Leo Lovel
Commercial Fisherman, Writer,
Former Owner of Spring Creek Restaurant (closed)
Spring Creek, Florida
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[00:00:00.00]

Annemarie A.: All right. Today is Tuesday, May 18. I'm in Spring Creek, Florida, and I'm here with Mr. Leo Lovel. Mr. Leo, would you go ahead and introduce yourself? Tell us who you are and what you do.

[00:00:16.04]

Leo L.: Well, my name is Leo Lovel. I've been many things. I'm not too much right now other than a maintenance man of this property out here on the coast. But we've been here forty-three years. We had a restaurant for forty-two of them. Hurricane Michael put us out of business. That was the fifth hurricane to put water in the restaurant. Before, it's been no problem; we had it down to a science getting it fixed up, but this time, it just ruined all, everything inside. It would cost too much money to crank it back up, so we just prepared our rental property, which consists of twelve covered boat slips and six uncovered boat slips. I guess we've gone the way of the rest of the old North Florida coastline in that it's all changing again. Apalachicola was a huge cotton port to start with, that was its claim to fame; then the Civil War happened, and wasn't any cotton shipped any more. So, they discovered that seafood, man, they had oysters and shrimp out the gazoo and they got world-famous for their seafood products. Then, due mostly to regulation—to where you couldn't make a living at it anymore—and, I would say, environmental changes like in the oyster industry over there, the seafood industry wouldn't support the county anymore. So, it's changed, in that it's now tourists, rental houses at the beach, ecotourism, fish guides, restaurants and that sort of thing. People from all over the country visit there, if not all over the world. Spring Creek is a community at the end of a dead-end road that

was totally a commercial fishing community. There were, back in the early [19]70s, there was probably forty oyster boats working out of here, tonging oysters in our little bay out here, Apalachee Bay. There were probably fifteen or twenty of us that had gill net boats. There was two thirty-five-, forty-foot stone crab boats running out of here. **Mr. Lee Nell** ran the **Mandolee** that he had built in the 1940s out of cypress offshore and would stay a week and come in with two, three, four thousand pounds of grouper and snapper and amberjack. There was seven or eight blue crabbers that worked out here. The Spears family at the end of the road, they shucked oysters, picked crab meat. For years, we walked out the front door of that restaurant and walked fifty yards down to the end of the road for everything we needed. Alex Nichols had the *Wanda Carol* here, which was a thirty-five-foot shrimp boat. We opened our own seafood business, which is where we are right now. We call it the Spring Creek Fish & Oyster. The Spears family had two more fish houses over there. There were tractor trailers coming in here twice a day. We, personally, were involved. We had stone crab traps, fish traps. We'd stay three days offshore, grouper and amberjack fishing. Had every size gill net that we needed to fish all year, run season October through December was our big time to get some red roe mullet and make the money. We shipped softshell crabs and octopus, and I'm not talking about ten pounds, I'm talking about thousands of pounds. Rock bass, grunts, blowfish tails, grouper, pompano, mackerel, bluefish, amberjack, to New York City twice a week from right where we're sitting right now. Eighteen-wheeler would pull in here Tuesdays and Saturdays. We'd put anywhere from three to fifteen thousand pounds of fish on that truck.

[00:05:21.28]

Annemarie A.: That's crazy.

[00:05:24.02]

Leo L.: It is. It just amazed me, this garden, which is the Gulf of Mexico—or farm, it's beyond all that—has all this produce to offer and the best thing you can do to it is do nothing to it. But things are changing, let me get back to that. That's what we were, and that's what had been, really, Spring Creek, forever. And, of course, it modernized and production got better. But then that got . . . it started with the net ban. 1995, state of Florida made it illegal to have the gear it took to catch fish. Then, they started putting turtle excluders in the shrimp nets, and fish excluders in the shrimp nets. Closing gear, giving us quotas. What they never took into consideration, today, the government—the lawmakers—we had all the challenge we needed between the weather, Mother Nature, just the fishing seasons were like every other business. It had boom years and bust years and all in between, but you could make a good living at it. Spring Creek's changing. It was, like I said, there was also a bunch of guide boats that old, retired commercial fisherman that most them couldn't read or write could take parties, what they call parties out, most of them from Georgia to catch trout and redfish. Well, then they made laws that you had to have a Coast Guard six-pack license to be able to carry people out for hire. To this, 2021, you pretty much have to be college-educated, because you have to take a course and then you have to pass a pretty technical test to get the license that a lot of people take and fail. We've got three or four members of our crew right now taking the course. And, again, back to the change: what they want to do is eco-tourism. What they're currently doing is the big change. We've gone from a totally wild harvest to, now, and thank goodness we're

growing oysters from seed. It's been a unbelievable thing to watch. My two sons and I were the very first people in the state of Florida to acquire oyster seed. We did all this by the seat of our pants. I think we got thirty thousand. WEI built wire cages, and we were just starting to get into the clam business. We were trying to stay watermen. We've been connected with water all our life, and it look like the only way, if we were going to stay watermen and make any money at it, was to get into aquaculture. And it was clams. That's all there was at the time. But then the oyster thing started getting worse, and worse, and worse. The wild oysters just disappearing. So, Curt [Hemmel] called me and said he had some oyster seed left over from another product he'd done. He has a big hatchery in Florida. [Terra Ceia] I told him I'd take 'em. Sure, I know to put 'em in the water, but what else do you do? [Laughter] Well, you need to figure that out. But we did. We made the wire cages; we built P.V.C. racks, 'cause you can't let oysters get silted over or they'll smother. This is kind of funny, but every year, you have to prove to the Department of Aquaculture [FDACS] that you're farming. The way you do that is, you send them a copy of the receipts for the seed that you purchased and whatever product you might have sold. Of course, all of ours was just seed we purchased, because we were just getting in it. So, I checked all the places and answered all the questions. I think there was something about comments I made. We are experimenting with oysters. We have gotten thirty thousand oyster seed, we've built cages, built these racks that are about eighteen inches off the bottom. Got the cages on top of those. So far, they seem to be growing very fast. And they were, it was unbelievable. Unbelievable. Well, I got a letter right back from the state. "Mr. Lovel, we're glad to see that somebody is experimenting with new products in the state of Florida. This is the kind of thing we need. But, you are in violation of statute

