

**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA — FALL 2009**



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

Interview with:	Tom Mayers
Date of Interview:	October 14, 2009
Interviewer:	Casey Schelhorn
Subject of Interview:	Longboat Key
Transcriber:	Casey Schelhorn

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

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

He has an interesting history in that he came from Italy and he came to Savannah. He and my great-grandfather had the biggest fish house in the Southeastern United States in Savannah, and then he moved. John Savarese left Louis, and Louis was my great-grandfather. John Savarese came down to Tampa, and started a fish house that was bigger than the one in Savannah. It was a coincidence because he was very bright and a successful businessman, but it was a coincidence because the railroad came to Tampa at the same time, around the late 1800s. What that did was it gave somewhere to sell the fish to, because Tampa was a small place. With the railroad, all of the

sudden the fish could be shipped up to population centers and it became a big business. He had 150 boats fishing out of his fish house plus he had the *Mistletoe*. He had about 500 people working in the industry, plus he had spinoffs.

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

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

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

They bought this property and they built a little cottage on it. From 1936–37 they had a structure, and after that they just kept adding to it. Now it is a real comfortable, unique house perched over the water. They bought the property from John Savarese. He, back in 1913, had built a house for himself here, and the house was further out, and that house was damaged in a storm in 1921 and it destroyed the house, and it was out another 100 or 200 feet. The house was destroyed, and then my parents built a house a little further back, thinking that they would build it back because of what happened to the 1st house. Now the water has sort of eroded the land so that we are right on the edge of the water. The next hurricane could take this property away, but I guess it is well-named Land's End.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was a man from the DNR [Department of Natural Resources]... His name was Tom Savage, he came here and we went around looking for mangroves together. We went to University of South Florida in St. Petersburg where DNR had its station, and I worked with him and he wrote some important papers on mangroves in the early days. I worked with John Morrill, I did mangrove studies all the time I was in New College. Each time I came back I would go to John. I went to New College for 20 years, on and off. I never flunked out, I just dropped out and was accepted back; they always let me back in. Finally, they graduated me. I did my thesis on Sarasota Bay mangroves and it was 170 pages. John called me up to ask me if I wanted to work. I said sure, I can work. He had me working for a scientist doing biomass studies. It had to do with the development of Arvida on Longboat Key. So I did that and worked with a Ph.D. on those things.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

clean and then they build all these houses. They come back and plant the trees because it is easier to do it that way. If you go back to the developments from the '60s and '70s they left all the trees they could, they set aside wilderness corridors and all of that seems to have been forgotten, and it's not as though we have more of those areas left.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They used to take the fish down to Cuba by boat. Miami, back in 1900, had 30 people residing there. Tampa was a small town. They had a place called Fort Brooke. I have pictures of my ancestors outside of Fort Brooke. Fort Brooke is where they went inside of a stockade to protect themselves from the Indians. Between 1800 and 1850... I don't know when Florida became a state, but it was a territory. John Savarese was from Italy. It may have been taken after the Civil War, but just think of the dynamics of what was going on after the Civil War—the North and the South and carpetbaggers trying to take advantage of the locals, and all the things that were going on. It may have taken someone from Italy to be a success. He wasn't from the North. He wasn't from the South. He was a little bit different. He was fair to everybody. So, you know, it was interesting... I had a man calling from the Tampa Yacht Club who wanted to know if I had any pictures or history of my great uncle. He was an investigative attorney, so he was really a bright guy and just had a lot of material that he had gotten together on the early days of sailing and it was the centennial of the Tampa Yacht Club, and they were doing a book for the centennial. He was providing information. They had a sailboat race around 1900 and two captains... John Savarese on his Mistletoe was the committee boat, and the two captains that were racing, one had to be wrestled down to the deck because he had pulled out his shotgun. He had been drinking all afternoon and as he had come across the finish line one guy had done something to make him mad, so he pulled out his shotgun to shoot the other guy on another boat. I think it is incredible to think of how fun and freewheeling that must have been back then, to be drinking all day long and that these boats were workboats, and to think that my uncle was a captain. John Savarese was the committee boat because he probably owned the boats that were racing. He had the fish house and had a lot of sailing boats. That is some of the fun history, and to think of the carriage trip, what an onerous sort of trip that must have been, going from Tampa to Sarasota, not knowing whether you were going to get robbed, attacked by Indians or have a wildcat attack you.

