

LYNN MARTINA
Lynn's Quality Oysters – Eastpoint, FL

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Date: January 11, 2006
Location: Red Top Café - Apalachicola, FL
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 46 minutes
Project: Florida's Forgotten Coast

[Begin Lynn Martina]

0:00:00.1

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for the Southern Foodways Alliance on Wednesday, January 11th, 2006, and I'm with Lynn Martina, who is Lynn of Lynn's Quality Oysters in Eastpoint, Florida. And she came to Apalach[icola] today for a meeting, and we're at the Red Top Cafe on Highway 98. Lynn, would you mind saying your name and your birth date, if you don't mind, for the record?

0:00:23.8

Lynn Martina: Lynn Martina, February 28th, 1964.

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AE: And are you a native of Eastpoint or the Apalachicola area?

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LM: Born and raised [in Eastpoint].

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AE: What are your parents' names?

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LM: John and Cheryl Carroll.

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AE: And do you have brothers and sisters?

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LM: I have two brothers: one retired from the Navy, his name is Tim, and I have a younger brother, Tracey, that does construction work on the St. George Island.

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AE: So how did you come to have Lynn's Quality Oysters?

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LM: Well my parents were in it for twenty-eight years. My grandmother's health got bad, and my mom had to get out, and the only way she would get out was for me to take her business so—and so it's kind of family handed down. My grandfather was in the business and then my mother and now me, so.

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AE: Have they each had their own oyster houses—

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LM: Uh-hmm.

0:01:10.0

AE: —or the same one and you just changed the name?

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LM: My mom's was in the same place, and I just changed the name.

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AE: What was the name of it when your mom had it?

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LM: Braxton and Carroll Seafood, and they were there twenty-eight years.

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AE: Okay, so you grew up in the business?

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LM: Yes. [*Laughs*]

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AE: And when did you get put to work growing up?

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LM: I bought my parents out nine years ago, but I used to—I've worked in it since I was nine or ten years old. I—when I got off the school bus I would get in one of the stalls and shuck oysters until it was time to go home. And I'd go home, and I'd prepare dinner, you know, as—as I got a

little older in age. I'd prepare dinner while my parents were still working. And then I got married when I was almost eighteen. And I didn't start out doing what I'm doing [working in the seafood industry]. I worked with my mother for a while, and then I got out and went into banking. And then I decided that wasn't for me, so I went back [to work with my mother]. And then after I went back, that's when my grandmother got real sick, and my mom had to take care of her, so she got out. I bought her out.

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AE: What's your grandmother's name?

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LM: Toy Shiver.

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AE: Toy? T-o-y?

0:02:17.6

LM: Uh-hmm, T-o-y.

0:02:20.2

AE: Okay. And so what was it like growing up in Eastpoint?

0:02:25.1

LM: A lot different from what it is now. We—when we were coming up, we were—we were raised to work, you know. That's all we ever did. And the seafood industry was all my mom ever did. My dad was in law enforcement. And then when he got out he—he went into business with my mom and they—they did real well for twenty-eight years. And—but we just—we were always, you know, known to work.

0:02:56.1

AE: Has the size of the oyster house changed, as far as you know, numbers of—output—employees and all that kind of stuff?

0:03:03.6

LM: Yes, it has. Actually my—my mother was totally wiped out in 1985 from Hurricane Kate, when it came through, so she—that's when the—the building that I'm in now, that's when it was rebuilt. They had the older tin houses then and then when I—when she built it back in [nineteen] eighty-five, she built [the building] out of [cement] block. So that's when—and the—she had

more working stations, so therefore she could employ more. And then when she got out [of the business], I actually took on more—more in the [oyster] shell stock aspect—aspect than she did. I do a whole lot more in—in handling the bags and boxes [of whole oysters] than she did. She did mainly shucked product.

0:03:49.2

AE: So what's it like being a woman in the industry having her own oyster house?

0:03:55.0

LM: Interesting at times. It's—it's kind of difficult. Because the meeting I just came from was all men. When my mom was in it, there was two or three maybe other women in it at the time but it's—it's predominantly men. You do have some wives with husbands, you know, that are running the smaller mom and pop operations are—are more husband and wife, but I'm the only one that does it at my house. My husband works for the Eastpoint Water and Sewer. He's close to retiring. He has almost thirty years there, so he'll retire, and if things are still going good, you know, maybe he'll come work with me. That's the plan, so we'll see what happens.