so-and-so, such-and-such, number three. You can't have anything higher than six inches off the bottom and you're in violation of that with your racks." So, we've been studying on oysters: how they do it up north and countries that have been doing it forever. The biggest success seemed to be with floating cages, or cages that were up in the water column, off the bottom. We got invited to go to Auburn University's oyster lab. Bill Walton was the expert at the time and still is, and he's an amazing person in this industry in that he's really got his heart and soul in it. He knows the business. Where they were, they were actually taking oysters and inducing them to spawn when they wanted them to, and they took us all through that. The secret of getting a single oyster, rather than a clump of oyster, because clumps are no good in aquaculture 'cause you've got to have a single oyster. And an oyster gets to stick one time; it's got a tongue that can taste and it can stick. This is an oyster spat, now, that you have to see with a microscope in the water. And what they want to stick to, by nature, is oyster shell. So, the way they solve that problem is, they handed me a Ziploc bag that looked like it was full of whole wheat flour, but it wasn't flour. It was oyster shell that had been ground precisely to the shape and size of the tongue of the spat. And they induced the eggs and milked from the oysters and they mixed that together, and then that goes into another vat that's agitated, swirling. It's got those particles in it, and those particles stick to that little, tiny piece of dust and form an oyster.

[00:13:48.02]

Annemarie A.: Are you serious?

[00:13:50.08]

Leo L.: They sent me an experiment in a tank, recirculated tank. One of the nurseries sent me fifty thousand oyster seed, UPS, came in an envelope about that big. You could put 'em all right here. And I had to go buy a super magnifying glass, because you couldn't believe they were oysters. But they were. I put them in one of my old—we used to raise soft crabs, so I fired off one of those tanks, put those seed in there, and then we had to order algae concentrate from California. It was amazing. I mixed the algae like the directions said and poured in the water. Water would turn just as green, so green, you couldn't see through it. You'd come back three hours later, it was crystal clear. You could feed 'em again and come back a few hours later, it'd be crystal clear. And they grew. I mean, they actually got up to . . . oh, gosh . . . not as big as the end of your finger, by any means; half that size, your little finger. And we put them in a nursery bag and put them out there in the bay and checked them once or twice, and somehow, they just got lost in the process. But that shows you how the oyster industry was, getting started. Getting seed, right now, is a terrible problem. You talked to Jody yesterday. She probably told you all about that. But we've had—and this is what we've missed the most—we've had the most exciting, adventurous life that you could ever ask for. You know, I wrote a couple of books. All that's true, and there is so much more that I could write. I would like to. We've seen this world change in four years.

[00:16:15.18]

Annemarie A.: I bet.

[00:16:17.21]

Leo L.: It's different people. The oyster industry is struggling. But it has turned the corner. These people that are doing this oystering, which you've met . . . they've been unbelievable, inspirational. I can't say enough about them. They have got the procedure down, and it's a lot of work. But there's no doubt that it's going to pay off in so, so many ways. Number one: —and I just feel certain that somebody knows what's going on and just isn't telling us—why is it that this bay, that I know better than my backyard, could grow? I mean, if we wanted oysters, we waited for the tide to go out and we jumped in a boat and went out and got on a bar with a five-gallon bucket and we filled that bucket up with hand-size, single oysters, wild oysters, came home and ate them. Those bars are dead. I mean, they are dead: they're brown. If you get out and look, to me, it looks like the oyster shell that's laying there is about thumbnail size, thumb size. There's a whole lot of reasons, or could-be reasons; ocean, maybe, acidification. But on the other hand, we're growing oysters in world-record time. The finest-tasting, looking, healthiest, cleanest oysters that you will ever see on the surface. This is not a deep bay. [Laughter] And there are people that are planting diploid oysters, which are the wild oyster that reproduces. Triploids are the most practical because they don't foul their shells with spat that they produce, and they feed all the time. Wild oysters get real weak after they spawn, and not really worthy of eating until they fatten back up and it slows down their growth. These oysters just keep, keep growing. The problem they're having now is getting enough seed. The market has gotten, they've had chefs come down here from up in north Georgia and all kinds of different places that have tasted these oysters and just want to know everything there is to know about them. But they have got the process down. But we miss the old days.

[00:19:39.08]

Annemarie A.: I bet.

[00:19:40.25]

Leo L.: I mean, one of my . . . I've thought about titling my book, "My Life in a Rubber Suit," because we wore slicker suits. You know, big overalls are plastic to keep us dry. We had 'em on every day, that and rubber boots. Either getting in the crab boat, or we ran an airboat for fifteen years. Commercial mullet, fished it. That was amazing. I was down here thirty years before I had one. Tried to get them outlawed and they wouldn't outlaw them, so after the net ban, I got one. It worked out too good, really. We continued to fish after the net ban with . . . it's a long-story, but with semi-legal nets, nets that were in question sometimes, sometimes they weren't. This is how the law was for a few months. You can have this size mesh net on the boat. You can have fish in your box, but you can't be caught with fish in the net. Now, how crazy is that? But, anyway, we fished every day during the fall for run mullet. We left out here in the airboat. It was kind of like, either Ben or Clay, one of my sons, was up front. I went, a lot of times, by myself. I mean, I would be checking the engine and oil pressure and all going out the canal, and they would be checking the nets and getting everything else in its exact place, perfect position to strike. From the time we busted that boat off, you didn't know what you were going to see, what was going to happen, who was going to get after you. It was a good life. I mean, we had times we couldn't catch anything and then we had times we caught so much. It would be hard for you to believe unless you see it. That Gulf of Mexico is

something we really need to try to protect. This part of it, up here, nobody wanted to come here for a long time because it's all marsh grass and woods and bugs. But now, people, when they come and look out across this marsh and they see eagles and ospreys and mullet jumping in the canal, and alligators swim across, manatees go by and some of the best fishing in the world. Produces some of the finest fish and stone crabs, I mean, I could just go on and on. And we missed chasing it like we used to.

[00:22:59.21]

Annemarie A.: I bet. Well, for people who may never get to be here at Spring Creek and Oyster Bay, would you kind of describe it? Describe what it looks like, describe what you got to see for forty-three years on the water every day?

