way with business. But finding that person—in a week, you won't find him. He'll have to be sent. You can look all over the world and you might—it's like buying a car or a boat or anything else. **[Laughs]** You think it looks good outside, but when you go to use it, it might not run. It's got to be sent; it's got to be ordained. And when it is, it works. I don't understand my boy. He can have that church but he went—he—see I couldn't—I raised him and taught him, but God called him, and he's his, and if he wants to send him over yonder—he's been to Peru. He's

been everywhere. I ain't never been out of Eastpoint. But that boy has been all over the world, and that's what I'm talking about.

He loves computers; I can't run a computer. I don't know what it is—I ain't got one, never had one, don't want it. I got one laying right yonder—a little black one, laying right there [points] that's a Bible Dictionary of computers. I can punch it, and I can use that. But they bought it for me, and I told them I'll use that if you'll give me that. In other words—words, you punch a word in there, and you don't know the meaning, and you put that word in there it will—you punch that button and it'll—it'll tell you the definition of that—two or different things. That's—that's my library.

1:22:00.1

AE: *[Laughs]*

1:22:00.8

BS: My boy has got enough stuff over there in that church and in his house. It looks foreign to me. I don't mess with that. I'm too far gone. That's why we need a young person. We got computers in that church. *[Laughs]* I can't even turn it off. And once we get it on, I can't turn it off. I'll unplug that thing right there—with everything it was on it—that girl was using. When I couldn't do it, I just pulled the plug out.

But to be honest, I built that church—not just me, I mean with all the people that's there. I just went there to build the thing and help them build it, and I hadn't quit yet.

1:22:38.3

AE: Well, what do you miss most about boat building?

1:22:39.7

BS: What I miss most? I know that—that it's an important thing to keep it going, and I know that—that the people are going to use boats as long as there's a—there's a—this world stands. The world—what's changing with the boat is, now, it's changing from commercial to pleasure. It's to—from—from commercial being in town—it's a tourist town. And boat—boats, they like to look at boats. And just like you asked the question, you—if I wanted to, I could go down on that beach and take a tour and—and all I'd have to do is stand there with a pipe [or microphone]—a speaker in my hands—and haul people up and down—in between Coon Barge and all over the East Hole and over there at Goose Island and over yonder at Nick's Hole, all up and down. They'd be knowing all about the place. See, I know every place there is over—my boy does. I know what the name of that—Shell Point, Goose Island, Goose Island Slew, down yonder at Marsh Island, East Pass, the old hotel that Pop Hamm had built over here—they built over there on [St. George] island back here. And the Pierces that own that—that St. Vincent—and then the Wilson's that used to own—used to own St. George Island.

See, I started the building on that [St. George Island] when the ferry boat was going over there. The boat building is—is the oldest—one of the oldest trades there is. And people are fascinated with boats—different boats, every class. And I love boats and I love—I love boats,

and I love to look at them. I don't care who built them. And I don't care if it's fiberglass or if it's steel or if it's—it's metal, aluminum, or wood, I love boats. I love to see them. They're beautiful things. Just a house and a boat is one of the prettiest things that I know. When I drive down this road or go to that beach down on that bay, and I see that thing sitting there afloat; I go by the house, and I see somebody living in that house with the doors open or the lights on in that thing it gives me—I feel good. When I went oystering, and when I went shrimping, I brought it in, and all I had was the boat and my stuff left. I don't know if it went—I couldn't see nothing.

1:24:55.3

AE: Have you built boats for yourself?

1:24:57.1

BS: Yeah, I've built several boats for myself. All the boats I've had I've built myself. I've got one out there now that I've got, a sixteen—sixteen-foot.

1:25:05.9

AE: Do you think we could walk out there to that shed and look at things?

1:25:08.4

BS: Yeah, let me get my shoes. [*Recording is paused while Mr. Shiver puts on his shoes.*

Recording resumes when both Mr. Shiver and the interviewer are outside by the boat-building workshop, and Mr. Shiver is already talking about a hurricane that hit the area as recording resumes.] [Nineteen] eighty-nine—the—the day that my daughter—that went in there and went fishing—was going to graduate. It hit this place and tore this shop down and killed three people from our church that lived right over there and laid them up right in this yard. When I come out they was all dead.

1:25:32.6

AE: Oh my, a tornado did that?

1:25:34.4

BS: A tornado. Seventy-foot by twelve or fourteen trailer come off from right over there and wrapped all around that trailer. That house just tore it all to pieces. We were in it.

1:25:44.1

AE: Oh, man. Scary.

1:25:46.1

BS: And it was scary.

1:25:47.3

AE: How about storms over the years, are they getting worse or—?

1:25:49.9

BS: They're getting worse, and they're getting more—more of them and [*entering the workshop area*] now this is the old shop. It don't look like much, but it ain't changed. It's just the same as it was—well, like the others I had. That's the tools. That old band saw.

1:26:05.6

AE: Do you have—?