My dad came down here and he was in paradise. All of the sudden there were rattlesnakes everywhere. We ate them. He wasn't a real conservationist. He would catch them. I remember him drinking and saying that he could catch rattlesnakes with his bare hands, two of them. They would take bets, and he would go out and catch two rattlesnakes with his bare hands. Nobody would even imagine that he could do that, but those were the days and he could do that. They used to have bombing runs on Longboat Key where they blocked the main road off, because they were practicing bombing. That was during WWII. I have all sorts of pictures to show you the old days. I'm trying to give you the background. Growing up I never knew, my dad was from Barbados, he had this seafaring thing. Then I went to Barbados and it was this island in the middle of nowhere. I sailed there because I was on a racing sailboat, and I got to Barbados and I could see, and it all started fitting together and I could see that they had nothing. They are in the middle of nowhere. They are one of the most cultivated islands down there. They have the Queen of England, Mick Jagger, the Beatles as guests, and hotel rooms that are fancier there than those

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

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

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

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

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

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

What I'm trying to do with the Historical Society, is build up an idea of what was here on this island originally. I did a video on it, trying to describe the native vegetation that was here. What was on Longboat Key when it was first found by Europeans? I think that it is interesting that people don't have a concept that there used to be deer and bear here. I talked to a man who worked for the forestry service... He was a PhD and traveled here and in the Caribbean and he said that what the first Europeans did here originally was to log. Even in the earliest days on Longboat Key there was logging. There were people interested in logging and timber, at the same time as they were logging, they would bring over a barge with some mules and some skids and they would bring it across the bay and float the trees over to a mill where they would mill the lumber and bring guns and hunt the animals. This was the earliest incursion into Longboat Key, aside from Indians and there were small groups of Indians. An archaeologist who is really good is George Luer PHD, and he can tell you about the Indians of Longboat Key. Aside from the Indians, and the little bit of development that they did, there were loggers. They actually first changed the island. The island never was a kind of virgin place in history once the Europeans arrived, but it was a very nice place. You can imagine 90% wilderness in 1960. It was a really exciting place to live. We didn't even see much of it. We just didn't have an idea of it diminishing.

I've done a lot of interesting thinking about Longboat Key and what happened... You see this little bay right here? There are a series of little bays and lagoons along the length of the island that exist where old passes used to be. Whenever you see in the aerial photos isolated bodies of deep water and you think, "How did that get there?" It may have been a pass at one time and it closed up as a deep embayment or lagoon and I'm sure that is not the most earth-shattering sort of deduction ever made but I don't think that many people really understand it. This bayou here is a natural bayou that my great uncle dredged out back in 1915. You could say they didn't have big dredges here in the 1800s. When my uncle came it was already there and it was deep. You could ask how did it get there? It was a pass at one time that land accreted around and encapsulated and then the accretion moved on. This is what is happening here. You see this piece of land here. That is just an ongoing process, and I don't think people realize that it is just one of those things... That's how these islands are formed, and that is part of the history that barrier islands keep moving. They are not meant to stay in one place. They are talking about putting jetties out here to keep the land from eroding. The most changes I've seen here have been since they've started doing the beach renourishment. The more they renourish the beaches, the less stable the passes seem to become, because of this free sand going into suspension in the water and being deposited somewhere else. That spit of land if you look as far as you can see into that little corner there, 10 or 15 years ago that is all of the land that was there, and now all of that has grown where there was just water not long ago. That's pretty fast. It is beach renourishment. It washes away and where does it go? Well you can see it is right here.

When I was back in school, they had two theories: one was retreat, the other was renourish. The one got drowned out and the renourish people are the ones that have taken over, and it's like an industry, they have sold everyone into buying over on the Gulf. My dad used said only a fool builds on the Gulf. Lots of people have watched their houses wash away after building on the

Gulf. So, my dad said, only a fool builds on the Gulf. Because that is just part of living on the Gulf. They had a house that had washed into the water near here on Longboat, and we used to go over there and it was like a fun house. The concrete foundation had split and there were sea oats growing in the living room and all the windows were knocked out from a high tide during a hurricane. It was an abandoned house and we used to walk through it as kids. We used to say wow, they just lost their house, isn't that incredible. We used to walk through it all the time going to the beach. Then they built condominiums out in front of that house by 100 yards, and they are saying they have a hard time keeping beach out in front of the condominiums, and you can say, wait, there was no beach there originally. Now you are saying you need to restore beach that never was there.

I don't know, the older you get, the less you seem to know. I don't know much about foreign policy and don't know what we ought to do about it, but you hear the people on TV and they know everything. I tell my daughter, I have an 18-year-old daughter, and I say the more you think that you know what's going on, the less you know, and the more you realize how little you know, the more you probably know and she looks at me like, "You've totally upset my whole hierarchy of learning and getting smarter." And I say it is only a fool who thinks they know everything. I just am surprised every day about how little I know. But I've found a nice home here. I've been all over the United States, I've been to Europe, I worked as a captain in the Mediterranean I worked as a captain in the Caribbean, and if you need to go someplace in a sailboat, you hop on a boat and go out the pass and go anywhere you want. Go to Australia if you want to. It is a neat idea, but as a kid, when I was fourteen years old, I had a nineteen-year-old girlfriend, and my parents told me to get on a boat and go somewhere. So I got on a boat and took off to the Keys with a guy, and he didn't know how to sail well and that was the first time I became a captain. I knew more than he did, and by default the one-eyed man was king, because he didn't know much. We made it down to Key West, and that was the first time I was a boat captain. The moment I became 21 I got my captain's license, because my girlfriend told me that another guy had gotten his captain's license, and because he had gotten his license I ought to be able to get mine. Back in those days you used to have to go down to Miami to get your captain's license. So I went down to Miami took the test and got my captain's license. At 21 I was a big boat captain (100 Ton Ocean Operator) and that was nice.