[00:23:14.01]

Leo L.: Yeah. I'll give you a description. This will give you, maybe an idea. One of my real good friends, he lives in Panama City. His wife was tourist promotion in Panama City, and they visited over here and he asked me if I'd take them out on the airboat. I'd say, we got the airboat, took out, went down the canal and ran out in the middle of the bay out there and turned the boat off. It swung around. We're out in the bay of space and the shoreline, and she went, her face just lit up. She went, "Oh, my God. I've never seen anything like this." The Gulf of Mexico was nothing but pine trees and marsh grass and live oaks in the background and not hardly a building in sight. Another beautiful thing about this, you can get in a boat—and this is where we fished, this is where we spent most of our life—we'd come out here. We'd head east. We'd go by Oyster Bay and Shell

Point. Live Oak Island, which is, that's a mile, maybe. After that, there's nothing on the coast for . . . fifty miles. Wildlife refuge, national forest. We're sitting here, where we're sitting is surrounded by a hundred and eighty thousand acres of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, which two million acres of state and national forest backing that up. If that gives you an idea of what a pristine area this is right here. But we've got fourteen—reasons it's named Spring Creek—there's fourteen freshwater springs scattered within a quarter of a mile of where we're sitting. U.S. Geological Survey told us, or they sent us a print-out, that there's twelve hundred and eighty-four million gallons of freshwater comes out of the ground here.

[00:25:34.01]

Annemarie A.: Wow.

[00:25:35.25]

Leo L.: We had a mixture of every kind of fish that lived in Florida because it was a basic freshwater environment this way—it's all controlled by the tide—and there was so much water coming out here, it took about, when the tide turned and started in, it would take about two hours to stop the current going out. But we had freshwater fish, salt water fish, every bird that you can name that migrates through or lives . . . the monarchs come through here. If we had a hummingbird feeder up, there'd be hummingbirds all around it. Which we have had, we just have to put it up this year. Yeah, every snake that you could think of used to be around. There's not many. I don't miss them too much, but it wasn't

anything when it was dry for there to be a moccasin under that water spigot over there. [Laughter]

[00:26:46.17]

Annemarie A.: I believe it.

[00:26:49.12]

Leo L.: But not anymore. And the people that lived here then, when we first came here.

[00:26:57.05]

Annemarie A.: Could you talk about them a little bit? Who were they?

[00:27:01.05]

Leo L.: Well, the Spears family. I don't know, they own all the springs on that property over here. They were a totally, totally fishing family and had been for . . . I think Mr. Willie Spears, the daddy, and Ms. Nellie, the original Spears that came down here and bought that place, traded for it or whatever in 1930s, okay? Maybe even before that. From what I heard, Mr. Willie was quite the businessman. They, back in those days, the way they fished was, they had a big boat—twenty-five, thirty feet long, crudely-built boat, but a good boat—with an old flathead, gasoline motor in it. Then they had about twenty-five rowboat fishermen. Matter of fact, I'm rebuilding that skiff right there. Was a preacher Uncle Floyd Gray's paddle skiff, and I think his daddy built. Uncle Floyd died thirty years ago at the age of eighty, s that boat's probably a hundred years old and it's been

sitting in a barn for thirty years, and all the nails have rusted completely out of it. So, I'm having to put all back together to—I'd like to fish it again, but it's mostly just to preserve it. But I think the wood's good in it, so. But that's the kind of fishermen we had. They didn't have outboard motors. He'd string them all together, twenty guys and their twenty boats, little boats or however many they could round up that day—I'm sure of some them would hide every once in a while, I probably would—and he'd drag them out here in the bay and turn them loose. They'd have nets, and they'd catch what they could catch out of their paddle skiffs, and then he'd go back in the evenings and pick them up. Fortunately, one of my favorite friends, he was my mentor that taught me most of what I know about mullet fishing, he grew up down here. He was probably as good a fisherman, shrimper, that you'd ever, ever want to meet. And his sons still are. They're getting old like me, too. And he's got some grandsons that are still fishing. That's the Nichols family.

[00:30:05.00]

Annemarie A.: What was his name?

[00:30:07.15]

Leo L.: The Nichols?

[00:30:09.23]

Annemarie A.: Yes, sir, what was the man who was your mentor?

[00:30:11.18]

Leo L.: Alex Nichols, A-l-e-x, but everybody called him Alec. Alec and Irene Nichols. I called him every morning up until he died. He . . . they had it going on over there, I'll put it that way. You could make a movie out of it. Today, you could still go over there and just throw dirt on that paved road and get some actors and film something. But they had it going on over there. They owned an ice company, or their family did, up in Colquitt or one of these South Georgia towns. From somebody that lived down there told me that they delivered ice. They didn't have ice machines; they delivered block ice. When we'd go fishing—when I first started—when we'd go fishing, I'd take those blocks them and drop them in one of these great, big metal machines with these teeth and grind it up and spew it in your box. Anyway, they brought the ice down from Georgia. They brought moonshine liquor, and they brought the ladies. I understand they had three slot machines that they kept in the big house all week. Of course, he paid off on Friday. Sunday evening, the empty ice wagon and ladies went back to Georgia, and Mr. Willie had all his money back. He . . . he was a smart businessman, I'm telling you. Did very well for the Spears family.

[00:32:20.25]

Annemarie A.: Sounds like it.

[00:32:23.13]

Leo L.: Yeah.

[00:32:24.24]

Annemarie A.: Well, when did you first come to know Spring Creek? How old, what year was it?

[00:32:30.00]

Leo L.: It was . . . Mary Jane and I got married in 1970. We had our fiftieth anniversary this year.

[00:32:39.15]

Annemarie A.: Congratulations!

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Leo L.: Thank you. We have eight grandchildren, seven granddaughters.

[00:32:45.17]

Annemarie A.: Nice.

[00:32:47.03]

Leo L.: [Laughter] But we came here in [19]77 and bought the restaurant. And what question did you ask me? I'm sorry.

[00:32:56.22]

Annemarie A.: Oh, well, I asked you when you first became acquainted with Spring Creek.

[00:33:05.24]

Leo L.: Oh, that's what I was trying to remember. Daddy had a little cottage over on Shell Point. There wasn't anything over there. We started coming here before we got married, eating at the restaurant. Then I fished out of Shell Point. Then one day, we got adventurous and we explored over here, and just couldn't believe this place; the springs, no people. I was in the paint business, in Tallahassee commercial paint. Sold paint. And loved the outdoors. We got to become really good friends with the waitress and people in the restaurant who ate there all the time. One day, Lillian's husband stopped by the store—paint store—and said, "Mr. Carvell's going to sell that place down there. Are you interested in it?" I said, "I don't know anything about the restaurant business, but I'll go talk to him." And anyway, we wound up owning it, buying it. My mother owned a share, my father owned a share, I owned a share, and my grandmother, Helen, owned a share. None of us had been in the restaurant business before. We came down here and my mom started cooking some—we had fish fries at the house all the time, her hush puppies and her cheese grits and frying fish like we fried them at home, and just knocked it out of the park. I mean, it was not unusual back in the [19]80s and early [19]90s for people to wait an hour, hour and a half to get a seat. But everything we were serving as coming from right here, I mean, just the freshest fish you could ever see. We had Southern Living gave us four pages back in 2009. That changed out life for about a year and a half.