1:26:06.9

BS: And that old table saw and whatever you see hanging there—them old tools have been hanging right there. They—you can still build a boat. And I use old refrigerators for to store my tools. [*Laughs*] I don't—a lot of them said, *You don't have much over-hang*. I said, *I don't need it—just as long as you get what you want*.

1:26:27.3

AE: Do you have a favorite tool?

1:26:30.0

BS: Well I like—yeah, all the—and I like the electric planes and anything that makes the job easier. Now this is just a small boat here [*a small blue fiberglass boat that is being stored in his boat-building shed*], the one that's—some of the skills—just a fishing boat. And we've ran fish on this thing, and me and my wife and my grandson love—one of them—one of them just plays music and doesn't like to fish—that left here with the boat in the bay. I got that thing so he can sit up here and bass fish, and I can sit on that seat and just watch him. But this is something similar to what they were. It's just a small one.

1:27:20.5

AE: Well it looks like a lot of work.

1:27:21.9

BS: Well see, that's fiberglass, but my brother fiberglassed that boat. And I—I told my wife last night, *If I ever build some more, I ain't fiberglassing no more. I'm just going to go back to the*

straight wood because it's—they last just as long. I don't—I guess I just wanted it that way but—

1:27:43.6

AE: So when you built that big shrimp boat—the fifty-footer—?

1:27:45.3

BS: I built it right here.

1:27:48.1

AE: Oh, okay.

1:27:48.7

BS: It was sitting right up here in this—in this area [on the west side of the boat shed, under a tree] and now the shop was over there [towards the east]. And it reached way back close to that dog pen [in the very back of the yard]. It was fifty-seven, fifty-three-foot—fifty-two-foot. It looked a lot bigger than what it was. It looked like an ark sitting up here in this yard because it was way up high as them trees, you know, [by] the time the wheelhouse got on it. And it had timbers—it was humongous—timbers that were put in the thing and had a big old eight-foot

band saw that man brought over here to me to use. It was his, and I had my nephew working, and he was real strong and all and—.

1:28:36.9

AE: Did you have any kind of signature on your boats, like a—a way you would sign them with a design of nails or a—?

1:28:44.7

BS: Well, yeah, I used stainless steel nails—ring shank. I'll show you some.

1:28:49.2

AE: Okay.

1:28:53.3

BS: And I used—when I started out, I used bronze nails, like Mr. Lolley, and that's all he ever used. He never changed from bronze—from bronze. I did. I changed. And I know this [shop] don't look like much. That's all I got.

1:29:11.2

AE: I know. And you know where everything is.

1:29:11.7

BS: It's all I've ever had. Everything is about wore out—the tools and this little bucket of stuff here is all old drills. Let me see if I can find—not much of a container of stuff—stuff that nobody else won't use. It's—it's—. I don't have many of them left, but that's one of the stainless steel nails there.

1:29:43.7

AE: Can I get you to hold it in your hand?

1:29:45.7

BS: Oh, yeah.

1:29:46.5

AE: And I'll take a picture?

1:29:47.7

BS: Let me get—there's another few sizes here. Now I use a two-inch and one-inch and some three-inch nails but—but it was just a different—and the three different sizes there and—.

1:30:16.6

AE: I want to try that again; that didn't look good. All right, one more time, maybe. I'm sorry.

1:30:27.7

BS: Probably that old hand—that old thing—

1:30:31.1

AE: No, I got the flash coming on and the camera—

1:30:36.0

BS: Yeah, but these is—all this is old clamps that you clamp the wood together with. Now them things—some of them have been—when this place burned down it burned down in—in [nineteen] eighty-eight. It had a—I had a thirty-two-foot boat sitting here. I built it for—for a man in Tallahassee that was a—a welder and he—he gave me 1,800 dollars to start that boat because it was 3,600 dollars for that boat—was a big cabin on the front and it come back with a

canopy over it. He was going to use it for—for fishing out in the Gulf and all. And the only—it was on a Thursday night, and I was—had the bottom all fixed to nail on the next day, and it was all—and I was sitting here looking at that, and I said, *Boy she's going—I'm going to get to that thing a lot quicker, doing everything right.* And I laid down and about one o'clock in the morning, [at] one-thirty I heard somebody hollering, *Fire, fire!* And—and I got up and—and run out here and looked, and this whole place was—that boat—it just—it burnt every—it looked like a man's body that next morning, where those timbers just laid down there. It burnt up that boat, a brand new little fourteen-foot boat I just put there and burnt up my brother's trailer—every tool for seventeen years. Everything I had was gone.

1:32:20.2

AE: Wow. Did you have insurance on it?

1:32:21.7

BS: No insurance. *[Laughs]*

1:32:24.0

AE: No?

