FRANK USINA
Aunt Kate's on the River - St. Augustine, FL
***

Date: January 20, 2015
Location: North Beach Camp Resort - St. Augustine, FL
Interviewer: Anna Hamilton
Transcription: Deborah Lattimore, Technitype Transcripts
Length: One hour thirty minutes
Project: Minorcans of St. Augustine

[00:00:00]

Anna Hamilton: This is Anna Hamilton for the Southern Foodways Alliance. Today is Tuesday, January 20th, 2015, and I'm sitting in the offices of the North Beach Camp Resort with Frank Usina. And to start, I'll ask you please to introduce me to yourself.

[00:00:20]

Frank Usina: Frank Usina. What else you want to know?

[00:00:24]

Anna Hamilton: ***[Laughs]*** What do you do?

[00:00:26]

Frank Usina: As little as possible. Not as much as I used to. Family's been out here a long time. We have several businesses here.

[00:00:36]

Anna Hamilton: And what are some of them?

[00:00:37]

Frank Usina: Well, The Reef is the restaurant on the ocean, Aunt Kate's on the River, which is a newer restaurant, and, of course, the RV park here.

[00:00:45]

Anna Hamilton: And for the record, I'll ask for your birthday.

[00:00:47]

Frank Usina: 7/23/34.

[00:00:50]

Anna Hamilton: All right. Thank you. And I guess the best place to start is really at the beginning. How did your family come to settle in this area?

[00:00:57]

Frank Usina: Well, of course, the family's Minorcan history, came to Florida from Minorca to the New Smyrna colony, and, of course, when it failed, to St. Augustine in the 1770s, and here to North Beach.

[00:01:19]

My grandfather, Frank Andreu Usina, was a carpenter, worked for the FEC Railroad ***[Interviewer's note: Florida East Coast Railway]***, and they were—he and my grandmother, Catherine, Aunt Kate, were in Miami, where he was working on building whatever they were building—buildings. And it would have been 1889, that winter. There was a yellow fever epidemic, and they shut down all the work. My grandparents cleared quarantine there and came up to St. Augustine.

[00:01:59]

The family story is that Flagler Mission, the failed development out here at North Beach, there was a building out here they might could stay in. I don't know if—we can't document that. It is family lore. Personally, I think it's more probable that someone from the Adolphus Pacetti family might have mentioned it because they had the Spanish land grant that North Beach was developed out of, and, to me, that's more probable. But that's nothing we're ever going to—the Flagler story is in my mother's notes, and it's a story that the family's always told. There were Flagler connections, because my grandmother's sister was married to the undertaker that married Flagler's daughter and grandchild, and he also buried Harry Flagler. So we span that time, and there's a possible connection there. I think possibly more there than the fact that my grandfather worked for the railroad, but that's something we're never going to know exactly.

[00:03:22]

But in any case, they came out here and there was a small two-bedroom cottage, I suppose, left from the railroad period that was very brief. It was the two rooms with a double-sided fireplace and a little porch. Actually, that became the family home eventually. My father was born there a few months later. Well, actually, it was more than that, because it would have been in the summer of 1890. And the house grew over the years as it was built, added on all the way around, and it's turned into eventually four bedrooms and two baths, where it was two bedrooms and an outhouse—or two rooms and an outhouse. But the family's—well, my sister did live there, and we still own the building.

[00:04:21]

Anna Hamilton: And do you live there still?

[00:04:22]

Frank Usina: I don't live there. I live across the street from it. I moved about two or three hundred feet. That's about it. Betty has moved many times over the years, but I didn't move very far.

[00:04:37]

So, anyway, that's basically how we got out here. Soon after my grandparents came out here, Flagler stopped by and asked my grandparents if they would fix oysters for he and his friends. I think it may have been at another time maybe they came back. In any case, they did. The hat was passed, and my grandparents had more money than they'd seen for a while. Wages weren't too great back then.

[00:05:12]

Anna Hamilton: But just after Henry Flagler's one stop over here?

[00:05:15]

Frank Usina: And that grew into more stops. There was still a dock from the old railroad days. The bridge may have been gone by then. I remember the draw span sitting on the shore down there that fell over probably in the sixties, and their piling. And, of course, aerials show the path of the railroad through the barge across the river, and the

main road of the RV park is the old railroad grade up here to the beach, where there was a fairly large building built up here that was a bathhouse and had a second-floor restaurant. And according to the brochures from the railroad, there were entertainment. I believe they had horses and there was a toboggan ride or chute or something. Don't know what else. Like I say, we do have some of the brochures from the 1880s. The railroads opened in either 1890 or '91, and it didn't last long, though. There was a fire somewhere in the mid-1890s that burned most of the island, and that was the end of that development.

[00:06:43]

Anna Hamilton: The development here at North Beach?

[00:06:44]

Frank Usina: Yes. But the North Beach plat from that period is the plat that's used today, as far as legal descriptions of North Beach.

[00:06:56]

In any case, people came bringing their own—by their own boats. My grandparents served primarily oysters, but then my grandmother also cooked. They rented a boat from George Corbett to bring people up here. Around 1908 or 1909, they acquired a boat that became the *Victory I*. The story was that it was sitting on a sandbar, and we have a picture of a boat that looks very much like it would have been of *Victory I* sitting on a sandbar, one of those little bitty pictures. And at the same period of time, they, with family and friends, raised a building, a big old barn-like down at the river,

where Aunt Kate's is, the same site, to serve meals and have dances. And, of course, like I say, that boat became the *Victory I*.

[00:08:13]

There was a rival operation with the Capo family down in Surfside. That's another story that's been covered in other ways. By the teens, he had a bigger, faster boat, so my grandfather commissioned Warren Sanchez to build—actually, it was a twin to that boat, which created other problems as well, but became the *Victory II*, and Daddy worked on it as it was being built, as a helper. A lot of that, the timbers and framing and planking for that boat, came from—it was longleaf yellow pine that the family salvaged off the beach. The lumber schooners carried deck cargo, and it started to be washed overboard, and in this one particular storm, there was a lot of it on the beach. I can't tell you exactly when that was, but it had to have been before 1917 when the *Victory* was built. It was taken up to Pine Island to a sawmill because they were logging up there at that time, and it was cut into framing size and planking size that was used to build the *Victory*. That was used primarily at that time to bring people from St. Augustine. People still came in their own boats as well.

[00:09:53]

Anna Hamilton: And they were tourists who were coming over? Who was coming over?

[00:09:56]

Frank Usina: Well, it was primarily winter, and, yes, it was a lot of tourists. Now, it was used for local people as well, and over the years we've talked with people who they came over here as children or they were courting when they came over on the *Victory*.