[00:35:15.12]

Annemarie A.: I bet.

[00:35:16.07]

Leo L.: Evidently, everybody in the state of Alabama gets Southern Living, because we opened at five o'clock during the week. I'd walk up, normally I would five until five, five thirty, go up and take a shower, shave, change clothes, go the restaurant. Lord! At four o'clock, there'd be twenty cars, all from Alabama, sitting out there at the restaurant waiting for us to open up. But we served people from every state in the country. Then, the state—when we planted those first oysters—

[00:35:57.18]

Annemarie A.: What year was that?

[00:35:59.29]

Leo L.: Oh, God. It's got to be . . . six or seven years ago.

[00:36:07.16]

Annemarie A.: Gotcha.

[00:36:09.20]

Leo L.: I don't really know. Started harvesting some just for us at the restaurant and selling them at the restaurant. And the word got out. Number one, they were the best-tasting oysters anybody could have ever eaten in their life, because they came from—these oysters here are, too. We had every newspaper, television station. We have reporters wanting to go out with us, and we took some, and then we had to just start saying, "Look, we've got to go

out there and look. We can't take you and tell you what we're doing and do it again." You know? [Laughter] Because the camera didn't . . . we were in newspapers all over the place. People were calling. We got written up in the New York Times. It was like, what in the world? I'm glad that's kind of gone by. You know, it gets old after a while. I had people pointing a camera or microphone in front of me a lot. My sister-in-law called me from Spartanburg, South Carolina at six-thirty one morning. Of course, that's one of those calls, you think—"I'm sitting here watch NBC national news and there's Leo on!" I was right down there on the dock. I mean, she'd been here a number of times, but I'm just telling you, it was just kind of crazy, the attention it got. And it's still getting quite a bit. But the kinks are getting worked out of it, I think. When I say the kinks, you've got to have a constant. You're going to be in business of supplying something, you've got to have a constant supply of a good, quality product, and that was somewhat of a problem at the beginning. What was unbelievable, was back before cell phones, when we had the fish business just rolling down here, I'd walk up to the restaurant. I'd call one of the processors on a hard-line phone. They had communications with their drivers, and they had networks of semis all over the state, delivering, picking up. So, I could have—we had eighteen thousand pounds of mullet piled up and stacked up in hundred-pound boxes, hundred and eighty boxes right here one November day. Two hours later, there's a semi here to pick it up and take it off. Well, we started getting people wanting oysters in New York and Chicago and different places to try. "Oh, I know how to get them there." I started calling all these truck lines and all: they're gone. We're not producing enough seafood. The Barbers had done very well in the wild oyster business, they're over in East Point. Are you familiar with them?

[00:39:32.15]

Annemarie A.: I'm not.

[00:39:34.05]

Leo L.: They had it going on. They probably have three or four tractor trailers of their own. I don't know how many shuckers they have. They're ordering oysters out of Louisiana and Texas by the tractor-trailer loads, and used to, all it handled was wild Apalachicola oysters. Well, there's not any. So, they shuck hundreds and hundreds of gallons of oysters a week and sell every kind of seafood there is. They've been there a long time. You might want to stop by there.

[00:40:11.23]

Annemarie A.: Yeah, I will. What's their business called?

[00:40:17.28]

Leo L.: Barber's Seafood.

[00:40:21.14]

Annemarie A.: Gotcha, cool.

[00:40:19.13]

Leo L.: You can't miss it. It's on the left-hand side of the road. There'll be a huge pile of oyster shells outside. It's a two-story building. There will be tractor trailers backed out to 98. David Barber. I know his father was in it, and I don't know how far back it goes, but his son's grown and he's in it. They probably have thirty, forty employees.

[00:40:50.26]

Annemarie A.: Sounds like quite the operation.

[00:40:56.11]

Leo L.: It is. It's a big operation. But that shows you, that's another part of the change. The oyster inspector that handled here last year. She said, "Leo, I've been to every oyster house in Franklin County today." She said, "There was a total of eleven and a half wild bushels of oysters harvested total." That's nothing.

[00:41:23.20]

Annemarie A.: That's crazy.

[00:41:26.02]

Leo L.: And now you know the bay is closed for five years. And they know what's wrong, and they know why they lose every time, when they get—you know, in front of the federal court system. Because the state of Florida's the one that messed it up. They dug Bob Sikes Cut. Are you familiar with that?

[00:41:55.21]

Annemarie A.: No, tell me about it.

[00:41:58.14]

Leo L.: If you cross the bridge going into Apalach, and you look out, you got St. George Island. And then you've got Bob Sike's Cut. Then you've got Little St. George. Then it goes into . . . another island. Before Bob Sike's cut, all that water coming out of the Apalachicola River had to flow miles and miles and miles laterally to get out. When they cut Bob Sike's Cut to increase tourism and yachts—and the commercial industry—they knew it was going to raise the salinity, because hell, they just opened a gate for the tide. Y'all see the water that goes through there when the tide is coming. It's just . . . well, one reason you have oysters around rivers, and everybody thought they had to have freshwater to survive? They don't. They have to have freshwater to protect against predators. That's what's happened to the Apalachicola oysters. That and overharvesting. As you probably well know, when the oil spill was coming, the state turned them loose. When I say turned them loose, they turned the oystermen loose to catch anything: no size limit; no, get them all, boys, 'cause they're fixing to be covered with oil. And they did. And it didn't come. So, it's a big combination, if you follow what I'm saying. You never hear them say anything about Bob Sike's Cut, but that's one of my beliefs, that what's caused it is man-made. Now, it lets the salinity rise and all the different things are just death on an oyster. Like oyster drills, they're a welk, got a little snout like an elephant. He goes up to an oyster and he puts that little snout up there and he excretes some kind of acid or whatever and drills just the prettiest, tiniest little hole in an oyster, out he goes. I can't call the

names of these creatures. They're devastating to oysters but they're tiny, tiny, and they can actually get in an oyster when it's just in the feeding position. Break in and then some of them break down the shell on the inside, and some of them mess up the oyster, but they can't stand fresh—brackish water.

[00:45:07.07]

Annemarie A.: That makes sense.