1:32:24.8

BS: That man come—his name was Neat [?] He come over and he said—he drove up, and they had done here, the people in Eastpoint had done come here with this bulldozer and this bucket, see—dump trucks—and they had this place clean before I could even think. I didn't know what I was going to do. But anyway, we were standing out here and somebody had done come up—well the next day was—they had brought trucks, and they had done piled lumber all over this place. I mean, it was just that quick. [*Finger Snaps*] I ain't never had to buy nothing back. Three times it's been destroyed, and the people around here always helped me. But that man drove up and he said—there wasn't nothing here. I mean it was clean. The last time he said the boat was sitting and he said, *What happened, Bob?* And I said, *It went up in smoke.* [He said] *What you going to do?* I said, *Well what you mean?* I said, *You're talking about your boat?* I said, *You—I'll give you your money back, or you wait until I get this place built back, and you can give me that other 1,800 dollars you owe me, and I'll build your boat, and you'll have your boat.* He wrote out a check right there. He had 3,600 dollars, and I didn't even have a tool. And a boat.

1:33:50.4

AE: Wow. Would you mind if I made your picture out here while we still have some—some daylight by this brick—brick house you built?

1:33:54.1

BS: Oh, yeah. I don't mind—I don't mind it.

1:33:56.5

AE: [*Laughs*] All right.

1:33:58.3

BS: I don't mind it at all.

[Short pause for taking pictures]

1:34:07.4

AE: All right. Well I believe I've taken an awful lot of your afternoon. Do you have—

1:34:08.9

BS: Well let me show what—about my daddy just for a minute.

1:34:12.9

AE: Okay.

[Short pause as Mr. Shiver and the interviewer enter the house and make their way to the kitchen.]

1:34:36.2

BS: It might be a little brighter right here in this kitchen, here.

1:34:41.9

AE: Okay.

1:34:48.7

[Mr. Shiver pulls a cookie tin off of a high shelf in his kitchen.]

BS: These are some old—old pictures and things of some boats and the old oyster houses, and it's even—I'll show you my daddy. Now here he is right there. He's one—he's telling these people—just like you're doing me. He was eighty-five years old then. *[Mr. Shiver has a few laminated newspaper articles from 1999, documenting the areas history and featuring a story about his father.]*

1:35:13.8

AE: This is in 1999, okay.

1:35:15.9

BS: Yeah, and this boat is no more. There's a person tonging oysters, and if you want to get a picture of that stuff—.

1:35:25.8

AE: Are any of these boats that you made?

1:35:27.3

BS: It's possible, somewhere in there. I don't—. And I can't tell nothing about—that one right there, maybe. And I want to get you—these people right here and there's the old dredge boat and dredged that channel in—in the [nineteen] fifties, and they're dredging out. See that oyster house?

1:35:50.8

AE: Yes, sir.

1:35:52.5

BS: Xuriphia Miller and Houston Miller.

1:35:53.8

AE: Yeah.

1:35:54.7

BS: You've heard of them?

1:35:55.4

AE: I have heard of them—those names.

1:35:56.4

BS: All right. That's them right there, and he's in a nursing home now, and she's real bad, and that's his sister.

1:36:01.9

AE: Wow, that's a good picture.

1:36:04.3

BS: And this is the old oyster house right here that—that—that my daddy helped build way back yonder. And that's Earl Odum there. Nobody don't know—that's Earl Odum, I know that man. But this is—but that's Daddy there. He talks a lot about—things about see—he said it was tough back then. Shiver uses the word *tough*; if you could hear my old daddy talk. But anyway, I kept—my mama had this, and this is Vernon Gilbert with his shrimp net and all that. This is David Barber, and that's Rocky Moore's oyster house. That's some of that modern day stuff, see. But I just kept this around because I like to read it

1:36:58.5

AE: Yeah, that's good to have—a little piece of history.

1:37:01.1

BS: Done all that—talking that stuff. Now that old man, though, he didn't mind us—all he could do back in them last days.

1:37:09.0

AE: And it says here that your daddy, at the time, was perhaps the oldest living fisherman in Franklin County.

1:37:13.7

BS: Yeah.

1:37:16.3

AE: Wow.

1:37:19.1

BS: He came to Eastpoint in [nineteen] forty-one—is when he brought us over here. There were four or five oyster houses here. In [nineteen] thirty-one—I believe it was [nineteen] thirty-one when he was working on a farm in Georgia for fifty-cents a day. See, a lot of stuff that he took with him when he left here, and that's the reason I kept this stuff because a lot of the things he's told me, he told me time and time again.

1:37:50.4

AE: This is great to have.

1:37:51.4

BS: Well, here's where they talk about Thirteen Mile. He's wrapping up paper mill paper.

1:38:00.9

AE: They called it a paper mill house—.

1:38:01.5

BS: Paper mill house, yeah.

1:38:02.4

AE: Came from Port St. Joe, okay, huh.

1:38:06.2

BS: Right. And he lived in a paper mill house. The first season—that was at Thirteen Mile, now, and he bought two lots with a circle—circle. It's where the tire store is today, and that's that same lot. And he paid 200 dollars for—on Highway 98, and they said he paid 100 dollars right there. **[Laughs]** But he sold it for 800 dollars in [nineteen] forty-seven. That's when we left over there, in [nineteen] forty-seven and moved on this highway—this road. And that's what I was telling you; that's where we—I remember that. That's where—it was at Thirteen Mile and he said west—currently owned by Buddy Ward, so you already know that. A portion of his wages at the

mill [was] paid in chips [or tokens]. You could redeem them at Scipio Creek, and he was working at the mill there at Scipio Creek, Daddy was.