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AE: Do you enjoy your work?

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LM: I do. Not as much as I used to because of regulation. It gets harder every day. You have to battle people to get your money, dealing with red tides and the hurricanes, and it has its ups and downs. It's been good; it's been good to my family. It's provided well for me. Like I say, I've just put a—one daughter through college and—and hope my son goes. The seafood industry has been good and it's—it's good for Franklin County. It's provided for a lot of—a lot of people here. It's all they know to do, all they've ever wanted to do. A lot of them have raised—raised their children to do it. You have a lot less now doing it than what you used to. The younger generation these days are doing other things. They can see where, you know, the seafood industry is going. And it's sad to say, but it's—it's slowly—you have some diehards that are, you know, willing to stick it out and—and keep it going, but a lot of regulations just putting—you know putting us out. And the younger generation, like I say, are doing other things. I have the oldest of shuckers that are shucking left. Some of the ladies that shuck for me shucked for my mom; some of them are as old as seventy years old. And when they quit, I'll be out of the shucking end of it, anyway. You know, I'll just really divide our product—already shucked and repacked or just handle shell stock.

0:06:22.2

AE: Well, and I know there's some folks who are using Latino laborers now; is that an option for you or not?

0:06:29.0

LM: Uh-hmm, I have—I have used some. Some plants are—I know of a couple that are—are mainly, you know—but all of mine are—are local homegrown, hometown people.

0:06:43.7

AE: How many shuckers do you employ—or have?

0:06:46.4

LM: I have about eighteen right now. I have—well, I had twenty-five stations, but then, when I built my office back, I actually went in and knocked seven out to put my office inside the block building. So I lost seven [shucking stalls]. So on a good day [there are] fifteen to eighteen [shuckers].

0:07:05.2

AE: Uh-huh. And they're shucking strictly the oysters that come out of the bay?

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LM: No, probably eighty- to eighty-five-percent of my production comes from out west, and it's because of the supply and demand. Our bay doesn't—we can't—and we can't rely on our bay to be open all the time. I mean just like now, the east end of our bay is closed because they're floating a barge down the river. They had to open the dams to—to rise the water to let the barge come through, so this end of the bay is closed. Because when [the water level in the bay] reaches fifteen-feet, they automatically close the bay. So you just can't count on it.

0:07:44.2

AE: Yeah. When the bay is producing and people are harvesting and getting good catches out there, is it—because someone was telling me, I forget who was saying that—I mean obviously Apalachicola oysters people want.

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LM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

0:07:58.8

AE: And so are those—when there is good harvest are—do those go to—those are mostly sold on the half-shell, then, and the shucked ones are going to be packaged?

0:08:07.7

LM: Yeah. You do have some that are still shucking. You used to have a lot of husband wife teams that did that. At the time now, I have three that are doing that, and the rest of mine are shucking out-of-state oysters. Now from time to time, I will shuck—if—if I have an over abundance of, you know, of the Apalachicola bags, I'll shuck those. I'll shuck those rather than, you know—or shuck those first and then get on my out-of-state [oysters]. But the majority of mine are shucked—the shucked product, the majority of it is from out of state.

0:08:47.2

[Lynn's lunch that she ordered is delivered to our table.]

AE: Do you want eat and talk or you want me—?

0:08:49.0

LM: You can go ahead.

0:08:52.2

AE: Okay. Now you were telling before we recorded about Hurricane Dennis in July. That devastated your business.

0:08:58.0

LM: It did. It knocked us out of work for about three weeks until we could—we actually—and the state worked really well with me—with all the industry that was damaged. They let us get the plants back workable and then worked around us as far as being, you know, up to state regulation. They worked with us on getting ready. But that wasn't as bad as when Katrina hit out west, because when it hit Louisiana and knocked them out, I was in trouble. Because I couldn't get the product in. Our bay was down. You couldn't get product there, so we were out all the way around.

0:09:42.5

AE: So business-wise Katrina was worse—

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LM: Oh, yeah.

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AE: But then physically, Dennis hurt your building?

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LM: Yes, yes.

0:09:51.3

AE: So are you still—you're still obviously recovering from all of that.