[00:45:09.16]

Leo L.: So, that's part of the problem there. What's going on here, I don't know, because there's been no . . . you know, we went through a drought eight or nine years ago, terrible. Mr. Lee Nell who died five years ago, he was eighty-six, was born here. He and I stood at the big spring down there, and you know how your bathtub looks when you let the water out? That spring, instead of having water gushing out of it, had a vortex in it. It was sucking water, saltwater.

[00:45:46.19]

Annemarie A.: That's crazy.

[00:45:48.25]

Leo L.: He said he couldn't believe it. He said he'd been here all his life. And to show you how things change, he and I saw our first manatee in 1982 here in Spring Creek, and he had lived his whole life right there on the water. They weren't here. Now, we got—and this

has been in the last five years—I fished thirty-something years, striking six and eight hundred yards of net off from Dog Island to Aucilla River. Thousands of miles and caught everything that I thought lived here. I never caught these drum they've taken on here, that weigh anywhere from twenty to fifty pounds, and all they eat's oysters and crabs. You can get out on those bars and, if there was a clump of live oysters, sticking up ladyfingers against each other about as big as your thumb, the tops of them are just crunched off like a cow would eat grass. You can ride by out there and see a tail a foot wide sticking out of the water because they're standing on their heads. They're built like a tank. I mean, they're perfect for standing on their heads. When you clean one of them—which they don't bring many of them in—his entire intestinal track is full. He eats the oyster shell, too. I guess absorbs the nutrients out of the oyster and passes the shell.

[00:47:31.10]

Annemarie A.: That's crazy.

[00:47:33.21]

Leo L.: Yeah. I know I saw Charlie. You got a minute?

[Pause in interview]

[00:47:39.21]

Annemarie A.: Okay, so, we're back. I was wondering if maybe you could talk a little bit about . . . I'd like to know a little bit more about the history of Spring Creek Restaurant. Who did you all buy that restaurant from?

[00:47:58.22]

Leo L.: There's only been two owners. There's been a lot of leasers. We bought it from Mr. Bud Carvell from Rome, Georgia, who was in the road construction business up there. Great man, him and Ms. Mary. They've both been long passed. He basically built Spring Creek. This canal and the next canal, he drilled and put dynamite down and blew them up, and then they took what they—back then, all they had, they didn't have these excavators; they had drag lines that slung the bucket, you know what I'm talking about? And he dug these canals. You didn't have to have a permit or anything back then. That's all fill over there. I don't know what it was, probably marsh. So, he built the restaurant and the motel, and this was Bud's marina, his marina. Or used to be, when we bought it, we didn't buy this at the beginning. Every slip had a twenty-foot-long, hand-built, cypress flat-bottom boat that were built right here on site with eighteen-horse Johnson motors on them. They sold beer and shrimp for bait and tackle in that store right there. People from Georgia would fill that motel up, hire a guide or a lot of them knew their way around a boat and would go fishing. I told you about the guides having to have the licenses to carry the party, so that was a big beginning of the end for this marina. Then, they wanted . . . all these insurances and more regulations on the little store up here. And Hubert and Liv, who'd run it for years, Hubert was the most amazing man I guess I ever knew. He and Liv had been married. They lived in middle Georgia, and he worked for Georgia Power. He went up a pole and the power was supposed to be off, and he got stuck to a transformer. They thought he was dead. He could hear everything, but he was basically paralyzed and stuck to that transformer. They were all just hollering and crying. The other lineman wouldn't

come up there and get him. I mean, he shorted out the power, so the power went off. But the two helpers borrowed the spikes from the lineman and went up and got him, because he'd always been good to them, giving them lunch and stuff like that. Anyway, he lost his left leg at the hip and his right arm at the shoulder, and that man could do anything any other man could do, if not better. He was the feistiest old guy, and he was our business partner, in the fish business. He kept everybody straight. And he messed with people. Lord. A tunnel boat, that's like that mullet boat you see? That's got the motor in the middle? There was one tied up, head of the dock up there one day, and he had a bunch of kin folks down here to take fishing. Old Georgia boys. "Mr. Hubert, when you going to take us fishing?" They were sitting up there, drinking beer. He said, "I'll tell you what, son. I'll take you fishing. See that five-gallon bucket right there?" "Yes, sir." Even though the water's dark here, sometimes, and of course, that boat was in the shade. He said, "I need you to bail that water out of that boat." It didn't have a motor on. It was just that square hole in the middle of the boat with the ocean right there. "And when you get that water out, we'll go." Smoking a cigarette and drinking his beer and all of his buddies are scrunching up their face like, "What?" That boy starts bailing, and he bails and he bails and he bails. Finally, somebody snickered, and when they snickered, everybody just went to laughing like hell. The boy's going, "What's going on?" "Get out of that boat! Can't you see that's the ocean under there? You're not bailing the water out—" But Hubert did that kind of stuff all the time. You never knew when he was fooling with you.

[00:53:13.13]

Annemarie A.: That's great.

[00:53:15.13]

Leo L.: Yeah, he and Ms. Liv, they ran this place for years and years. He just died last year. My son, who's done all the art work in the books, he drew Hubert. About that big. And he sold—the first person that bought one was the sheriff of the county. Ms. Liv held two would-be thieves at bay. She got up one night. They lived in a mobile home right there and there was a bunch of little boats with motors on them. She happened to look out the window, and there's a car parked at the restaurant about one o'clock in the morning, and there were two guys toting an outboard motor up there to it. So, she woke Hubert up and said, "Oh, they're coming back for another one." Hubert, of course, is in bed asleep. His leg's not on. You know, so . . . Hubert gets on his little rolly stool, and he's got his leg and he's trying to get it strapped on. Liv said, "They're taking it off right now!" Hubert's got his pistol sitting there beside him, but he can't get there. Liv grabs a B.B. gun and runs out the door. Hubert makes it to the door, he's sitting on the door still, trying to put his leg on with one arm. Liv's out there with that B.B. gun. "Hold it right there! I'm going to kill both of you!" They just dropped the motor and put their hands up. Hubert's saying, "Shoot them, Liv! Shoot them right now!" They're going, "No, no!" They called the sheriff, and the sheriff showed up and arrested the guys. David Harvey was the sheriff at the time. He and Hubert and Liv became really good friends, and they awarded Liv for bravery. [Laughter] Anyway, Clay drew Hubert, and David Harvey bought the first copy. Then people bought—because he was such a character. His family bought pictures of him. I wish I had a copy to show you, because he got him. I mean, it's Hubert. He'd clean his fingernails with a pocket knife with one arm. He made tools. He repaired outboard

motors in that one side of that shop. He made tools that would . . . that would work like if you needed two wrenches, you could put this tool on. How does a one-armed . . . ? He fished by his self all the time. He kept a fiberglass arm with a rod holder on the end of it in the bottom of one of his boats at all times. And caught fish. I was going by him one day and I guess he decided to change fishing spots, had his anchor out. How do you take an anchor up with one arm?