1:39:12.9

AE: Is this from the Apalachicola paper or the Franklin County—?

1:39:16.9

BS: I don't know where it is. Is it?

1:39:19.1

AE: I don't know; it doesn't say.

1:39:21.9

BS: I guess it is. Yes, it must be because that's the—that's my—that's my niece right there. She was in that beauty—seafood, yeah, that's where it's from.

1:39:31.9

AE: Oh, okay.

1:39:32.9

BS: I don't know how they got a hold of this, you know. And I don't even know when they did it to him or with him.

1:39:39.8

AE: That's real neat.

1:39:42.8

BS: But—

1:39:44.1

AE: Well do you have any other thoughts about boat building that I haven't asked you?

1:39:48.6

BS: Other than that it's just been good to me. I mean, it was a blessing to have. And to have a job right here in your yard, where when you walk right in that door at lunchtime and—and—and it's a blessing to put them out there and see people working with them. And even in your state [of

Mississippi], out there—when they was out there and crabbing and things and catching those roe mullet back when they'd let them do it. I don't know if they do now or not—all in Louisiana, but it's just—just gives you a sense of pride that you was a part of—of that part of history and that time and to be—it's something that's dying. It really is. I hate to see it, but I guess there will always be wood boats and people that will do it and people that will want them. But I guess the fiberglass and the metal has about took over that because they look more fancy and all but—.

I was talking to a lady at a funeral I did this past week, and I thought I knew that lady because the older woman that passed away was eighty-two years old. When I got through, this other lady is a family member that I knew and grew up with, but it was their sister and she asked me—said, *Come over here just a minute. I want you to talk to this lady. Do you know her?* I said, *I've seen her before.* And—and she said that my husband—she said, *[He] got a boat built back in the [nineteen] seventies, and we live in St. Mark's over in—in Wakulla County and said an oyster—said a Shiver built—built him an oyster boat that he could fish on out there on those flats.* And I said, *What was his name?* And she said, *Wright.* I said, *I remember him. I remember that Wright. I remember him well.* She said, *That's my husband.* She said, *He loved that boat. He loved that boat.*

1:41:40.3

AE: Wright like W-r-i-g-h-t?

1:41:43.9

BS: [*Brings out many small notebooks of index cards, which are his collection of bookkeeping records from the years of boat building.*] This is my—this is my thing that I've—see, now that's my uncle. In [nineteen] seventy-three I built that boat—Crystal Beach, Texas, 624 dollars for a twenty-three-foot—a twenty-five-foot boat. All that I got is registered here on these—that's another one here—George Marshall and that was in [nineteen] seventy-three.

1:42:09.1

AE: This is your bookkeeping system, kind of?

1:42:10.2

BS: That's my book—that's it. That's what I kept them in right—right on up. That man there is from Apalachicola. You'll find a lot of them. That one right there is from Panama City. A bunch of them—people—people from Japan come over here. That man there was—.

1:42:33.9

AE: Do you have notes too that correspond to the kind of type of boat and size that they—?

1:42:37.8

BS: No, I don't got no notes. All I got [*Laughs*]—that's Moultrie—where's that at—Moultrie, Georgia?

1:42:43.5

AE: Marietta.

1:42:44.9

BS: Marietta, Georgia—that's way up yonder close to Atlanta, Georgia. That's a Raffield here. That's from Panama City in [nineteen] seventy-four. I know him.

1:42:59.9

AE: [*Reading*] Mr. A. L. Quick.

1:43:01.7

BS: Yeah.

1:43:02.0

AE: I interviewed him.

1:43:03.1

BS: [*Noticing another name.*] This was a crabber. He owned a crab business, and I built him—I just built him a fleet of boats, that man, Mr. Herman Metcalfe. Let's see, I don't know—.

1:43:25.1

AE: I saw the Quick's last night.

1:43:27.5

BS: You did?

1:43:28.5

AE: I sure did. [*Reading outside of notebook.*] 1980s—one [notebook of index cards] for each decade, huh?

1:43:34.9

BS: Yeah.

1:43:37.3

AE: [*Laughs*]

1:43:39.8

BS: John Odom. That's my brother there, and I built—that boat went to Texas. Let's see; who is that—Metcalf.

1:44:00.5

AE: [*Reading*] Alex Metcalf, twenty-seven-foot Orangedale—

1:44:03.7

BS: Cove Springs—that's way down south somewhere.

1:44:05.3

AE: Oh, yeah, Green Cove Springs, Florida.

1:44:08.9

BS: Yeah.

1:44:09.6

AE: You were organized.

1:44:12.9

BS: Well it's just part of—I don't know, just these little old books—I just kept the things over the years, and every one of them is in there. That was my daddy and all there.