[00:10:15]

I mentioned the Capo family. I've been told that there were certain families that went to Capo's Surfside or to Capo's North Beach, and there were other families that came to Usina's North Beach. Like I say, there's plenty of research on that and you can find the history of it. It's been pretty well documented what happened.

[00:10:38]

In any case, with the Pavilion, it was Usina's Pavilion, my grandmother cooked the pilau and chowder, and, well, there was, of course, potato salad and probably, with my grandmother, probably greens, turnip greens, because she always grew turnip greens. She had quite a garden. It was probably more of a small farm. You can't say that people were self-sufficient, but they were much more self-sufficient than they are today. You bought your sugar and your coffee and your salt.

[00:11:21]

Daddy ran hogs. Friends ran cattle. I remember the catch pens that Daddy had, north up toward the Guana. One was a place called Irishmen's, and another was Jack Dayton's. I don't know exactly what they were. To get to Guana, you either had to go by boat or you had to go up somehow and cross Guana itself to the neck, what was called the neck. And Dayton's Landing would probably fit that scenario.

[00:12:11]

Now, this is before there was any road or bridge out here, because a lot of bridges, of course, were built in the mid-twenties by August Heckscher. And prior to that, Daddy said that it was always easier to go to Jacksonville Beach, ***[unintelligible]***, because you could go up the beach way, where you had to go to St. Augustine by water.

[00:12:35]

Daddy had little formal education. What he had was in St. Augustine, and you had to go by boat and you had to stay over with friends and family. My great-grandfather was English and well educated. He was a younger son, and that's how he wound up in this country and eventually in Tocoi as a schoolmaster, where he married one of his students. And there is some family history that she probably had Indian background, and that's something we've not been able to document and probably cannot document. That's something Betty has wanted to work with more. What I remember of her and pictures of her, yes, I could accept that. That would have been—of course, that was something that certainly was not advertised any more than of your neighborhood history. As in many cases, for many years Minorcans were somewhat of a second-class citizen in St. Augustine.

[00:14:05]

Anna Hamilton: Really?

[00:14:07]

Frank Usina: Oh, yeah.

[00:14:08]

Anna Hamilton: Will you tell me a little more about that?

[00:14:09]

Frank Usina: I can't tell you that I know a whole lot about it. It may have not have been that overt. I think it was, from what I remember.

[00:14:39]

My grandmother had five sisters, all who married and lived in St. Augustine, and she had one brother. But the family gatherings normally would have been on Sunday afternoon out here, and my brother and I normally picked that time to head for the beach. I'm talking about post-war. When we built our first beach buggy, it was Model-A at that time, and later a V8, but that was the way to get to the beach. And so we missed those stories.

[00:15:21]

Anna Hamilton: The family stories of your grandmother?

[00:15:24]

Frank Usina: Yes. Now, of course, you know, her stories, as we grew up, yes, we had them, but not the family stories that she and my mother—my mother had a phenomenal memory for facts, for people. There again, while she finished high school, she had no

further education, but she would have certainly loved to live in a more modern time when women could do more things. I'd say she was limited to the garden clubs and ***[unintelligible]*** and—well League of Women's Voters that she was very active in.

[00:16:13]

Anna Hamilton: And what was her name?

[00:16:15]

Frank Usina: Mary Borum, B-o-r-u-m. Her father, the family was out of Virginia into Georgia during the Civil War and eventually into Florida and St. Augustine, and he was a caretaker or gardener at, I believe, Portneusa [phonetic] Gardens. That's out across where Winn-Dixie is today, where the old drive-in was. And he was to be the gardener at Heckshers, a development in North Beach. I don't know exactly how that worked out. We do know that he planted some of the palms and oleanders along the old Latta Road, and he was also the bridge tender for the bridge. One of the pictures at Aunt Kate's shows him and a large sawfish that they picked up with the lift span and the draw.

[00:17:27]

Of course, they stayed here at North Beach. The business, I suppose, grew through the years. There were cottages, rental cottages here, and they had a few boats for people—rowboats, real old heavy rowboats built out of cypress. I remember some of them when I was a kid. And the cottages, they were rented.

[00:18:02]

My grandfather had a horse car that was used to bring people from the river up to a bathhouse at the beach. Of course, this was not the original bathhouse that had burned, but one that, I suppose, they were involved in building. There were no other reason for it. And it finally burned, there again, probably in the early sixties.

[00:18:30]

Anna Hamilton: And this was a spot for changing into swimsuits?

[00:18:32]

Frank Usina: Yes, the old wooden—it had booths like you could change in, had a women's side and a men's side.

[00:18:40]

And the old well, we had it filled many years ago, but it was left either from the railroad days or from building A1A, I don't know, State Road 140. It might have been also at one time State Road 78. I'm not sure about that, sitting here. But, anyway, there was a well here that was used for the showers, and everybody used it to fill the radiators for the beach buggies, because everything ran hot on the beach. As I say, that was the one well. Then there was the five-mile well where South—where the store is now. Then there was a ten-mile well. Those wells have also been sealed and covered over the years, but that was the wells that we used to—when we were on the beach. As well as down at Vilano.

[00:19:40]

Anyway, the business seemed to have been stable, evidently. We have mentions, as Betty had mentioned earlier when we were talking, things in the record of fifty years ago and about the boat ride and the menu. I think the boat ride was twenty-five cents and the meal was twenty-five cents, and the menu for the—

[00:20:12]

Much of the custom was the winter and the people who came to St. Augustine—of course, they'd come here many years, but people came from the North for health before Flagler, and that was a little bit of why Flagler at first come here. But, of course, their era of the earlier 1900s, people came down to skip the same kind of weather they got up north right now, which has got to be pretty miserable. And, yes, they came out here, and, yes, they went swimming. We used to make a show of going, jumping in the ocean on New Year's Eve, but it was nothing but a show. ***[Laughs]*** It didn't last long. I prefer eighty-degree water.

[00:21:09]

Anna Hamilton: How cold is the water this time of year?

[00:21:11]

Frank Usina: Sixty. Somewhere in the lower sixties.

[00:21:17]

Anna Hamilton: That's pretty cold.

[00:21:21]

Frank Usina: It's chilly.

[00:21:23]

Anna Hamilton: What is the earliest memory you have of the Usina Pavilion and having people come over in boats?

[00:21:31]

Frank Usina: None of that, actually. The Pavilion, yes. I mentioned the family house. We slept there. We lived at the Pavilion. Meals were cooked at the Pavilion. Of course, being born in '34, I don't remember that earlier period.