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LM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I did probably—the last figure I had was close to 70,000 dollars in repair work that I had to do just from what little bit Dennis did. So I couldn't imagine some of the—the guys that are totally wiped out. And a lot of the plants—you saw the ones over in Eastpoint that are just not opened. Unfortunately, those—those buildings that are knocked out now, two particular towards—back towards Barber's Seafood [on the east side of Eastpoint], they sold their property; they closed one week prior to the storm. They got their money one week before the storm hit. And—and there's a lot of mixed feelings about that. A lot of the people think we shouldn't get out of the seafood industry; we shouldn't want to get out of the seafood industry. But they don't know what we deal with from day to day, either. You know, it makes you want to get out a lot of times. **[Laughs]** It's not worth the headache. But the people that sold—one lady [who used to be in the seafood industry] has Parkinson's disease now. They can't go anywhere, and they were in the business over forty years. They provided a lot of jobs. They were—they're excellent people. One of the other couples that sold, they were—actually sold us our containers—boxes and containers—that we packaged [our oysters in]. That man had open-heart surgery this week—six bypasses—and now they're out. And—and our property is our

retirement; that's all we have. We don't have 401-Ks and IRAs and big bank accounts. We don't have that. So what we're sitting on is our retirement, and we were kind of—we're kind of in a situation with the [Franklin] County now trying to get the zoning changed. Because there's some people like out past The Hut [restaurant, which is on the west side of Apalachicola, and has closed since Hurricane Dennis in July 2005] that are wanting to sell their properties. They're out of the business anyway, but because of the zoning—the way it's zoned—it's seafood-related only; they can't do anything with the property. And who in their right mind wants to go and buy that property for seafood-related now? They're not going to do it. So those people are just stuck. So they've given all those years, so why not give that to them—you know? But the County doesn't see it that way.

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AE: So the—the people—

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LM: That's kind of a sore subject.

0:12:22.1

AE: —that sold their land in Eastpoint were the purchasers—what are they going to do with it? They're going to sit on it until it's rezoned?

0:12:31.8

LM: Uh-hmm. They can develop the north side of [Highway] 98 but not the south side. Now one of the—one of the ladies that sold hers told me this morning, she said, *We had that zoning changed. You can develop on the water side.* I said, *Not according to Planning and Zoning; they tell us no, it cannot.* She said, *I'm telling you.* So I'm waiting on her to bring me the paper. I want to read it and see.

0:13:00.6

AE: So how long is—where Lynn's Quality Oysters is—how long has that parcel been in your family? Ever since they've been in business?

0:13:08.7

LM: Oh, [*Sighs*] actually, my grandfather on my dad's side—my dad's dad actually had a—he used to do smoked fish there when I was a little girl in the [nineteen] seventies. So it's been there—it's been in our family thirty-five to forty years at least.

0:13:32.4

AE: Well when you got into the business, was it an obligation to your family to maintain the business or was it something you really were—were interested in and wanted to pursue?

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LM: No, I really wanted to do it. And my husband has even asked me—he said *I—I thought you were doing that because you were going to make money? What happened?* [**Laughs**] And after—after the storms, I didn't want to build it back. I was just that fed up; I didn't want to build it back. But I had people—I had families, you know, counting on me because they can't do anything else—don't want to do anything else, you know. Most of them don't have an education; the bay is their education. So I mean, when they were small, a lot of them didn't go to school; they went to work. And I really didn't want to put mine back, but when my people came to me and looked at me and said, *But what will we do? You know?* Because I said, *At my age, I can get a job. I'll go clean up the Dollar Stores, you know. It don't matter. I can get a job. But they can't.* So I felt obligated to them. But if it happens again, I don't think I'll put it back.

And we're even—right now—the meeting I just got out of, we're talking about the County actually putting in an industrial park—a seafood industrial park—to move everybody off the water that wants to. You have some that wouldn't move off the water; I don't know that I would. I don't know that it would be good to put all dealers in one—some think that will work. Me, personally, I don't think it would.

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AE: That's a lot of egos in one place.

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LM: Yes, it is. Yes, it is. [*Laughs*] I mean you have dealers now—a couple that just don't see eye to eye. I pretty much work well with all of them. But they just—it's not going to work, and they—you know, if they choose that they want to go there to this place, that's fine. They should do it. But don't *tell* me I have to.

0:15:38.1

AE: Right. Well that—that waterfront in Eastpoint in the times that I've driven down there it—they're just seemed like they're are just a handful of buildings standing now. What was the architecture—?

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LM: There used to be [seafood] houses from one end of that channel to the other.

0:15:57.1

AE: Before [Hurricane] Dennis or just back in the day?