1:44:25.2

AE: [*Looking at name on index card*] Is that road out here [near Mr. Shiver's home] named for him, C. A. Gillespie?

1:44:30.5

1:44:31.3

BS: Yeah. Let's see. They're on different pages—that's Panama City. Howard Millender, Crystal Beach, Texas. And that's the one—he—he—this was way back during the [nineteen] eighties, and the last boat I built was for this man.

1:44:44.0

AE: Was it really?

1:44:44.1

BS: He said I want—I said, *I'm not building no more, Howard*. He said, *You're going to build one more*. I don't know how many I built for him. He was in the crabbing business, and I got it and I built it. It was—it was about the size of that first one, and I ain't built no more since then.

[Looking at another photograph] That's my brother, Steve. He's in Texas. That's in [nineteen] eighty-three. That's a house—the labor [cost] of a house I built.

1:45:08.2

AE: Five hundred dollars in 1983?

1:45:11.8

BS: I built that house—because—she's gone now. It wasn't a real big house. It was a little two-bedroom house. Harry Falk, he was a County Commissioner at that time. Southport, Florida—

1:45:26.4

AE: All your work is [scattered] far and wide here.

1:45:27.8

BS: Yeah, it went all the way to Brownsville. And I thought I'd find one here where it went to Brownsville. But that one right there went to Hackberry, Louisiana. That man is dead, too, now. That's his brother I was talking to. There's another one—that's the same fellow because I built him a lots of boats. And he had a heart attack and died out there in Texas—I mean, in Louisiana.

This is the labor on something I built for—for this person, again. I mean, he'd build one and take it out and work it and sell it. Where is that—Perry, Florida? Well, I done—there's another one right there—Perry, ain't it? That man there, he's a logger. I built a boat for him, and he caught them fish out there in Mississippi and Louisiana for—for—. There's another one from Perry. He—that's Panacea, Florida, there. That's a Metcalf brother. And that's—that's my wife, and I don't know what I done when she paid me that money.

1:46:50.1

AE: [*Laughs*]

1:46:50.7

BS: Another Perry.

1:46:55.7

AE: Hmm.

1:47:02.2

BS: Well anyway, that's my book. I mean it looks like—it's—I don't have many—

1:47:08.3

AE: That's a life's work right there.

1:47:10.5

BS: Yeah.

1:47:12.7

AE: It's amazing—good to have.

1:47:16.9

BS: I wasn't going to get too complicated with it; I kept it pretty simple.

1:47:20.8

AE: What do you miss most about it?

1:47:22.5

BS: Hmm?

1:47:23.2

AE: What do you miss most about it, since you stopped?

1:47:25.6

BS: I miss being able to—to repair boats for people and—and build them for it and just not able to go and do like I did—do the things I used to. I miss the building. I miss building boats because it's—it was a love that I had and—and the people that had some of them ideas and had people—

just it wasn't my idea. The peoples I built for, it was their idea and—and they put it in my head what they wanted. Once they laid it—it's just like that picture. Once it got there, you could see it so plain, you know, and—and you could—you couldn't hardly wait 'til you got out there where you could see the thing, and they'd haul it off and they'd put it—take the boat and go into Brownsville or Baytown or—or Hackberry, Louisiana—some of them places over in South Carolina, Perry, or Panama City, or one of these other places. And just knowing what you've done was scattered all over the place—

1:48:28.3

AE: Do you—

1:48:29.9

BS: —not ever believing that you would when you were growing up—had no idea in the world of what would come and what you would be involved in. But these people right here, Xuriphia and Houston Miller, was the backbone over here. Now they were kin of Dewey Miller; Colby Miller was Dewey Miller's brother and that was Houston's daddy. This lady right here [Xuriphia], we called her Mama. She has helped more people in this county. She's fallen now—her husband, he's ninety now, and he's in a nursing home in Port St. Joe. This a young—let's see, I believe that's her sitting on that car there with her leg [showing from beneath her skirt] there because Houston liked that picture. And this is the old oyster house that they hauled limestone from up in Marianna and—and daddy helped build that in [nineteen] forty-one, and

it's still sitting there. If you want to drive down on [Highway] 98, you'll see it sitting down there—one of the old places that's still there sitting beside another place that I helped build over there—a new building for her. And that was in the [nineteen] seventies. But it—all that—they'd haul them old stones from up in—and—and we worked out of that when I was a boy.

1:49:47.5

AE: Where is it on [highway] 98? What's it next to now?

1:49:52.3

BS: It's—it's—you go down past—you have to go—you go down to [Highway] 98 down—have you been to Carrabelle?

1:50:05.6

AE: Yes, sir.

1:50:06.6

BS: You know where Sharon's Place was at? It's tore down—

1:50:08.3

AE: Yeah, I've seen that, uh-hmm.