[00:21:52]

Anna Hamilton: But by the time you were born, the *Victory* was coming over and—

[00:21:58]

Frank Usina: Oh, well, much before that. That would have ended with the Depression. I mean, everything stopped. We think this more recent recession was bad, that was devastating. I will go back to what I mentioned earlier. Betty has talked—we've talked over the years about her growing up in wartime in Long Island, as I grew up in wartime here in St. Augustine. If you were in the cities in the Depression, it had to be completely,

terribly miserable. Out here, you had the river, there were plentiful fish, shrimp, crabs, oysters. I said Daddy ran hogs. I don't remember food shortages or anything growing up in the thirties or during the war. The shortage were for tires and fuel.

[00:23:14]

I do remember—and I've mentioned this at other times to other people—the flowered feed sacks, chicken feed, and the companies that marked chicken feed made hundred-pound sacks with patterns on them. One was a flowered pattern and one was of some kind of a checkered pattern, and it was intended, and the farmwives used them for everything, and I mean everything.

[00:23:55]

I kind of vaguely remember the Evans house out at Tocoi, and it was a large square building raised well off the ground, with a big front porch, but it was open on the inside. It had wires strung across it with just drapes, and at nighttime, you could pull the drapes across and you could isolate areas of it. In the daytime, you opened everything up. I don't know that they were made from feed sacks. I just remember some type of hangings.

[00:24:31]

But my grandmother was known for her aprons. They were definitely made from feed sacks, and we have one of them, and eventually it'll show up in our showcase down there at Kate's. The window curtains were made from them. I remember underwear made from them.

[00:24:53]

Anna Hamilton: I'll bet that was comfortable.

[00:24:55]

Frank Usina: Well, it actually was not—this was not burlap. It was a nice cloth.

[00:25:02]

Anna Hamilton: That's better.

[00:25:04]

Frank Usina: But, I mean, people used everything. I mean, there was not a thing of something being thrown away. It was used. We have a lot of things that, as Frank Junior said, you know, he can't see Aunt Kate's being turned into a museum, and it's not going to be, but we've got all types of things left over the years that have not rusted away.

[00:25:35]

Anna Hamilton: Like what kinds of things?

[00:25:37]

Frank Usina: Primarily tools. One of the old railroad shacks that was down toward the river that had gradually kind of tilted and is falling over over the years, we've had all kinds of stuff in it. When we built Aunt Kate's, it was not in the way of the building, but

it was back there, and so we went through it and moved some stuff over to the old garage. One of the things there was—you know, nobody could figure out what this piece of wood was, piece of cedar limb, tapered on the end, with a notch on it. I said, "Well, I know what thing was. It was used when Daddy decided which hogs were going to be butchered." It was used to—you slit behind the hog's ankle, and it was used to—well, you could hoist the hogs up to clean them. And then to get the hair off them, they scalded them, which was no more elaborate than a little trench dug in the ground with a 55-gallon drum in it, and you built a fire in the end of it. I can't think of the name for that little piece of cedar, but it was used to handle the hog. You could douse him down in the hot water and haul him up and scrape on him. I remember that. I was involved in a little bit, but mostly I don't think I was involved that much.

[00:27:15]

I do remember the catch pens and going up to them, and Daddy marking the pigs. The Mickler families from Palm Valley also ran hogs, and there were several other families that also ran hogs. We have Daddy's hog mark. We actually have the paper, the certificate from the state. But in theory, when you caught the sow or the pigs, you marked the pigs the way the sow was marked, and that way everybody kept their own hogs. I don't know that was always followed or not. I suspect it wasn't. But in any case, I do remember that.

[00:28:15]

There was a large—not a pasture, but a large enclosure down toward the river that Daddy always had some hogs in, and when he picked out the ones he was going to

slaughter, they went into a small pen and they had 100 pounds of corn that they were fed daily, and that was to clean them out. In the wild, they ate a lot of fiddler crabs, and I really don't remember any particular different odor. The entails from a hog is kind of smelly anyway. I don't know if it flavored the meat or not. I know, of course, there were plenty of acorns, but the hogs were always in the marsh, digging. The theory was that the corn cleaned them out so you had a cleaner meat.

[00:29:19]

Anna Hamilton: Would you—I want to shift a little bit, because I'd like to talk about the evolution of Aunt Kate's, and first I'm wondering if you will bring me to a meal when you were growing up at the Pavilion, and tell me a little bit about what your grandmother and your mother might cook.

[00:29:41]

Frank Usina: It would have probably been a pilau.

[00:29:45]

Anna Hamilton: And what's a pilau?

[00:29:46]

Frank Usina: A pilau, of course, it's a universal dish for extending a little bit of meat into a meal. Here, it was used with rice. Other parts of the world, it might be something

different. But the base is a very simple tomato and onion base with seasoning. The difference about our pilaus, as opposed to others, is the amount of time you take in cooking down the roux—the base for it, the tomatoes and onions, and then, of course, the addition of whatever meat's available. Here, it was shrimp and chicken, primarily. Of course pork. And my grandmother also made a crab pilau that was luscious. I haven't had it in years. But, like I say, it's a simple dish, and we do serve it with as close as we can keep it authentic down at Kate's, along with the clam chowder. And I think we have a very good clam chowder there. When chefs, and not just chefs—but if you want to call them sous-chefs, anybody that happens to be charged with putting together something at the time and while they have a recipe, they do freelance, and I think we have a good pilau and a good clam chowder. Of course, growing up, there was always potato salad.

[00:31:34]

Anna Hamilton: And what sort of potato salad?

[00:31:36]

Frank Usina: Well, I guess what I'd probably call a Southern potato salad. It would have had mayonnaise, mustard, relish, onions, a small amount. That would be the base of it. You've got to have boiled eggs in Southern potato salad, at least what I would. I don't know what other people would say. And if I was making it, I would still make it somewhat the same way today.

[00:32:09]

Betty says all Minorcan men cook. I don't know, but I've cooked all of my life. But I like cooking. As far as cooking in a restaurant situation, no, I would not care for that. There's too much pressure there. I cook at leisure.

[00:32:26]

Anna Hamilton: What kinds of things do you cook, do you like to cook?

[00:32:29]

Frank Usina: I've always cooked all seafood in our house, most meats, stews, chowders, whether it's a clam chowder or fish chowder. I don't bake. Betty does. I want to say it's nothing particularly elaborate. I grew up with I suppose simple meals, and that's what I cook.

[00:33:02]

Anna Hamilton: Are they family recipes that you cook?

[00:33:04]

Frank Usina: They're what I learned from my grandmother. I don't know that she had a written recipe for anything. My grandmother was, I suppose, what you would call a pioneer type. She was a very strong woman, not in physical size, but as I remember her, and she had to be to do what she did. To survive, that's what you did.