[00:56:23.23]

Annemarie A.: [Laughter] I've no idea. I don't know! That's crazy.

[00:56:27.02]

Leo L.: You grab it with your arm and you pull it up and you bite it with your teeth. You reach down and you grab up another armload of rope and clamp down on it. Like I said, the man was incredible. He really was.

[00:56:45.06]

Annemarie A.: Sounds like it.

[00:56:48.06]

Leo L.: And he's just one of a cast of characters to live down here back in the beginning. People showed up down here, walked in down here, from nobody ask them where they came from or . . . and they could get a job for beer and cigarettes and a place to sleep. And be on the back of a boat most of the time. And they'd disappear the same way. The craziest

one was Crazy George. That's his name. He looked like a Viking. I'm talking about I guess you would have said he was a handsome, rough guy. You know, built like a gorilla. But he wasn't . . . all there. Mostly there, but he had a lot of quirks. But he'd go over there and split wood in August with an axe with one arm to show off to the neighborhood. He rode a boat all over. I got into altercations with him out there. But one of the guides here that liked to drink picked George up and they went to St. Mark's and went to Outz's and got drunk and got into an argument. George told Peanut to go to hell and he'd get home on his own and disappeared. Well, Peanut had another drink or two, got in his station wagon and took off up the road. Real, real foggy, and he hit something. He turned around and went back and it was George. He killed him. Walking right down the middle of the road.

[00:58:57.03]

Annemarie A.: That's awful.

[00:59:00.03]

Leo L.: I know. And we had drownings. Part of it, I guess.

[00:59:05.19]

Annemarie A.: Yeah.

[00:59:07.02]

Leo L.: I remember dragging for . . . I can't even remember his name anymore, off Live Oak Island. He fell out Pistol's boat, crab boat, coming home. Pistol said he wheeled around, he took the oar and stuck it out to him, and said he just . . . went down. So, we went, all went over there, about four or five of us in our boats with our little twenty-foot shrimp nets and drug and drug and drug until it started getting dark. I told Pistol I was going, and he said, could he borrow my net because he'd torn his all to pieces on the rocks. I said, "Sure." Next morning, my net was laying up there, torn all to pieces. I called Pistol and he said, "Well, we got him." He said, "We'd given up and we pulled the net in and his fingers were hung in the webbing." You know, they passed by him and . . . we all went and looked for the Hurley boy, same thing. He fell out of the boat here at the mouth of the creek and the guys couldn't find him, so everybody went looking for him. I think he was Mike Hurley. Mike was bald on the top of his head. He was a young guy. Mitch spotted, he was about that far under the water. He could see that looked like a crab cork. They got him back. But there's been a few they've never found. One guy went duck hunting out of here, heavy man, and he didn't come in that night. So, sent a guy at daylight, they went looking for him and they found him. He'd fallen out of the boat and he had—he couldn't get back in. He had his arm over inside the boat, but he was dead from hypothermia. Whole lot of smuggling went on around here.

[01:01:11.09]

Annemarie A.: Yeah? You want to tell me about it?

[01:01:12.04]

Leo L.: Sure.

[01:01:14.08]

Annemarie A.: What kind of smuggling?

[01:01:17.28]

Leo L.: Marijuana. Shrimp boats.

[01:01:22.03]

Annemarie A.: Oh!

[01:01:21.17]

Leo L.: Yeah. One of the funniest ones, it wasn't funny for them, but this big shrimp boat pulls up to St. Marks, to the Lynn brothers' dock, and the guy stops off the boat and says, "We're here!" W.A. goes, "So?" "We're here!" "What does that mean?" It kind of dawned on him. "We need fuel." Big old eighty-foot shrimp boat. "Okay." I think W.A. said they put fifty dollars' worth in, which ain't nothing. Tied loose and started on up the river. Well, St. Mark's River's not . . . but there were some old marine ways up at the Newport Bridge. That's where the drop point was supposed to be. One of my buddies—I didn't know about this for two years after the fact—he had a job with the operation, and that was to take the watchman to lunch while they unloaded. So, he did. Well . . . [Laughter] He's sitting up there eating lunch with this watchman, and the guy runs in the room. Names are wrong. He goes, "Jim! You need to get back over there to the boat yard!" He

said, "There's cops everywhere over there!" Jim said, "You need to take me back over there, something's going on." He says, "No, finish your lunch. Finish your lunch." "No, I can't!" "Well, I'm starving. I've got to finish mine." The other guy that came in said, "I'll take you." So, he ran out of the room. My friend, he went straight to his car, jumped in it, and went to Tallahassee and had another buddy take him to the airport and he flew to Jamaica and stayed there for . . . about a year. He decided to come home. He said he flew into Miami, got off the plane, he said he didn't take ten steps down the concourse before somebody came and grabbed him by the shoulder and arrested him. [Laughter] But that's just one. There was another one. This off-duty policeman in Thomasville, Georgia was eating breakfast. Shows you how things happen. And the table behind him was going Oyster Bay this and Oyster Bay that and one o'clock in the morning and yada, yada, yada, Oyster Bay, Oyster Bay. So, he called FDLE. He said, "I don't know what, but there's something going on at Oyster Bay. It's going to be at one o'clock in the morning. There's a lot of coordination going on." They looked up, and there was, like, forty-three Oyster Bays in the state of Florida. Well, the sheriff's department put an undercover police car on the Shell Point Highway, because it's the only way in and out. Sure enough, about one o'clock in the morning, a U-Haul truck and another bigger truck came down the road. Oyster Bay wasn't developed yet. What they had done, they had offloaded on Smith Island out here. There was a little island just right off, quarter mile off the bay. They had boats. They were going to ferry it in and be gone. Anyway, they caught them. [Laughter] All the young guys here, this had been forty, thirty-eight years ago. I noticed all of them had ice bags full of pot, walking around Smith Creek, because when they went out and recovered that, the bails had busted open. I guess they just left it laying there on the

ground and didn't pick it up. [Laughter] So, there was plenty of weed in Spring Creek for about six months. It's crazy.

[01:06:14.13]

Annemarie A.: Oh, man. Well, can I ask you a couple of questions about—could you give me your date of birth?

[01:06:20.23]

Leo L.: July 8, 1951.