1:50:09.7

BS: Well you go on, it's the next place down from where it's tore down, you know. You go past Sharon's Place, and it's an old—that old building right there. You—there's—there's a green building sitting right by it, which belongs to Houston's brother and—and that old building is sitting there. They'll tear it down now. It's old. And whenever you see all that across the road—them big metal buildings [that were torn down from Hurricane Dennis], all that down there, they're fixing to push all that down. It's gone. They're going to build 200—375 units on that property, from First Street down to that junior store—well, Cheap Butts is the name of that store. They've already got that, and they're going to push everything down. It's going to be—there will be some of them houses that will be 1,000,000 dollar houses.

1:51:00.3

AE: Well so but according to this paper from 1999, it says that that oyster house [that belonged to Xuriphia and Houston Miller] is the oldest building in Eastpoint.

1:51:05.9

BS: That one right there.

1:51:08.7

AE: So there's no way to preserve it as a historical landmark?

1:51:11.8

BS: They'll push it down. People has bought [real estate] there. They couldn't care about no history. They're making history.

1:51:20.8

AE: That's a shame.

1:51:20.9

BS: But listen, there ain't but one thing permanent in this world and that's change. That's—that's the permanent thing that you can always look for. I've seen it all my life. I've seen the—the paper houses. I've seen when the when the wind would blow harder in the house than it was outside and be colder in than it would be out. You'd get out in the sun to stay warm. Mosquitoes coming through there—no screens. I don't guess they even made screens in them days. Me and Colby was talking about that today. I said, *Captain, I don't know whether it was or not. Them old wooden shutters stayed wide open and we slept right out in—if it rained we'd pull them to and*

rained and we did our washing outside. And—and but we've watched change. I've watched change. I told you—about forty-seven years of changing, and I lived right there, right there—we had that in the [nineteen] forties, a twenty-two-foot trailer made out of masonite—my first home, mine and Barbara's first home. I've built onto it—put a porch and a bedroom on it. In [nineteen] sixty-four, I sold it for 500 dollars and put that trailer there and built on a bedroom and a living room, a porch onto that and sold that—paid 1,300 dollars for that—3,700 dollars for that trailer in [nineteen] sixty-four—brand new. I sold it for 3,500 dollars thirteen years later, with the room, and all that I built on it because this house I had it here. I moved three times, right here.

1:52:50.7

AE: That's incredible.

1:52:52.5

BS: Hmm?

1:52:54.7

AE: That's incredible.

1:52:54.9

BS: Well I told my wife, we need to sell this place. She said, *When my toes is turned up, you can do what you want to then. This is my home; I'll be here.* We're too far now to start—trying to start somewhere else, so we're here. But at least I can stretch this table out on Easter and on Christmas and any time I want my family. You talk about gathering? I put these things right over here—and this table, pull it out and stretch it out and bring them chairs off of that porch and get the kids out there that were in this house, I'll turn them loose—all my clan. And they'll meet here.

1:53:28.4

AE: It's all about family, isn't it?

1:53:29.3

BS: There's only—it's all about family. And when that dies, you kill the family, you kill the whole nation. You kill it, it will die. You've got to preserve that family. I've got—ain't but one missing out of my family, and that's my oldest daughter. But her—but her little old daughter, she's twenty-six years old and lives in Panama City. She's been to college. She's in a law thing over there, and she went to do child—she loves to work in kids—children. She couldn't do it. Too emotional—she had to quit. Now she's in a thing—she's learning to do legal, secretary thing for a lawyer. She can do whatever she wants. **[Laughs]**

1:54:12.3

AE: Well what thought would you like to leave people with about the way you've made your living all these years here in Eastpoint?

1:54:18.5

BS: Well, my thought is today is, I just thank the Lord for it. He's blessed me to be right in my yard to raise my kids and go to school. If they had trouble, I could stop any time. If a person down the road had a sickness or had a need, I could take my apron off and run to that and stop—the nursing home people, and building these boats—all of it I believe God put me here. So I could stop any time I needed to and go to the hospital, go to the nursing home, which I went there fourteen years with my guitar and ministered to them—my wife and another lady here—to them folks 'til they closed them down. That was a blessing. They was—people like Miss Xuriphia. People called. The boat building has been a blessing to me and my family, and what you see is because of the boat building. And that old shed you see, a lot of people would look down on it, but without that I couldn't have this. And I wouldn't have had the opportunity to do what I've done here in this county. And all that can stop it is health. When you get to where your health won't go—and your legs and feet won't carry you, then you've got to let other people help you, then. And they do. So I appreciate you coming. It's a blessing too.

1:55:33.4

AE: Well I appreciate you talking to me. This has been wonderful. All right, well that's a perfect note to end on.

1:55:36.9

BS: Yes, it is.

1:55:37.9

AE: So thank you.

1:55:39.5

BS: Well thank you for coming.

1:55:41.6

[End Bobby Shiver-1]

[Begin Bobby Shiver-2]

[Recording resumes again as Mr. Shiver begins looking through more old family photographs.]

0:00:01.1

Bobby Shiver: This is my—my mama and daddy right there at Thirteen Mile.