[00:33:44]

Like I say, the meals were simple. There would have been baked beans, cornbread, and, like I say, she always grew turnips. She grew okra and turnips. Many people can't stand okra, I happen to like it, but there again, it's what you grew up with. And I suppose that she gave me chores in the process. Of course, she also cooked gopher stew, now.

[00:34:30]

Anna Hamilton: Tell me about gopher stew.

[00:34:32]

Frank Usina: Well, you probably know that a gopher is a land tortoise. They used to be quite plentiful. They are protected now. It was a very popular dish, and, of course, it was famous at Moccasin Branch out at—the political gathering out there always had to have gopher stew. And, of course, turtles were also on the menu.

[00:35:01]

Anna Hamilton: Other than gophers.

[00:35:02]

Frank Usina: Yes. You ate what was available. Terrapin soup was more upscale.

[00:35:19]

Anna Hamilton: Why?

[00:35:20]

Frank Usina: Well, I guess it just was, than a plain old common turtle. We still have some terrapin in the rivers, not very many now. You have more freshwater turtles than you do saltwater turtles. That would probably have been the bulk of the meal. It would have been simple meal. And, of course, always oysters during the winter, during the colder months. Back then it was a thing, the months with an *R* in them.

[00:35:57]

Anna Hamilton: Oh, that's oyster season is the months with *R*s?

[00:35:59]

Frank Usina: That's what it was traditionally. Why that, I don't know. But, you know, our falls were much colder. When I was in school, fall was cold. Football was cold. Bonfires were there as much to keep warm as anything else, as a reason for a fire.

[00:36:26]

Anna Hamilton: How would you prepare oysters when you all would eat them?

[00:36:37]

Frank Usina: My family prepared them a little bit differently. We had what were called oyster roast. There was a fire pit. Some of the earlier pictures particularly of my grandmother roasting oysters would have been over a wire screen, and it was one-inch hardware cloth—I'm not even sure it's even available today; we still have a little of it—over an open fire. When I grew up—the pictures of her were over something small. When I grew up, it was—I won't say more elaborate, but it was a more defined brick, two rows of brick with steel rods across them, and you just built a fire under it. Then you could have one or two of the wire screens, and you could shake them and turn the oysters over, and you had a smoky flavor to them.

[00:37:42]

Anna Hamilton: Did you cover them with anything?

[00:37:43]

Frank Usina: No. See, that was a big difference. What you're thinking of is the more traditional oyster roast over metal, a steel plate, with a fire under it, and the oysters are covered with a wet gunnysack. And that's what Gene Johnson was known for. There is, I think I remember, a mention in the family that one time Gene Johnson worked for my family—Andrew, Harold Andrew from Crescent Beach, when I was a kid, worked up here. Leon Carerra, Willie Canova, there are people that worked up here for my father. That was a big difference. Now, oysters today are mostly steamed. You will have some places that do them over the steel plate with the burlap bag covering. In fact, Betty and I

went to a conference some years ago up at Savannah, and we went to one that was doing a very nice job with it. The guy had a very elaborate thing on a trailer. He could really turn out some oysters and did a great job with it. I always thought it'd be nice to have that, but it's something that you've got to have somebody doing that and you've got to have a lot of oysters. I mean, this is for a big party, and it worked out very nicely for that. [00:39:24]

The operation that my grandparents began in 1900 basically ended in 1929.

[00:39:39]

Anna Hamilton: Oh, I didn't realize that.

[00:39:40]

Frank Usina: Everything ended in 1929. "Ended" might be a little bit too strong, but there wasn't much happening during the thirties. It wasn't until—I know they did do some parties up here with the *Victory*, I mean bring people up, but for a part of that period, I know the *Victory* was supposedly sitting on the beach, and later in the thirties, Warren Sanchez did some repair work on it. Then Daddy started running his river fishing trips. Somewhere here there's a poster. I think it was a dollar for the day's fishing, baits and line included, and lines would be a hand line. There were not too many rods-and-reels back then.

[00:40:48]

Anna Hamilton: And it would go to the ocean or—?

[00:40:49]

Frank Usina: No, the river. It was river fishing. No, the *Victory* was not an oceangoing boat. It was strictly inland. I don't know how involved the Coast Guard was in the inspections during that period as they are and have been for many years. There was licensing and documentation. I don't know. I grew up, there was more Coast Guard inspection and annual inspections of that type of stuff.

[00:41:23]

But Daddy started that, like I say, during the latter thirties and up to the war period. Daddy had a bad heart, had pneumonia as a child, maybe not as a child, but he was young and he had a bad heart. He did run the *Victory* on the weekends with people that came through the USO.

[00:42:02]

Anna Hamilton: What is that?

[00:42:03]

Frank Usina: The USO.

[00:42:06]

Anna Hamilton: Oh, I see. I see. Okay.

[00:42:08]

Frank Usina: I know you know that St. Augustine was a big liberty furlough town. What's now Francis Field, the VIC area, which is a sea of soft-walled tents they use, Florida, all of Florida had military installations. Of course, the Ponce de Leon was the Coast Guard trainings. The airport across the river was a navy training base. We had all kinds of things and pieces of planes growing up, as they either ran into each other or just plain crashed. There was a number of them. I'm not sure whether they were ninety-day wonders. I think some of them were six-week-wonders.

[00:43:04]

Of course, we had Mayport, Lee Field, Cecil Field NAS, Camp Blanding, one of the largest army training posts, and that was just here. I mean, they were everywhere up and down and throughout the state. And, of course, later in the war, some of them we used for German prisoners. That's a whole 'nother story. There's been a lot of research done on that as well.

[00:43:39]

Anna Hamilton: How did your family survive through the wartime?

[00:43:43]

Frank Usina: The same way as earlier. Like I said, I never remember any shortage of food. Wartime shortages was gas and tires, I think, sugar, possibly. Here again, my

grandmother gardened. Of course, I remember, like I say, Daddy's hogs. Friends ran cattle. And the river was always there. And then, of course, turtles were still open season back then, and turtle eggs.

[00:44:27]

Anna Hamilton: And tell me about turtle eggs. I don't think we've talked about that yet.

[00:44:30]

Frank Usina: Well, there's no polite way to describe a turtle egg. It looks like a Ping-Pong ball. It's soft. The egg itself, the eggshell is soft, and the inside of the egg is soft like a chicken egg. A chicken egg, when you cook it, gets harder. A turtle egg never gets harder. The white is consistency of a soft Jell-o, and the yellow gets a little grainy and it is salty. And, really, as I remember it, you can't tell a whole lot of difference between a raw turtle egg and a cooked turtle egg. It's one of those things you better grow up with a taste for it.

[00:45:27]

Anna Hamilton: And what would you do with them? How would you eat them?