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LM: No, years ago. Back, yeah, in the [nineteen] eighties. In the eighties, at least, they were from one end to the other.

0:16:03.7

AE: All seafood houses?

0:16:05.3

LM: Uh-hmm. Now there's actually two that's operating.

0:16:11.7

AE: How many were there before Dennis?

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LM: One, two—six, seven.

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AE: That's a big loss.

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LM: Yeah, it is. And you know—and it's—it's hurt the [Franklin] County. You know, there are just—they're finding other ways to survive, which might be good, you know. I think—I think the younger generation needs to find another way because we see where this is going. And that was my argument with the County; I said, *Compare the amount of licenses you sold just five years ago to what you've sold this year.* I mean, we—they used to sell like 1,500 licenses, and I think they said they sold 500, and a lot of those are not working. I mean a lot of them are in law enforcement or—they're just keeping those licenses, you know. If they ever let them go, they won't get them again; they'll be like a restricted species. So they're trying to hang onto them just in case. If they should ever want to go out there and work on their days off from their other jobs, they could do it. But it's fading away.

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AE: How has the fact that so many seafood houses went out of business or were devastated by the storm, how does that affect the ones that are in business now? Is there a balance of supply in demand now, or is it harder for you because there are fewer wholesalers, or how does that work?

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LM: Well you would think it would make things better, but we were—I mean, we just came through the [Christmas] holidays, and we should have worked—I know just Barber's Seafood normally, during the holidays, they work until two or three o'clock in the morning. They were through by six, seven o'clock at night. And you would think with the other guys being out, it would benefit the businesses that are still going but that—it—that doesn't seem to be true right now.

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AE: Any idea why that is?

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LM: I really think—and, too, the price of oysters is just outrageous. They are. But, you know, everything is up. It's time for the price to get up. The product cost is up, your gasoline is up, you know, your—your cost of running your trucks are up. So it's time that the price gets up, but it just hasn't—you just have less and less people doing it, and I think actually the—the restaurants and the retailers, when the bay was down all that time, I think they actually found out they could put an extra piece of fish or they imported shrimp a whole lot cheaper than they could put oysters on their plates, and I think they have just taken them off of the menu. A lot threaten—I know Red Lobster [restaurant chain] did that one year; they took them off the menu completely. They said, *They're too high; we're not going to sell them.* And they didn't. And I really think that's

what's happened. I think they've decided, you know, they can sell the other things cheaper. So it hadn't—it hadn't benefited those of us that are still going.

0:19:28.7

AE: Hmm. Well what do you think about the future of the bay and people working the bay? Because if you can get, you know, if you can get the oysters that are cultivated in the Gulf from Texas and Louisiana and wholesale those, I mean, are the—if—if the people stop working the bay, or it's closed for most of the year is that—I mean, you can still run your—run a business?

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LM: I could still run—I—yeah, we could still operate. Because you do have some that's—when Texas opens, I have customers that prefer the Texas oyster over our oyster. Now we—we have other people tell us and—and locally, we think our oyster is the best oyster in the Gulf [of Mexico]. Well I'm sure Texas thinks the same thing, you know. But yeah, we could still work. We don't want to shut this bay. It was—it's been shut because of this red tide thing [which is a bloom of dinoflagellates that causes reddish discoloration of coastal ocean waters, which is often toxic and fatal to fish]. This has been unreal. I mean twelve weeks; it's never—never been that long. And are we going to look at that again next year? And the more that happens, the more people are going to get out of this business. They don't have no choice.

0:20:53.3

AE: Do you think you have a different managing style or business style as a woman?

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LM: In some areas, yeah.

0:21:05.4

AE: How so?

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LM: Probably in the general housekeeping. [*Laughs*] I'm a little stricter than a lot of men would be. Sometimes I can't say no and that—that's a big—that's a big problem of mine. I—I just—I have to learn to say no sometimes. You can sit there in a day's time and give away your whole paycheck just from people walking in off the streets. [Solicitors saying,] *I'm from this; can you donate to this? And I'm from that; can you donate to that?* You know, I've done it, but you do learn to say no.

0:21:49.9

AE: Let's pause this for a little while so you can eat some of your lunch.

0:21:52.3

LM: Oh, you're fine. It's not bothering me. *[Laughs]*

0:21:53.3

AE: Really? Are you sure?

0:21:55.4

LM: Yeah.

0:21:55.8

AE: Okay. Well what is a day at the office like for you? When does it start, and what do you get done, and who do you talk to?