I do the mangrove trimming, do the boat captain thing, do a little bit of this a little bit of that... It has all been a nice thing to do. It is not the only place in the world, but you can't be two places at once when you're not anywhere at all. I have the mangrove thing. It's been a good thing for me. I know how to catch the fish here. I've got birds that are on a first name basis with me that I feed. I've got little baby raccoons that I raised that come around all the time. I even caught a rattlesnake here, videotaped it, because my daddy taught me how to do it. I caught some small rattlesnakes and then all of a sudden there was this four-and-a-half-foot, healthy rattlesnake right in our yard. They developed a piece of property over here and when they bulldozed the property some of the animals that were on that piece of property came over here. This rattlesnake, box turtles, other snakes... It was a fun thing for me to do to catch the rattlesnake and videotape it and I said, okay, that's it... That's the end of my rattlesnake catching. My dad told me that it is just a matter of time. He said you're going to get bitten if you keep fooling with them, and he taught me some things that were really important to know, and I know those things and I just say okay, that's enough. I do catch one occasionally, but it's not something that I want to make a lifetime thing out of. My dad was bitten twice and he did not recommend it. He said it was not a good

thing. The more you watch the TV programs, people say it costs them something like 50,000 dollars in hospital bills to get bitten by a snake, and I'm going, "Forget that!"

It has been a nice place for me to live, for my family to live, and I wish it the best for the future. I just think that nobody has been listening to me all these years. I've tried to help. I've tried to participate. It just gets to be that you're not involved with a lot of these things because everybody else is getting paid to be at the meetings. Then they disregard you if you're not paid to be there. So what are you going to do? There is a hope. I've got a plan. Over there is big shoreline north of New College. There is that whole shoreline to be developed. I've got a development plan for that, I recommended in my thesis. I tried to get it to the developers to say, hey, here is your opportunity to do it right, but it seems that people really aren't all that interested in doing things right, or trying to learn from the past. They just keep making the same mistakes. I don't know if I have any hope that they are going to do anything good with that property, but there are ways of doing it. It is just choices. There are good ways of doing it, if they do it in a reasonable way.

Interview with: Tom Mayers
Date of Interview: October 20, 2009
Interviewer: Casey Schelhorn
Subject of Interview: Longboat Key
Transcriber: Casey Schelhorn
Date of Transcription: October 20, 2009

(The following interview was conducted while looking through Tom's photo albums)

My dad worked for a metal sales company. We had an aluminum boat and it was kind of unusual back then, and I grew up with a stainless steel slide and it was the biggest slide in the neighborhood that the kids used to come to use. We had, as a little kid growing up, these little wheels of metals that he had as samples and different grades of aluminum and stainless steel. As I am working with boats and masts later on in life, it is kind of funny because I was familiar with different grades of aluminum and different amalgams of metals to make different items and the different qualities of these because that's what my father did for a job. That was the early days and there weren't many people around here then.

We mostly had family coming down here on the weekends, and coming down to visit and it was just a real remote, nice spot. We had a screen porch that was out over the water and we had hammocks. Everybody enjoyed the hammocks. They were a real nice addition and as we kids came down on the weekends, we would argue over who had the first turn on the hammock. We would say "I get to use the hammock first," because that was such a key part of living here on the island, and we would play together. We had probably no telephone, no TV. The adults spent a lot of time drinking and singing songs and visiting and it was just nice where the adults and the children would all sit around in the evening. It was a small house and we all were just right there enjoying the time together.

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

coming and going. My dad had a monkey, and we got it for him because he was a character and he always liked animals. We just thought it would be a nice present for him. When we went to give him the monkey, we bought it as a surprise, and when he came in the room my sister, who knew the monkey and had been visiting with it so it would be familiar with the family, tried to hide it from daddy. From that point on the monkey thought that daddy was his enemy. They loved each other but the monkey never got over that introduction.