[00:45:31]

Frank Usina: Well, the majority of them were just eaten sometimes raw, but generally just boiled. My grandmother, and I know many other people—they're very rich and they make great cakes, according to them. I've never—I suppose I've eaten a cake made with turtle eggs.

[00:45:52]

Betty Usina: Pound cake.

[00:45:53]

Frank Usina: That's what they were, would have been a pound cake type, but I would have had—I don't remember it specifically, but I would have had to. But they're unique. Now, a gopher egg, it's the same. Now, I don't know about all turtles, but the egg of a gopher is very similar to of a sea turtle. Gophers do swim, by the way.

[00:46:18]

Anna Hamilton: They do?

[00:46:20]

Frank Usina: Yes. Hard to believe, but they manage to move around, and they do float.

Anna Hamilton: ***[Laughs]***

[00:46:40]

What I remember of wartime is the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard at south Ponte Vedra, the barracks there, the horses and dogs on the beach.

[00:46:58]

Anna Hamilton: Patrolling?

[00:47:00]

Frank Usina: Yes. The watchtowers. They had field telephones, wires running up through the sand dunes for communication. Of course, we had the German landing at Ponte Vedra as well as in Long Island, where Betty lived. That was the two places in this country that they landed. And, of course, the stories of the shrimp boats and the submarines and the refueling them with shrimp boats, and the sinking of the Gulf—what was it? Out in the Gulf Atlantic, the tanker that was torpedoed off of Ponte Vedra, Jacksonville Beach. I think I remember it. Daddy had all types of stuff that came off the beach, including the gangplank, the wreckage from it. And, of course, there was a lot of oil on the beaches. Even when I was growing up, there was still at times you'd get pods of oil clumps washing out of the sand.

[00:48:28]

Anna Hamilton: Did that have any impact on the seafood industries here?

[00:48:32]

Frank Usina: The seafood industry didn't exist. I mean, there was very little refrigeration and no freezing. Even after the war, there was local seafood industry, but really there was no transportation, there was no refrigeration, and no freezing. That all happened after the war.

[00:49:03]

I remember Sid Mickler had a small shrimp boat. It pulled one net. You would go offshore, make one drag, you had all the shrimp that you had nothing to do with and very little market for them. That would have had to have been during the middle forties sometime, because it stayed at our dock at the river often. Shrimp were—I don't know what they were, ten cents a pound or something that was—if that. I don't really know. I remember snapper at twenty-five cents a pound.

[00:49:50]

And there again, seafood is very temperature-sensitive. The best thing to do with fish and shrimp is to keep it right at freezing, and that extends the life of it tremendously. The restaurants are used to be—both restaurants, I said, you know, this stuff has to be kept iced all the time. I don't want it sitting out. I don't want it warming up. It's the way we always kept seafood.

[00:50:24]

Anna Hamilton: What kind of seafood do you all sell at the restaurants?

[00:50:26]

Frank Usina: As much local as we can get, oysters, shrimp, and fish.

[00:50:31]

Anna Hamilton: And how are they prepared?

[00:50:32]

Frank Usina: However you want it. Your shrimp are going to be fried, they'll be boiled, and they'll be included in some dishes. And there again, your fish is going to be fried, grilled, broiled, sautéed. We're not getting very many local sheepshead right now, some drum. Had a big run of cobia the last month, so there was a lot of cobia on the menu. And, of course, the snapper, and grouper. We'll get as much local—particularly at Kate's, we get as much local as we can. You have to buy a lot from the suppliers. I mean, there's no way to keep a constant supply. We buy from the local fishermen. We have the licenses to buy from the local licensed fishermen, and we're trying to expand that.

[00:51:40]

Anna Hamilton: To buy from more fishermen?

[00:51:41]

Frank Usina: Yeah. We built additional facilities down there to be able to handle it. I mean, we're a licensed oyster house. That's a whole 'nother thing.

[00:51:53]

Anna Hamilton: What does that mean? Does that mean that you can sell like a raw bar?

[00:51:56]

Frank Usina: Well, no. No, that would be the restaurant operation itself. It means that we can buy and stock and sell shell stock. We're not licensed to open oysters and sell them in bulk, but we can buy the shell stock and we can store the shell stock. The restaurant can buy it from any licensed dealer. We are a licensed dealer as well.

[00:52:24]

Anna Hamilton: I see.

[00:52:29]

Frank Usina: We're stockpiling oysters right now for the oyster roast this weekend, the fundraiser for Flagler ***[Interviewer's Note: Flagler Hospital]***. That takes thirty-two, thirty-five bushels of oysters.

[00:52:39]

Anna Hamilton: And how many oysters are in a bushel?

[00:52:41]

Frank Usina: They're generally sold by the—it should be about sixty pounds. Size is going to determine how many oysters. For the most part, if you go to a store and buy oysters, you're going to buy them by the piece, by the oyster. At Kate's, we sell them basically by the pound, because that's the way we buy them, by the bushel, and it's basically two five-gallon buckets with sixty pounds. In fact, very few of them weigh sixty pounds.

[00:53:15]

Anna Hamilton: How are the oysters then prepared? Are they roasted like they would have been when you were growing up?

[00:53:23]

Frank Usina: Well, not in the same manner. I'd say they're steamed mostly now.

[00:53:27]

Anna Hamilton: I see. And where are they coming from?

[00:53:29]

Frank Usina: Most of our rivers come from either North River, Salt Run, or Crescent Beach.

[00:53:33]

Anna Hamilton: Nice. So, local.

[00:53:36]

Frank Usina: Oh, yeah. They're not as pretty an oyster as you would get as a raw oyster in a raw bar, and they're a whole lot cheaper. Oysters grow rapidly in this area. To get the pretty oysters, you have to have them under more cultivation, more controlled situation, and we don't have that in this area. There are virtually no leases in this area, so they're open for everyone, and so there's no incentive to develop a bed. The only incentive is to get as much as you can out of it from it.

[00:54:25]

Anna Hamilton: Do you see that there are pressures on the oyster beds?

[00:54:27]

Frank Usina: Of course. The NERR ***[Interviewer's Note: the National Estuarine Research Reserve]*** is doing some research now that I hope will lead to opening up areas and to encourage some cooperative cultivation. It's going to have to take some interest in the state to support that industry. Appalachicola has gotten a lot of coverage and support from the state. Over here, no. And I'm hoping that when I say the NERR are doing some work, it will lead to that.

[00:55:14]

There's more and more pressure on the existing beds as there's more and more market, more and more people in the area, more and more market for oysters. And I say ours grow rapidly, but they're not the pretty cup oysters that you want for half-shell oysters. There are more areas now that are getting into more cultivation, oyster farms, but there again, you're buying oysters by the piece and you're paying for them.