0:22:06.8

LM: I go—I don't go before nine o'clock. I just—I'm set back, and that's my rule. I go at nine o'clock, and everybody knows don't call me before nine o'clock. I'll be there at nine o'clock, call me then. And then I'll stay 'til five, six, seven o'clock—whenever the work is done. If the guys

are just sitting around waiting on trucks, you know, I have all the invoices made and everything, and I'll go on home and leave them there. But generally, I stay there until I know everything is done. Before business got so bad, I actually had a lady that worked in the office with me. Well then after all hell broke loose in July [as a result of Hurricane Dennis], I just decided, you know, that I was going to do it all on myself. So I have, and it's just about drove me crazy, but I've—I do all the buying and selling and invoices, payroll; I do every bit of it, so that's why it was so hard for me to get with you. **[Laughs]** So—but it's—it's—it's a hard life; it's a real hard life—sad but true.

0:23:17.4

AE: But you're—you know [you have] the satisfaction of employing the [local] people and keeping that business alive in—in Eastpoint. Because, I mean, wasn't—Eastpoint was the heart of the seafood industry back in the day, when it was all happening over there.

0:23:29.1

LM: Oh, yeah. Um-hmm, yeah. It was. Like I say, it was just so easy for the kids to get off the school buses and go to work. And it was from one end of town to the other. It's just what everybody did. Not anymore. People are raising their children to do other things—get an education, you know. I even had someone ask me, did I think my kids were too good to do what I do. And I said, *No, not for a minute*. I've provided well for my children, but I want better for them, and I want them to work and worry—I want them to work. They've all, you know—they

raised—they were raised to work, but I don't want them in the seafood industry. I really don't.

My daughter just graduated from nursing school, and who knows what my son is going to do, but I don't want them to do it.

0:24:33.8

AE: Do they not have any personal interest in it either?

0:24:37.4

LM: They hate it because they have seen me come home just crying. And even their dad told me one day, he said, *Either fix it or get out*. Because, well, you never would have known Donnie Wilson. He was a man here that he provided for this county just forwards and backwards. He was just—he was a super—super good man. Two years ago, [he] sat down at the bottom—bottom of his steps with a cup of coffee and fell over dead. And he had—he had been in the seafood industry twenty-six, twenty-seven years. And that's the first thing my husband told me, when I would just go home at my wits end. Ad he said, *Either fix it or get out*. He said, *You're not going to let it kill you like it did him*. And just the stress—the stress at times is just—I mean we battle—we just battle constantly. We were—I was paying 5,000 dollars a month for workmen's comp[ensation] insurance—just to give people a job. And I just decided—I just decided, you know, I'm not going to do this anymore. So I was all but for quitting shucking. I was going to knock a lot of people out of work, but I said, *I'm not going to pay 60,000 dollars a year before I get a dime for insurance*. And one of the local newspapers came around that [issue]

because we were all battling the workmen's comp situation. And a guy read an article over in Fort Walton Beach and he said—his friend told him—he said, *Here, I think you might want to read this.* And he said, *I stuck it in my briefcase, and I said, I'll read it later.* He said [to me], *I didn't take it out of my briefcase again until I got home.* And it was the article that I had done on the workmen's comp issue. He just so happened to call me. He said, *I think I can help you.* And he came down; he's from Orlando. He came down, and he hooked me up with a payroll leasing company. That's what he does; he's like a broker for payroll leasing. And he got me fixed up with them and now my—my workmen's comp, I pay about—I mean I haven't paid over 1,500 dollars a month. And without that man doing that, I would have been out of business.

But, you know, we—we battled that situation, we battled the bay being closed, we battled the State—if they come up with one more regulation, you know—we just—we can't—we can't face anymore. Now they're talking about this post-harvest treatment stuff. We have to post-harvest treat oysters and have to sell them frozen, or you're going to have to heat shuck them—a certain percentage of your product. Well I don't have the money to invest in that equipment.

0:27:37.9

AE: Can you talk about some of the regulations that came onboard since you've had your tenure, I guess, over your oyster house?