0:00:06.6

Amy Evans: All right, we're—

0:00:06.1

BS: I forgot about these things. There is my daddy and my Aunt Margaret at Thirteen Mile. Here's a new house that Dewey Miller built for us. There's my sister Margie and my brother, Steve.

0:00:16.3

AE: Oh, gosh.

0:00:16.9

BS: I forgot about these old pictures.

0:00:17.2

AE: I'm sitting here with Bobby Shiver again, and we're looking through some old pictures of Thirteen Mile.

0:00:22.2

BS: That's Thirteen Mile.

0:00:22.3

AE: Is that your parents?

0:00:24.9

BS: That's my daddy—no, that—that's my Aunt Margaret, and that's Bud Seymour that built those other boats. All right, here's the old house we lived in, and that's the old car that they—my mama moved me. That's my sister Margie sitting on that Model-A Ford. Now see, I forgot all about these. I'm going to show you a picture. You want to talk about Thirteen Mile. Now I can't remember all this too good. That's—that's at Thirteen Mile on an old shrimp boat of my daddy's. That's that oyster house out on them shell piles. That's my sister—that's my sister that's passed away, that's my brother—older brother that's passed away, that's my sister, Alice, and that's me in the back.

0:01:16.0

AE: [*Laughs*] A little baby.

0:01:17.7

BS: That was four of us. Here we all are—are again, my mama and all four of us again; I forgot about all these old pictures I had.

0:01:41.1

AE: These are amazing.

0:01:42.4

BS: And [*Laughs*] there's the old Carrabelle School, and my sister Margie way back yonder. It was probably back in the [nineteen] forties. Now let me see what all—. I forgot I had all—.

0:02:02.4

AE: Is this you, too?

0:02:02.6

BS: That's me there.

0:02:03.1

AE: Look at that smile. *[Laughs]*

0:02:25.3

BS: That says that's my mama right there.

0:02:30.1

AE: Let me see.

0:02:30.3

BS: That's—that's in—that's Eva, Louise, and Wallace, my—my Uncle Wallace right there, but that's up in Georgia, there. See what else I've got—. There's another picture of that old house at Eleven Mile. A lot of new pictures I've put in here that I got from Mama the other day.

0:03:09.3

AE: When is the last time you looked at these?

0:03:11.5

BS: Well I think when somebody comes in—now, that's my brother next to me with his wife. And as you look, he's—he's a rough character now. He's—and that's him there as a teenage boy. See—see the way he is now. I guess he's sixteen, seventeen there. He looks like—

0:03:30.4

AE: What's his name—that brother?

0:03:31.5

BS: Kenneth. He looks like Al Capone the way they look there. He still goes with his shirt unbuttoned the same way, sixty-five years old. And I got some more in here; I'll get them out, if I can find them. I know they're here somewhere. Older pictures of—. I forgot I had those pictures of—down at Thirteen Mile where I was when I was just a boy.

0:04:36.0

AE: A little boy. *[Laughs]*

0:04:36.5

BS: Hmm?

0:04:38.8

AE: A little boy.

0:04:46.5

BS: Once in a while, I get them out just to go back and look a little bit. That's my daddy and my brother, Kenneth, right there. We was—. That's a picture of my grandma, but that's an old-timey picture.

0:05:13.7

AE: Oh, she's beautiful.

0:05:17.4

BS: There's a picture of my baby sister, there. That's a picture of my—of—of my boy right there and that's—that's Michelle. Now that's Charles Raffield right here, the other boat builder that—that—that's the one that helped me with the first—that's Charles and that's one of the Raffield brothers right there—kin and all their folks over there in St. Joe and Panama. He's the one that helped me with the first boat I built—flat bottom one.

0:05:58.4

AE: Y'all were taking a lot of pictures.

0:06:00.9

BS: I don't know why but it—well, we've got them. I've got plenty of them in there on that—
they've gotten scores of them. My wife is a picture fiend. These are mostly all of my family. I
can't—there's one I wanted you to see but I can't—.

0:06:27.2

AE: Did you tell me who this one was?

0:06:29.7

BS: That's mama—that's my mama and my oldest sister and my daddy. I have some more but I
can't—. I'm trying to find them faster. My mama had these all over there at the house and—and I
knew them other—.

0:07:22.1

AE: Who's this?

0:07:23.0

BS: That's—that's my—that's my brother Kenneth. That's his first wife.

0:07:29.5

AE: That is a cool picture.

0:07:30.4

BS: Huh?

0:07:31.4

AE: That's a cool picture, like a photo booth picture.

0:07:34.0

BS: Yeah, he always tried to look like old Jimmy Dean, and he thought he was hip, and I guess he was. That's him right there as a baby. And that's my Uncle Wallace, and he got killed in World War II. He joined the Army and—and went over there and he didn't come back. I was about three years old, and I can remember well, though, when my mama got the letter, and we

was at the old place on the beach over there, and she cried, and we cried. We didn't know what she was crying about, but we cried too.

0:08:18.2

AE: Uh-hmm.