[01:06:24.15]

Annemarie A.: Great. And where'd you grow up? Did you grow up here or did you grow up in Tallahassee?

[01:06:29.12]

Leo L.: I grew up in Tallahassee, out on Lake Jackson, when Lakeshore Drive was a dirt road. Which, it's in the middle of town now. Been outdoors all my life, and then bought this. I started commercial fishing for the restaurant a little bit, and then we got into it in a big way.

[01:06:54.02]

Annemarie A.: Well, could you tell me a little bit about—I'm interested in the mullet fishing, because I think that that's also kind of a big thing going on here. Could you maybe

explain a little bit about, 'cause you're talking about the red roe mullet, could you talk a little bit about that and how that might be different? Who buys it?

[01:07:14.01]

Leo L.: Okay, during run season is what we call it. You've got the males and the females. The females are what we call red roe mullet, and it's bright yellow. What they call it red roe, I don't know. It's just bright yellow. But it is highly, highly prized in Japan, China, Taiwan, France: the eggs. We had one place in the county that split the roe and froze it, and then it has to be perfect. And you can't . . . the red roe mullet, they would pay us by the percentage of body weight of the weight of the eggs. Fourteen percent—I'm going to make the numbers up. The percentages, I'm not, but, they didn't really want to buy any till it got to be twelve to fourteen percent of the body weight. That brought the fish. We sold the whole fish, and Sigma International used to buy them all down in Tampa. They were under an Asian corporation. But they would harvest that roe and it's a trick to get it out without busting, because if it's broken in any way, shape, or form, they don't want it. Then each set of roe, which it's two, depending on how mature they are. I would say a five-inch roe that's as big around as a quarter would probably be sixteen percent of its body weight, and they liked that. It would get up to eighteen, which is amazing, if you think about it. The fish don't eat. They put on fat all September; August, September, early October. They'll get a layer of pure lard in them a half-inch thick, and their egg bag will be about that big, about an inch long. Well, evidently, as that roe—and it grows fast—they live off that fat. Because when you catch those big, red roe mullet, their belly is paper-thin. All that fat's gone, and you got this huge roe. You have to be careful when

you cut their head off. You have to cut it off at an angle, or you'll cut the roe off, it's so big. But they also value the gizzards that are in the mullet, and the mullet is the only fish that has a gizzard in it.

[01:10:04.23]

Annemarie A.: Interesting.

[01:10:06.25]

Leo L.: Matter of fact, back in the [19]60s, the state outlawed mullet fishing during roe season, and Wakulla County went up and said they couldn't regulate it. The Fish Commission couldn't regulate it because it wasn't a fish, it was a bird, because it had a gizzard. I think they let them go back to catching fish, because it was just this complicated line that they couldn't figure out what to do. [Laughter] But in the white roe mullet, that's the male. Some—very, very, very few people like to eat white roe. I don't in particular. I love red roe. I like to sautee mine and roll it in a little flour, put some olive oil in a pan with some fresh garlic. When that garlic turns just a light brown, lay that roe on there in medium heat and roll it around till it gets crispy on the outside. You either love it or you hate it. It's one of those things. Some people, you couldn't make them eat a piece of it. But that's when we made our money. The white roe mullet, the red roe went for, like . . . last year was the weirdest year ever. I didn't even go. First year in forty years I didn't go. The price went to fifty cents a pound for red roe mullet, and we had to drive a hundred miles.

[01:11:56.22]

Annemarie A.: Not worth it.

[01:11:59.03]

Leo L.: They paid us a dollar and a quarter the year before! They paid us—oh, and they didn't even want any white roe. So, you know what you do with those? You sell them for crab bait, twenty-five cents a pound. That's the other thing. When they outlawed all this mullet fishing, we were supplying one of the most healthy, inexpensive sources of protein anywhere in the world. Cheapest source of protein! That pretty much went away, too. We could've fed the world during the pandemic with our gear. There shouldn't be anybody hungry in this country. But anyway, it's . . . the mullet, they are the basis. I will agree, and that's part of the argument they used to put us out of business. They said, oh, the mullet's the basis of the foodchain. Everything eats them. Yeah, they're right. Everything: birds, the little treat out the baby mullet, the porpoises and the sharks and the marlin eat the four-pound mullet, we eat the mullet. It is the basis of the food chain, and there's millions and millions of them. They weren't threatened. By state records, they started keeping records, I think, in the [19]40s or [19]50s. I may be a little wrong, but I don't think I'm too wrong: the state of Florida harvested between twenty and twenty-eight million pounds of mullet every year for sixty, seventy years before they outlawed it. If you're threatening a species, you're not going to have consistent catches like that every year, but that's the way it is. It's written in stone. If the governor and all the lawmakers stood up and said—and they have—"We know this is wrong, what we did." Even for science it's wrong, because we're catching these tiny fish. We can't change it, because it the state constitution. It was voted on by the people, and it cost the proponents of the net ban

twenty million dollars they spent in advertising. They were supported by the entire tourist and recreational industry in Florida, so, they got the money. When you picked on a bunch of commercial fishermen, they just don't have it. I mean, there's organizations, but they don't have any power. Not like the hotel industry and the outboard motor industry and the airlines. You know what I mean.

[01:15:16.19]

Annemarie A.: Yeah.

[01:15:17.27]

Leo L.: They even published a paper that said—this is before they outlawed speckled trout—they make them a game fish. We used to harvest those big-time, and red fish. They said, they published a paper that said in our state, one pound of speckled trout caught by a commercial fisherman and sells for a dollar and twenty-five cents a pound. A one-pound speckled trout caught by a man that flew in from Michigan, stayed at a Holiday Inn, ate three meals a day in a restaurant, hired a boat and guide, got an out-of-state license, spent money, was worth four hundred dollars. Well, to me, that's apples and oranges. But it worked. And on the shrimpers, they showed pictures all over the state in the newspaper of a shrimp boats with turtles just piled up on the back there. That was their poster child for how devastating shrimp is. They proved that that picture was a state of Georgia research boat rigged to catch turtles, tag them, and release them. [Laughter] That was the picture they used, because it was on a shrimp boat. It's just hard to fight that.

[01:16:59.16]

Annemarie A.: I can see that. I can totally understand.

[01:17:04.23]

Leo L.: It changed. That one Article Ten, I think it is, changed this whole coastline. It really did. This county was timber and seafood. I mean, big-time seafood and big-time timber. Then the timber business kind of . . . St. Joe sold their plan. The seafood industry in this part of the world is over.