0:27:44.9

LM: Yeah. It's been—and they always laugh at me, and I say, *Well, this is another hurdle. You've got—want it a little bit higher the next time.* And they do. Whatever they give you to do, you do it, and then they'll put one on a little bit higher. You jump that one, and they're going to give you one a little bit higher. We have battled the stainless steel situation—everything right on down to the stands the ladies stand on have to be stainless steel. You—they shuck in stainless steel buckets with a stainless steel knife; the housing on the machines that they use have to be stainless steel, washed on stainless steel tables, right down to what you pack the oyster in, and you put it in a plastic container. That just does not make any sense to me. But the state says we have to do it that way, so that's what we do. I think the work—workmen's comp issue has been the biggest—and the reason I have a problem with workmen's comp insurance is, I can't tell those people when they have to come to work. I just provide a product. If they show up, I'm tickled to death. If they don't like what that product looks like, they may go home. And yeah, I can say, *Well just take your things with you and don't come back.* But then what am I going to do tomorrow? So you have to take it. But the state says that's my employee, and I argue that. I don't agree with that.

0:29:23.7

AE: Why not?

0:29:26.4

LM: Because they—they come and go like they want to, but the state says because they work in my facility [and] I provide them the electricity, they're my employee. I said, *Why not let me lease them a station—a working station?* They don't agree with that. Just anything to get around the workmen's comp issue. But the state says we have to do it. That doesn't make sense either, but the state says you do it.

0:30:06.1

AE: So what do you like about what you do?

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LM: The every day challenge. It is a challenge. At this point that's about the only thing—**[Laughs]**—because it has gotten so bad. I used to really like it because I knew I would get up in the morning and know I'm going to make 200 or 300 dollars a day today. And now I wake up and say, *God, I've got to go back.* It's gotten that bad. It's just really—I'm just to a point that I'm just tired of it, but I—I just still feel obligated. My aunt and uncle work there—all they've ever done. And I just, you know, I feel obligated to all these guys. I keep going back.

0:31:07.8

AE: And all that you've invested in the rebuilding is a commitment?

0:31:09.8

LM: Yeah. Yeah, because I can't do anything else with the building.

0:31:13.9

AE: Yeah.

0:31:14.3

LM: We've even—in all of this thing—arguing with the county—we've asked could we build something above and keep the bottom floor seafood-related. Let us put some kind of shops or something above it—something we could rent out, so when the bays are down and we can't get product, we can still generate some kind of income to pay the light bill. They don't agree with that—seafood-related [business] only.

0:31:40.5

AE: Do you have a—a retail section of your business, or it's just wholesale?

0:31:42.4

LM: No, it's just wholesale. We tried the retail once, but it was too much trying to handle it all. So we just went back to wholesale, and that's all we do. [*Lynn added and opened a retail element to Lynn's Quality Oysters in May 2006.*]

0:31:58.9

AE: What about cosmetically speaking, the waterfront and people going through Eastpoint to get to St. George Island and tourism and development?

0:32:12.1

LM: It's embarrassing. It's embarrassing because the people that bought all these properties didn't buy it for seafood houses. They're not going to invest any money in it right now. It's going—if—if they don't do something or—or the county doesn't come in and demand that they clean it up, those places are going to look like that five years from now. Or next year when the next storm comes through, it's going to all be out in the channel.

0:32:40.3

AE: So some of that is—is property that's been sold that the new owners aren't cleaning up. Is some of it that's just been delay in clean-up that—from the state from the hurricane that was in July?

0:32:53.3

LM: Yeah, uh-hmm. And—and two or three of them have just exactly started cleaning theirs up. They were undecided what they were going to do, and I think a lot of them were trying to sell theirs. But I think they're still hoping because that is their retirement and it's people—a lot of the businesses have been handed down to their children. If I could sell mine, I could pay my parents off, and they could live a whole lot easier. But as it stands now, I pay them a monthly salary or a monthly payment, and that's what they live off of. Because you have no—you have no retirement, you know. What you can do with your property is your retirement. It's all bound to change one day, though. It'll have to because when there's no more seafood—I mean when we—when we are actually regulated out, which I believe we will be, they'll have to change so you can do something else. Well are we just going to pay property taxes for the rest of our lives? And you can't get insurance after last year. God knows what's going to happen with insurance. Mine hasn't come up for renewal yet, but when it does, I won't be able to pay it because I was hit hard. But we'll see.

0:34:39.5

AE: Hmm. What do you think—what do you think that future is? I mean, do you think there are going to be wholesale seafood houses here?

0:34:49.0

LM: Well, you have some diehards that say they wouldn't get out for anything.