[00:55:50]

Anna Hamilton: I see. I'm going to shift a little bit, too, to ask you a little bit more about the history of how Aunt Kate's came to be.

[00:56:00]

Frank Usina: Well, of course, the Usina Pavilion, the old barn-like building that my grandparents and friends built, there were always rental boats there during the forties, even during World War II. Then after the war, people became more interested in fishing. More people in the state, as the state started to grow, people who were here during the war, stationed here, trained here, many of them came back to Florida, whatever reason.

[00:56:51]

The family had more rental boats. As I say, I mentioned the old cypress boats that I remember, but then we got into plywood boats. Some of them were built by Billy Sanchez, a local boat builder of that period, the earlier plywood boats that came into use in that period. Outboard motors, which outboard motors have been around since 1900, but they were pretty small and pretty crude and pretty much lower horsepower. By the

time I was growing up, or grown up, really, we had up to forty rental boats, a dozen outboard motors. Many of them were plywood and then the fiberglass.

[00:57:57]

There were no oysters served, as far as I know, after the late forties. There were still hamburgers and packaged stuff at the store, which was the Pavilion.

[00:58:15]

Anna Hamilton: It was called the Pavilion?

[00:58:16]

Frank Usina: Yeah. We've got pictures of it. I just remember the big sign that hung out over the road was "Usina's Pavilion," and that's what it was.

[00:58:30]

By then, Daddy was running the *Victory* full-time sightseeing, primarily during the summer, because you see St. Augustine had changed over 100 years—not at that time, but by now certainly, it went from a winter season to a summer season and now more of a year-round season with lapses in the spring and then quieter during the fall. But when I grew up, it was the summer season. The end of World War II, people took their two-week vacations and they came to the beach just as they went to the mountains in the north. So you had your cottage courts grow up. There was some here in Surfside as well as in St. Augustine, Jacksonville Beach, Daytona. St. Augustine, was a—your summer season started with Memorial weekend and ended with Labor Day. Labor Day afternoon, the

town shut down. That was the end of it. I mean, it was the end of it. It's changed over the years. It's not like that anymore. And where July used to be our big month of the year, now March is, as it may have been 100 years ago.

[01:00:07]

Anna Hamilton: That's interesting.

[01:00:14]

Frank Usina: Like I say, there weren't any meals, as such, served there after the late forties, the last oysters, that I remember, with the oysters sheds, the palmetto thatches, the fire-pit roasting oysters. Daddy had a 32-volt generator with batteries, big wet-cell batteries that you could charge, and he had some lights strung out into trees. Most of that's just pretty much what the driveway is up at Kate's today, and some of the parking, that's where the cottages were and then the oyster roasting area.

[01:01:03]

There were several people that gathered oysters. I mentioned Willie Canova and Leon Carerra. Daddy had pens that were made out of lath he sat down at low-tide bar so you could always stockpile oysters, and he also had one on wheels, on rails, with a hand winch that you could put oysters in it at low tide, and if you needed more oysters than you had out of the water, you could always winch them up at higher tide and get oysters out of it. High-speed yachts pretty much ended that. At low tide, the wake from the yachts would just destroy everything.

[01:01:52]

Anna Hamilton: The wake was—

[01:01:53]

Frank Usina: Yeah. As they destroyed the oyster beds today. I mean, the best oyster beds are in protected areas, and, unfortunately, a lot of those unprotected areas are now open to legal oystering. I said legal oystering. So the beds along the river shores don't have a chance to produce, grow up and produce. The wakes break them up.

[01:02:24]

Of course, the seventies pretty much ended the rental boat business, for the most part. I mean, there are fishing camps still. The majority of them are in freshwater, actually, but so many people have their own boats and motors that we just—the end of another era. Of course, Daddy ran the *Victory*, continued the *Victory II*, and then we're still operating the *Victory III* out of St. Augustine, sightseeing.

[01:02:55]

Anna Hamilton: When did you retire the *Victory II*?

[01:02:58]

Frank Usina: The Coast Guard retired it about twenty-five years ago. There was an episode on the Chesapeake where a boat that should not have been operating was

operating, had critical Coast Guard inspections. They hadn't pulled the certificate. And they had a problem and ultimately lost a passenger to hypothermia. The COI of that Coast Guard district was grilled on television, "Why was that boat operating?" And the next inspection cycle, they just destroyed old wooden boats all over the country. I had an inspector tell me fairly recently that he doesn't know of any wooden boats. There are still some, because there have been wooden boats that have been restored that are under Coast Guard inspection, but, I mean, I've read of them.

[01:03:54]

Anna Hamilton: So the *Victory III*'s made out of fiberglass?

[01:03:57]

Frank Usina: Steel. A lot of your boats today are built out of aluminum and steel, some fiberglass, but fiberglass doesn't lend itself well to the shape of a boat that's used for sightseeing. They're big boxy hulls, most of them shallow—most of them are not built for the ocean use. I mean, they are, yes, but most of your sightseeing boats are inland. There's not a whole lot of sightseeing out there in the ocean. Whale watching, that's a different style of boat. Boats like the *Victory* are not licensed for offshore use. They weren't built for it. They're very utilitarian for what they're used for, but they're not seagoing boats. Of course, like I say, the family's still involved in that business.

[01:05:04]

Kate's came about—we still had a few rental boats down there and until probably, oh, fifteen years ago or so, the bait house is still on the dock. I've kept it as long as we can, I guess. When it goes, there's nothing left on this river once you get past Comanche Cove.

[01:05:34]

Anna Hamilton: You mean to stop and buy bait and—

[01:05:35]

Frank Usina: Or soft drinks, beer, sandwich, whatever. I mean, when it goes, it's gone. It's not practical. There's somebody that operates it. The rent doesn't pay the insurance on it. I can't see it as a moneymaking operation.

[01:06:03]

Anna Hamilton: Do people still stop, though, from the river and—

[01:06:05]

Frank Usina: Oh, yes. I started to say this morning, but yesterday morning the lady down there running it said they had the only live shrimp left in the area, that they weren't going to last long, because the other shops were sending them over to them. Shrimp are a little bit cyclical. Fourth of July, there are no shrimp available. I mean, any shrimp on the Fourth of July is under bait size. I don't care what size of bait size it is, it's under bait

size. Most of our shrimp now are shipped over from the Gulf and have been for many years.

[01:06:48]

Back when we were operating the fishing camp, a lot of ours came from down around New Smyrna, Oak Hill area and they were shipped up. We also caught our own shrimp as much as—I remember that quite well. That's all changed over the years now. The shrimping industry here developed during the fifties. It peaked. DESCO what, 2,500 trawlers they built? Trawlers at the St. Augustine marina. How many boats they built here, I don't know, shipped all over the world from here. There are a few shrimp boats out here right now because this is the year when you catch the white shrimp. Unfortunately, the shrimp you're catching are your roe shrimp.