[01:17:43.18]

Annemarie A.: What year did you give up commercial fishing?

[01:17:50.00]

Leo L.: I didn't fish last year just because it wasn't worth it. I'll be out for this year if the price is reasonable. It's the most exciting, that first bunch of first I struck forty-something years ago, I ain't never looked up. I found out I could get money for that! That's what I wanted to do. We stopped, hell, we didn't even hardly hunt anymore. If I didn't hunt, I had a rod or a reel or a fishing pole for twenty-something years. [Laughter] Because we were fishing. I remember I took my sister-in-law and her husband, he fished with me a lot. We had a house on Dog Island for a while. We used to go over there and stay four days with the kids and come back with five hundred pounds of fish for the restaurant of all different species. One night, we wanted to eat fish, so I said, "Well, let's all go." So, we all got in mullet boat and went out there and found us a little pod of fish and struck off about fifty

head of mullet. She said, "Boy, that makes that rod and reel fishing we do look silly!" [Laughter] But it's fun to get fish on a rod. I've gotten back into it since we've gotten pretty good at catching redfish and getting out there. But things back to change. Everything's just changing. If you don't change with it . . . and it's funny, you can also look back. Hurricane Michael kicked our butt. You can see the outline—this was our cooler.

[01:19:50.04]

Annemarie A.: Oh, wow.

[01:19:52.03]

Leo L.: Back in the fish days, we had two twenty-five-hundred-pound-a-day ice machines in it. But we were in the oyster business when Michael came. This cooler was here. It was a walk-in freezer over there. A dock. Well, see how that's chewed up out there?

[01:20:19.24]

Annemarie A.: Uh-huh.

[01:20:21.17]

Leo L.: That's because the water was this deep and some boat dock or something was slamming against that, but it busted that cooler.

[01:20:27.27]

Annemarie A.: Mercy. Oh, wow.

[01:20:30.14]

Leo L.: All to pieces. I'm talking about just crushed. Took down that, was the prep room. Wiped down everything in the restaurant. That was the most popular AirBnB you've ever seen in our life. I couldn't have believed it. My son and his wife, my wife, fixed it up where it was the cutest place you ever saw. Wiped that place out inside. All the floor came up. Have you been in there yet?

[01:20:58.25]

Annemarie A.: I haven't.

[01:21:00.15]

Leo L.: All the floor came up, but it was all inside, so we put it all back down. So, it's been re-wired. It's going to get all spruced back up again.

[01:21:16.05]

Annemarie A.: Well, good.

[01:21:18.03]

Leo L.: But that, what I was getting: I probably lost forty percent of my property value here. Lost all the equipment up there. We decided we weren't re-opening. If we'd have to

borrow the money, we'd have to put the land up for collateral. And it's paid for, it is paid for. We felt like we'd had our butt kicked pretty hard.

[01:21:47.21]

Annemarie A.: Yeah.

[01:21:49.01]

Leo L.: But we still had this to get going. What I'm getting at: had we decided to re-open and borrowed all that money and then COVID came, I probably would've lost this place. So, Hurricane Michael did us a favor in the long run. I mean, it was harder to see at the time, but now . . . phew.

[01:22:17.23]

Annemarie A.: Yeah.

[01:22:19.11]

Leo L.: So, I'm thankful for that. Not really—you know what I'm trying to say?

[01:22:22.12]

Annemarie A.: I know what you're trying to say. I can look around and see that this is a very dynamic place and a lot of good things are happening here.

[01:22:33.26]

Leo L.: Mm-hm. Yellow fly. They bite.

[01:22:37.11]

Annemarie A.: They're all over. They do. They're all over. [Laughter] Well, I've taken up a lot of your time and I was wondering if maybe my last big question I like to ask people is, what do you hope to see for the future of oyster aquaculture, the future of Oyster Bay and Spring Creek?

[01:22:57.16]

Leo L.: I think I'm seeing it. Jody and Dewey have got this thing, their thing, rolling here. These are two young college students. They bought this little house, you see the tin roof right there?

[01:23:18.18]

Annemarie A.: Uh-huh.

[01:23:20.09]

Leo L.: Great guys. They rented from me. They just gave me their last check, because that's their boat. They bought that, and they're oyster farmers and go to college. They're opening—that's going to be a processor, too.

[01:23:33.24]

Annemarie A.: Nice.

[01:23:35.07]

Leo L.: All right. Then you got Estuary Oyster Company is over on that next canal.

[01:23:45.13]

Annemarie A.: I gotcha.

[01:23:47.05]

Leo L.: And they're processing oysters and selling them. With the popularity of these oysters they're growing . . . everybody that grows, farms oysters, produces a different product. They're all the same exact seed, same exact species, but I think what's going to happen is already happening. Spring Creek's going to become an oyster mecca, if you know what I mean. This is where you come to eat oysters, buy oysters. I'm going to sell this place. It's for sale. What I'd like to see, and what I think I'm going to see, is: it's not going to change much. People that are looking at it. They're going to update and upgrade. It's just going to be a combination of oyster farming, eco-tourism, fishing guides. It's going to be a . . . if you want to see Old Florida, the last of Old Florida, this is where you're going to get to go see it. Because it doesn't need to change. What's lucky is, you can't change any of this.

[01:25:13.00]

Annemarie A.: It's gorgeous.

[01:25:15.01]

Leo L.: Yeah, and when you walk out on the end of this dock and start looking that way . . . it's all St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge.

[01:25:27.17]

Annemarie A.: Yeah.

[01:25:28.25]

Leo L.: And it keeps, it wraps. That's all what this is above us. It goes for miles and miles and miles to the east. So, this is going to look like that hopefully a hundred years from now.

[01:25:42.08]

Annemarie A.: I hope so, too.

[01:25:42.12]

Leo L.: This place is amazing, what it produces, too. I don't know if it's time yet, but the tide's up in the mornings and the sun shines on this wall. At the right time, there'll be ten thousand shrimp that big. They look like bats, just hanging on that wall.

[01:25:58.29]

Annemarie A.: Crazy!

[01:26:01.02]

Leo L.: And they grow up here and then, when they get a certain size, they move out in the bay. Then, when they get about that big, they take off.

[01:26:11.03]

Annemarie A.: Well, is there—I know you have a whole bunch of stories under your belt, but is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

[01:26:19.19]

Leo L.: I've covered it, I think.

[01:26:22.11]

Annemarie A.: Well, thank you so much!

[01:26:22.11]

Leo L.: You're welcome.

[*End of interview*]