0:34:54.4

AE: But then the generation after them, you know, it just seems like—

0:34:58.3

LM: Yeah, the generation after them. That's why it will eventually come to an end because the younger generation is not doing it. They see the hell we've gone through, you know. They wouldn't—a lot of them—I mean the harvesters, they have it made. They come in, and they unload their catch on my dock, they go home, they're done. I've got to worry about is this product sold, get it in the cooler, is the cooler going to go out during the night, are you going to lose it, you know; this truck is going to break down when you're delivering. It's—it's always—always something else out there to worry about. I mean it's not worth it—not worth it.

0:35:37.4

AE: About how many oystermen do you buy from?

0:35:41.2

LM: Right now I have about ten and that changes. If somebody down the road pays fifty-cents more a bag, they'll pack up, and they're out of here. But overall mine—mine is pretty steady, but you do have a lot of them that will want to check around. And then you have some that will work in two places, you know. They'll split their catch so they'll always—you know, this guy down here may not have any sales that day and you may have [sales], and they can bring them all to you, and the next day they may split them or whatever. A lot of them do that, but they have a couple guys on the boat; one will usually work one place and one work the other, and that way they'll always have orders. But that's a whole other situation.

0:36:43.6

AE: Did you go to college?

0:36:45.1

LM: No, I didn't. I got married when I was almost eighteen, and I actually quit school in the eleventh grade to get married. I went to night school and graduated with my dad. My dad took his GED [General Educational Development or high school equivalency test] the same night I did, so we graduated together and went to work. I had my first daughter—I had my daughter at nineteen, and I had my son five years later. That's all I ever wanted to do was just get married and go to work and have babies, I guess. [*Laughs*] And I quit at two [children].

0:37:22.5

AE: And you wanted—you wanted to stay in Eastpoint? I mean, whether or not you were doing the oyster house?

0:37:27.3

LM: Yeah. Yeah, my husband is actually from Apalachicola. He was born and raised here. But I said, *No, I want to live in Eastpoint.* Which he worked for the—the City of Eastpoint, anyway, so I said, *Well it only makes sense.*

0:37:42.5

AE: How many people live in Eastpoint now?

0:37:45.3

LM: Oh gosh, I don't have a clue. I don't have a clue. There's a lot of little pig trails out there.

There's—there's a lot over there—not as big as Apalach is—but quite a few.

0:38:01.5

AE: Do you see it being built up like Apalach with second homes and things like that?

0:38:08.3

LM: I believe eventually it will if they ever change that zoning. I think you'll see a lot of changes. Of course, they have a big plan; they had—they had—it was all planned out what they were going to do with all that property over there. And if—if they pull it off, it will be beautiful. It would be a big change, but it would be beautiful. And not to—you know, if anybody wants to stay in the seafood business, that's fine, you know. Nobody is saying you've got to get out, but give me that choice; don't make me stay, you know. And I feel like that's what the county is trying to do. By not letting us change the zoning, they're making us stay. But we'll do it until we can't do it anymore, and then we'll do something different.

0:39:19.0

AE: Do you have a weekend with your schedule?

0:39:22.8

LM: [*Laughs*]

0:39:22.9

AE: Do you have days off?

0:39:25.5

LM: I make sure I do. A lot of times I won't even pass by the plant [*Laughs*] on the weekends. I'll go around the block because you just have to get away from it because it will run you if you don't. But I—even when I took my plant [meaning when she took over the business from her parents], my daughter was real active. She danced at the local dance studio here for fifteen years, and that's the first thing my mom said, she said, *You won't be able to—to run with Kayla now like you've always been able to do.* And I said, *Why not?* She said, *Well you just won't.* I said, *Yes, ma'am, I will.* And I—I made myself that promise that I—you know, it wasn't going to change me and I—you know, my son plays baseball, and I don't miss a baseball game. I'm fortunate that I have good workers that I can leave in charge, you know, and—and the show goes on. I said, *Hey, if you screw something up I'll straighten it out tomorrow.* But I just—it's not going to run me. I'll work it, but it's not going to work me. I made myself that promise.

0:40:47.2

AE: Do you use—you and your husband use the bay recreationally. Or the river?

0:40:50.5

LM: Uh-hmm.

0:40:50.7

AE: Do you go out fishing and whatnot?