[01:07:44]

Anna Hamilton: So you're cutting down the future populations a little bit.

[01:07:48]

Frank Usina: Mm-hmm. There are some regulations, but it's limited, and river shrimping is—well, we get our run at shrimp up at Pine Island every year or two. St. John's has some big years. Most of our shrimp come out of the Georgia marshes, I imagine, some out of St. John's and the marshes. That's their nurseries. That's what they've got to have.

[01:08:22]

Kate's, twenty, twenty-five years ago, we leased the old building to Oscar and Laura Leathers to redo it and open as a restaurant. Had to build a kitchen onto it, of course, because the kitchen that I grew up with was certainly not a legal restaurant by today's standards. Just like ***[unintelligible]***'s crab cakes are legendary, but she cooked them at home, and that finally had to end. Rules. She didn't have the only legendary crab cakes around St. Augustine, but those are other stories.

[01:09:21]

Oscar and Laura opened the old pavilion as Oscar's. There again, it was just an old barn, and they operated it for, oh, maybe five years or so and sold the business, and, oh, some years later it burned, mysteriously. It was almost definitely set. Betty and I were out of town at the time, but talking to the fire marshal after we got back, the way it started—of course, it was a big old pine building. When it started, it was gone. It did not start in the kitchen. It started just inside the front door where there's no—there's very little electrical in the building itself, very little. And the fire started in the south end of the building, just inside the front door.

[01:10:24]

But it sat there. I'd hoped to find someone who wanted to come in and reopen a restaurant there, and at the time, we got a lot of interested people who wanted to build condos, and we were not interested in that. Condos are fine. My aunt, when she retired, loved living in a condo. It would drive me crazy. To each his own. Till finally I decided I needed to do something, so I drew up some rough drawings of a restaurant and gave it

to a design group and they gave me something we could permit, and Jimmy Solano built it for us, and there it is.

[01:11:11]

Anna Hamilton: And what year did it get started again?

[01:11:13]

Frank Usina: Five years ago. Five years ago in March.

[01:11:19]

Anna Hamilton: Happy birthday.

[01:11:23]

Frank Usina: It's become more and more popular. It's done well. We're trying to—you know, there are now—one, two, three—four good-sized restaurants out here and several smaller ones, and every time a restaurant opens, it seems there's more business. They're all different. Cap's, The Reef, Kate's, and Beaches are the big ones. They're all different, so there's something for everybody.

[01:12:07]

When I did Kate's, that was my intent, to be different from The Reef. It's much lower-key. There's a little similarity in menus, but not that much. Of course, The Reef is known for its Sunday brunch and its overall décor and food. Kate's is different. I call it

upscale fish camp. It's a little bit more than that. It's an odd building. I wasn't going to replicate a big old barn. That's been done. You can fake all you want to and put all the rusty sheet metal on there you want to. Kate's is more old Florida or low country, if you like, steeper metal roofs and porches and siding.

[01:13:07]

Anna Hamilton: What is the menu like at Kate's?

[01:13:11]

Frank Usina: Heavily seafood, with pastas and a limited meat. You've got to have a decent steak, but primarily seafood, shrimp in all forms and fish in all forms.

[01:13:29]

Anna Hamilton: What is Minorcan about Kate's, would you say?

[01:13:33]

Frank Usina: The pilau and the clam chowder. I'd say we kept them as true as we can, because how many different recipes for pilau and clam chowder are there in St. John's County? Hundreds, as there are for Datil pepper sauces. And, yes, Kate's does do a Datil pepper sauce. People seem to like it. It's not as vicious as some. I've got Datil pepper sauce that'll light you up. It's many years since I would eat a Datil pepper. It's not worth it anymore.

[01:14:23]

Anna Hamilton: A whole Datil pepper?

[01:14:25]

Frank Usina: Yes. I mentioned Gene Johnson. One of Gene's favorite is sucker somebody into taking a saltine and put some raw oyster and Datil pepper sauce on it, and sucker somebody. There was a little restaurant on San Marco back in the forties, maybe fifties. The name doesn't come to me right now, one of the local families, might have been Segui, I don't know. It was a little gas station and he sold hamburgers, and he loved to sucker a tourist into trying some Datil pepper sauce. I think they may have moved later to Orange Street, where the train station is today. I can't think of the name right now.

[01:15:26]

But, like I said, Datil pepper sauce is hot and it can be vicious. Now, of course—years back, there was one Datil pepper. Now there are many Datil peppers. You can get Datil peppers that have Datil pepper taste and no hot at all, or you can get them with medium hot. I haven't grown any the last couple years. I've always got some home in the freezer, and people bring them. Of course, we buy a lot of them for Kate's.

[01:15:59]

But that's the two things, and that's probably as much associated with Minorcan as anything. Yes, cast netting, making nets. Very few people make nets any day. My

brother did it all of his life. I knitted on nets for many years. I never made one from start to finish. Jack always started them and we always finished them, but I never made one start to finish. Of course, you know, we started out with cotton knits because cotton twine is what we had, went to nycots, because the cotton you had to very carefully dry and hang up. Nycot, all you had to do was wash it out and throw it in a bucket—I mean, monofilament. I mean, you don't have to—you just wash it out and throw it in a bucket. Nycot you had to take a little bit better care of. And there's one of Jack's nets, one of my brother's nets, in the window down there at Kate's.

[01:17:02]

The fromajardes ***[Interviewer's note: fromajardes are a Minorcan pastry typically made around Easter]***.

[01:17:13]

Anna Hamilton: Do you all sell the fromajardis?

[01:17:14]

Frank Usina: No, no. I'm not going to push that one.

[01:17:19]

Anna Hamilton: Okay. That's fair.

[01:17:22]

Frank Usina: I won't tell you that—because pilau is not recognized—it's a harder sell. There is nothing sexy about pilau.

[01:17:39]

Anna Hamilton: You mean for customers?

[01:17:43]

Frank Usina: It's just what it is, you know. It's not paella. It's not—that Cajun—

[01:17:54]

Anna Hamilton: Jambalaya?

[01:17:57]

Frank Usina: Jambalaya, you know. Pilau is simple. That's how it came about, and it still is. Yes, I say, are there 100 recipes, 500 recipes? I have no idea. Everybody makes it a little bit different. They probably make sausage pilau down here more than anything else, but they make shrimp pilau, they make chicken pilau. Like I say, my grandmother's ham and bean pilau or—do you make beef pilau? I don't remember beef pilau. I mentioned the crab pilau. But shrimp and chicken was what was available, and, in our case, hogs.

[01:18:47]

Kate's has grown in popularity steadily. It's standing on its own feet at this point.