0:08:19.8

BS: You know, I don't see the picture I wanted to show you. I think—I must have went through it. That's my oldest brother there, and he was age twelve right there. He got—he died a couple years ago. He was a salty dog, too—a shrimper. Oh man, he was like that old man right there. He's sitting there with one—that's my nephew there and that's my daddy.

0:09:04.6

AE: What was his name?

0:09:05.8

BS: His name was Jimmy, but we called him Buddy.

0:09:08.2

AE: Okay.

0:09:11.9

BS: You're talking about a shrimper, he loved that bay and he shrimped and oystered and—

That's a picture of me and my daddy and my sisters playing music here in the living room. I was playing the guitar for them. We were singing—that blonde-headed sister of mine, she loved to sing, and we loved to sing together. We did—we sung country music when we was growing up. And I sung rock and roll back when old Elvis was—we thought we was just as hip as he was.

0:09:55.4

AE: [*Laughs*] Of course.

0:09:55.3

BS: I had a buddy that played lead guitar; he died at thirty-seven years old. He had—he was a diabetic. And me and my sister when we get together we—and we [*Laughs*]*—*all we sing now is gospel. That's one of my nephews. He got killed with a shotgun—a rifle hunting. And that's my brother in Texas—son, the oldest son. Daddy holding one of his nieces.

0:10:51.6

AE: He looked like he enjoyed being around—.

0:10:50.6

BS: That's my Uncle Flozell. He was dying of cancer and my father—my daddy's brother and—
. That was Michelle when she was a baby. That one is on that picture over there. Now there's my
Uncle Flozell and Uncle Lester with a family down at Eleven Mile and that's—that's an old—old
picture.

0:11:14.1

AE: Your Uncle Lester is in this hat?

0:11:15.3

BS: And then at Thirteen Mile—huh?

0:11:17.0

AE: Your uncle is the one in this hat?

0:11:18.4

BS: Yeah, and I think—see that lady right there?

0:11:21.9

AE: Yeah.

0:11:22.1

BS: If you'll look at close at one of them that you got a picture of, you'll see that woman right there. That's the one I thought it would be Aunt Marie [in the photograph we looked at earlier from Miller Fish and Oyster Company at Thirteen Mile.].

0:11:31.5

AE: Oh, I see what you're saying, okay.

0:11:36.3

BS: Now that's down there at Thirteen Mile, my Aunt Margaret. Now she thought she was—that's when—that was way down in the [nineteen] forties, but that's that old oyster house when we were talking about at Thirteen Mile.

0:11:46.5

AE: She liked posing for the pictures?

0:11:48.8

BS: Oh yeah, mama said she thought she was beautiful, and I said, well she really was to tell you the truth.

0:11:55.4

AE: *[Laughs]*

0:11:59.5

BS: She really was. Well I didn't find it, so we ain't going to worry about that.

0:12:08.3

AE: Well we found a lot of other stuff. This is great to see. Thank you for pulling it out.

0:12:13.5

BS: And that right there, now that's a picture of my—that's—that's—Kitty. That's the Rafffield—remember Charles Rafffield? And that's my cousin. That's my oldest sister, and that's my oldest brother, and they was holding him and taking a picture. What year is that? He was—Buddy was thirteen and sister was fourteen and Kitty was the same age as her. All three of them are dead now. But they took that picture, that's—

0:12:43.0

AE: And your sister is Gracie—? Frances?

0:12:43.9

BS: Frances. This is the nephew that just passed away at fifty-three. He was my first-born nephew, mama's first grandchild. But that was Steve—that was Steve down at Eleven Mile, that new house that Mr. Dewey Miller built us at Eleven Mile—that's—that was my brother Steve. And the onliest difference in that house when we lived over here, it had glass windows in it. That was an uptown house we was living in there.

0:13:21.1

AE: So what happened to all those houses? When were they gotten rid of over there?

0:13:24.5

BS: I guess they all just fell down or they pushed them down. That property is being sold over there now for big bucks and old Eldon Shellis owned that and—. But I had one of me and mama—no, I know where that one is at; it's down at the restaurant because they've got a big thing with a glass on it, and all the pictures of my family and—and my mama and my daddy and my mama standing there right beside this old—we called it an eight-ball, and this girl right here now is—was the Assistant Warden in Beaumont to the—to the prison. I mean, that's where she's—and now she's retired from that and she couldn't stand retirement and she went—and now she's working with the prison now, and she's over there counseling from prison to prison and went back to work. And she calls me when she's going to different places. She'll call me, and she'll say, *I need to chat with you on the cell phone*. And that's that same little girl raised in that old house. You never know.

0:14:26.5

AE: Sitting on that car wheel, yeah.

0:14:26.8

BS: Yeah, look at that old wheel on that thing. But that old eight ball—mama would put us in that old car—and that old washtub turned over that thing. I remember that old house so good. We thought we was rich as mud. We was I guess.

Interview of: Bobby Shiver
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Interview Date: March 23, 2006

March 6, 2006

0:14:45.9

[End Bobby Shiver-2]