0:40:51.4

LM: We have a—we built a big houseboat. We have a houseboat up on the river, and we spend every Thanksgiving there. We leave on Wednesday and Thanksgiving is—Thanksgiving and Christmas is my busiest times of the year, but that's something we've never changed. We leave every Wednesday. I make sure all trucks are loaded, you know. Your orders are gone by then, anyway. So we spend every Thanksgiving on the river because they hunt in the river. They, you know, with deer and dogs, and we stay up there 'til Sunday. We fish out—out at The Cut and have a saltwater boat. We fish. We love it here. We—my husband all the time says he'd like to move to Georgia because there's good deer hunting there, but I don't think, when it come down to it, I don't think he'd go. His dad is real sick and getting up in age. My parents' health is not real good, and we couldn't do anything like that. We have to take care of them.

0:41:53.6

AE: Do you cook at all? Have time to, I guess, is the real question.

0:41:58.3

LM: Yeah, I do, but I'm very fortunate. My son loves to cook. Nobody would ever believe that because he's such a sportsman, you know. He—but he loves to cook. He watches all the cooking shows. I mean, we'll go—I'll go home and sometimes just walk in, and your tea is even poured. You just go in and sit down. So I'm—we eat out probably two nights a week, though, because on my busiest night, you know, I have—I'm the President of the Booster Club at the high school, so we have Booster Club on Monday nights, so we usually—we usually run here [to the Red Top Café in Apalachicola] and eat a hamburger or something after the meeting before we go home. You just have to—we pretty much have our little schedule we go by and—.

0:42:44.1

AE: Are there things—since this is a foodways oral history, recipes tend to be important in there somewhere, too. I wonder if there's something that your grandmother or mother made when you were growing up that was kind of, you know, a bay thing.

0:42:58.8

LM: The oyster stew. My mom mastered the oyster stew. And my father-in-law is real sick with emphysema right now. He's like in the last stages of it, and he just hasn't been eating anything. So I made him oyster stew last week, and he ate it for two or three days. He said, *I know it was the best*. But I hate to say it, but I don't eat oysters. So I actually have to get my husband to taste the broth to see if it's salty enough or, you know, if I'm missing anything but—.

0:43:31.1

AE: You just don't like them or—?

0:43:33.2

LM: I just don't like them.

0:43:33.9

AE: Really?

0:43:33.5

LM: When I was young, I would eat them, and I guess it's after working in them, you know, it's the last thing I want to see on my plate. **[Laughs]** But I'm glad other folks like them, though.

0:43:45.2

AE: I guess so. **[Laughs]**

0:43:45.7

LM: And when customers call and say, *Are they good?* I say, *Oh, yeah, they're real good.* You have to tell them what they want to hear. [*Laughs*] A lot of people can't believe that.

0:43:57.8

AE: Uh-huh. That's funny. Well is there anything that I haven't asked you that's—

0:44:03.1

LM: I don't think so.

0:44:04.5

AE: —worth mentioning?

0:44:04.6

LM: I don't know if I've told you everything you wanted to hear or—

0:44:07.3

AE: Yeah, you told me a lot. Yeah, it's a whole different side of the industry. I would like to ask you, though, for the record [about] the Martina family. It's a big—big name in the area and

you're—can you go through those relationships? I mean you're—you're related to Monica Lemieux through—there's a cousin relationship that I'm not going to get right.

0:44:32.1

LM: Yeah, she was a Martina. She was a—and the Martinas are a very large family. Monica's sister, Marcia, is actually the Clerk of the Court—Marcia Johnson. Monica used to work for Vince Brunner; I'm trying to think if any of the rest of them are involved politically in any way.

0:45:06.7

AE: There seemed to be a—a few names that are big families that go back a long way. Are there some old kind of family rivalries and stuff?

0:45:14.5

LM: Shiver. My mom was a Shiver.

0:45:16.2

AE: Yeah?

0:45:16.8

LM: That's the largest family here. The Shivers. Millenders. Over in Carrabelle you have Massey and Mocks. But over here in Apalach, I think, actually, the Martina is probably the largest over here. And they're good people; they're Italian, but they're good people. **[Laughs]**

0:45:46.4

AE: Well all right. Well we can wind this up so you can actually finish your meal. **[Laughs]**

0:45:52.0

LM: I'm really not that hungry. I just—if I don't eat, I'll get a headache.

0:45:58.2

AE: Any final thoughts to add?

0:46:01.2

LM: I guess not.

[Phone Rings]

0:46:11.8

AE: Saved by the bell. All right. Thank you very much for this.

0:46:15.0

[End Lynn Martina]