[01:18:57]

Anna Hamilton: Is it the local community that's coming to eat, or is it tourists, or is it both?

[01:19:01]

Frank Usina: There are very few local restaurants that exist on local.

[01:19:08]

Anna Hamilton: On local customers?

[01:19:08]

Frank Usina: That's right. Maybe something like a Cheese Wheel or something, which is a lunch spot, but if you want to think about local restaurants without the visitors here, I mean, no, the volume is not there. Even your smaller restaurants downtown, no. And unfortunately now, we don't go downtown and eat that much anymore. We used to. The only place I can park now is my daughter's parking lot, and we might walk down and eat at Columbia or someplace along St. George Street. St. Augustine's going to have to address its parking. It's hidden from it for a long time, the city has, and we have to have driving within the city. We can't have the visitors driving all over town, lost, and trying to find a place to park. I'll leave it at that.

[01:20:27]

Anna Hamilton: That's fair.

[01:20:28]

Frank Usina: I've been on a half a dozen parking committees over the years.

[01:20:30]

Anna Hamilton: Oh, gosh. ***[laughs]***

[01:20:32]

I do want to jump in and say we've been talking for about an hour and twenty minutes, so I know that's a long time. I don't want to keep you forever. I just have one more question, and that's about the next generation of sort of the Usina empire here in North Beach.

[01:20:48]

Frank Usina: Don't call it an empire.

[01:20:50]

Anna Hamilton: Okay. ***[laughs]*** The collective.

[01:20:52]

Frank Usina: This is closer to Topsy.

[01:20:55]

Anna Hamilton: ***[laughs]*** What are the plans for the future?

[01:20:59]

Frank Usina: Plan? Plans, to me, are kind of like budgets.

[01:21:06]

Anna Hamilton: How so?

[01:21:08]

Frank Usina: Betty has always encouraged me over the years to have a budget, but I said, well, you know, what you do is you hope you take enough money in to pay your bills and the taxes. And we've always done that. I think we're known for that.

[01:21:26]

The fishing camp grew because we were there and there was demand for rental boats. We started the RV park because we had land that we were paying taxes on, and someone advertised in AAA there was an RV park four miles north of St. Augustine, which there wasn't. So we started a small RV park that's grown, very popular.

[01:22:06]

Betty and I talked about building a restaurant on the ocean. It finally became apparent that because as the state regulations got more rigid, I had to do something. So

we built what became The Reef. I built it for the Compton family to operate. We had the restaurant property down at the corner basically where Publix is now, that my father built in the latter thirties and my mother ran it as a service station during the war, with some groceries and stuff.

[01:22:42]

But, no, we didn't have any restaurant background. I had no intention of running a restaurant. But Steely Compton's health, he had to sell the business, and we leased it out several times to less efficient operations, finally got fed up with it, and said, "Well, we need to go back in there and see what we can do with it," and it took a while to reestablish its reputation.

[01:23:15]

Kate's grew because we had to do something with the property, and so we'd already had our nose bloodied enough with Reef's, so we couldn't do any worse, so now we have another restaurant. They're both paying their bills and make a little money. You don't go in a restaurant operation to make money. If you do, you're kidding yourself. Most of them, like many businesses, close quickly. You might hit the right niche and you might do well for a few years, but if you're going to depend on that, you're not going to stay in business. You've got to build a good, solid business, well operated, that supplies what people want.

[01:24:11]

The Reef has, aside from its regular menu, which people seem to like, we have The Reef's brunch, if anybody wants a brunch in this area. Now, I don't want a brunch. I

don't even remember when I could eat that. But we were talking yesterday morning briefly at our meeting over there, Monday morning meeting at The Reef, we just touched on the brunch thing, and the most popular thing is the crab legs. I mean, there are people who eat their dollar in crab legs and more. Of course, they're known for their prime ribs, and Kate's doesn't go to that level. It stays with the more traditional. Now, it's not going to do a cheap seafood buffet where you buy a lot of frozen stuff and throw it out there. Most of the vegetables are prepared right there. I say "most." Black beans come out of cans. They don't cook them from—you could. Sweet potatoes come in in boxes, and they're cooked and make sweet potato out of it. Collard greens come in in boxes, and they're chopped and cooked.

[01:25:58]

As I say, we buy as much fresh local seafood as we can. As we can. I'm not going to advertise that we don't have anything else, because you have to have a supply of fish and shrimp available to you, and we cannot supply them here. The only way to handle fish over any distance is to freeze it. Otherwise, yes, you can fly in refrigerated fish, but everybody ain't going to pay for that.

[01:26:36]

As far as plans for the future, we've been talking about the RV park. We have expanded it several times over the years, and we've considered expanding it further. It's going to be a very interesting permitting process today, and I really haven't looked into how extensive that would be.

[01:27:13]

We could possibly develop more of the land for residential use, and I would say that's not the top of our list. If it was, it would be single-family. Daddy started—I mentioned North Beach subdivision earlier. When it was platted out in 1890, it was 50-foot lots, 50-by-100-foot lots with checkerboard-style straight streets. A1A didn't exist. When Daddy bought into the property over the years, mostly in the forties, he just didn't think a 50-foot lot was a big enough to build on, and he had some other restrictions that he placed on. This was way before zoning or anything. So a lot of North Beach is sold with deed restrictions, as a pair of lots is the minimum.

[01:28:14]

Other properties that we added to it when we bought more of it during the sixties. We've maintained that, and North Beach is a nice area to live in. It's a nice neighborhood. You got one of the best access to the beach that exists, because every street right-of-way runs to the beach. There are houses along here, but every 200 feet there's a 60-foot right-of-way. They run to the river on the other side. We've got a good launching ramp. St. Augustine Boating Club has its own ramp. There's the county ramp as well. People walk. They ride bicycles. They push baby carriages. They walk dogs. They come down to the ocean to watch the sunrise and they go down to the river and watch the sunset. Not tough. I ask people when they think they've discovered something out here, say, "Don't mess with it. Leave it alone."

[01:29:31]

Anna Hamilton: Makes sense to me. Well, I don't have any more questions. Is there anything you want to add that we didn't talk about before I turn this sucker off?

[01:29:40]

Frank Usina: I really don't know.

[01:29:42]

Anna Hamilton: Okay.

[01:29:45]

Frank Usina: There are always things you can add.

[01:29:46]

Anna Hamilton: That's true.

[01:29:48]

Frank Usina: I've learned over the years that things that I don't remember pop up out of nowhere once in a while, and maybe another time we'll talk some more of them.

[01:30:09]

Anna Hamilton: I hope we do. Thank you very much.

[01:30:12]

Frank Usina: Certainly.

[End of interview]