We had a business, we had dances on the roof which was really cool. At the marina we had some old rental boats, we started off with boats that my father built. He really wasn't a boat builder in fairness to him, but he built about a ½ dozen boats and they kind of leaked. They were wooden boats, nice little wooden skiffs, but they leaked a lot. They had a washboard bottom, that is where the boards go across the bottom of the boat and you stuff cotton in the cracks. The boats leaked a lot. I used to be a good wrestler in high school and college and I always attributed it to bailing out leaky boats as a kid. As we grew up we had half a dozen boats all the time that it was my job to take care of. I was always painting the boat bottoms. We had a roof, a flat roof. It was one of the first fiberglass roofs in Florida. When they built it, they really didn't know how to build it, but they had dances up there. As a kid growing up we had dances with a hundred to two hundred people dancing to rock and roll music on the roof. It was just a real nice place to live with fun and variety. We saw a real lot of people, a lot of social interaction. We had a small, nice little business that everybody enjoyed. We had a sign out front that said "Ring ship's bell for service." I always greeted people in the yard: "Can I help you?". I still am that way today, just growing up in that environment.

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

The original dock was built by a company in Tampa. We borrowed money to have the dock built. We had a good dock company come down from Tampa to have the dock built. We had the dock built two hundred and fifty feet long. The same year that we finished the dock the State built the bridge and they built the jetty on the other side of the pass and it changed the flow of the water so that all of a sudden water that had been deep for like thirty years became shallow within a year. So this dock that we built to hold fifty-foot boats was shallow just like we saw today. You saw how shallow it was. Not only could you not get a fifty-foot boat in there at low tide, you had a hard time getting any boat in there. It was just sort of one of those things, it was funny, they built a marina to service all of these big boats and then once they built the 250 foot dock it sanded in because of circumstances. It was just sort of a coincidence that they built the jetty and the bridge at the same time and it sanded the dock in and it ruined our business. But it made it a nice place to live. We enjoy it, we just weren't able to get big boats into our dock.

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

My dad was just real casual. When he moved here he let his driver's license expire. So he couldn't leave. He couldn't drive anywhere. It is sort of a coincidental thing that my dad quit his

job without getting retirement, which was really kind of foolish. He was fifty-eight years old and just quit without getting retirement. But it was a coincidental thing that within ten years he died of cancer. It was kind of a foolish thing to do, but the way it turned out, wouldn't it have been sad if he had just kept his job and never been able to fulfill his dream, which was to have a marina. So that was his dream, to come down to the place that we had as a beach house and to turn it into a marina. It was fortunate that he had that opportunity to spend with his children and with his family.

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

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

My aunt told a story one time. Her father was an Episcopal priest and her parents were always inviting people over. They were like missionaries from Barbados. They went to Vancouver and had a church, and came to different places in the Northeast and lived. They had people over to their house for dinner, and my aunt one time said it wasn't uncommon to have a dozen people over for dinner. I said to my aunt, if you just had the children and the mother and father that would be a dozen people. So to have nobody over would mean a dozen people for dinner. It made for really interesting people who were used to being in a large extended family like that.

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

I was at a very young age out crabbing and fishing. It was like Outward Bound, we were always told to just go on out and have fun. We were taught to swim at an early age. My mother said that I used to walk down to the water's edge and get about knee-deep in the water and put my face in the water until I turned blue. My sister Joani learned how to swim because she fell out of a boat sailing and no one could get to her so she was just bobbing in the water. You know we were raised in a beautiful environment and it was very pleasant and it was just nice memories.

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

There were always funny things happening. I used to wrestle in high school and I was fairly good, and I came home and there were all these people who were drinking, and I got home from high school and there were all these people sitting at the bar waiting for me to show up, and

when I got there my dad had arranged for me to wrestle with a professional wrestler. They were all waiting for the show, because his son was coming home and he was a wrestler and this professional wrestler was going to wrestle me. Sure enough, we were down there by the water's edge wrestling in the shell. There was never a dull moment and it was a fun place, open to the public, anybody who wanted to walk in.

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

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

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

practical of a way to keep the turtle, and what we did with the turtle after that I don't know, we could have just let it go. It was just a curiosity for people to look at.

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

These are old drawings and things that show the features of Lands End in the old days. It had a canal behind it. It was this peninsula and it looks a lot like Florida is a peninsula that sticks out. This property has a lot of shoreline. This little beach house that we had, there really weren't many other beach houses around it and it was just real nice quiet place to be and come on the weekends. They came on the weekends and planted Australian pine trees because they wanted a fast growing tree. I'm an environmental consultant today, and I have people with the same exact request. They say how can I get a tree that will grow fast, because I'm not going to live forever. I have a neighbor who built a house next to me and are looking right at me. I have to agree with them that Australian pines are one of the fastest growing trees. That is what they used to do in the old days. I remember my mother said that John Ringling was the one who imported most of these trees in the early days. That was part of his plan for civilizing the area was to have Australian pine trees. He actually planted a row of Australian pine trees along the road all the way down the island. They used to call it the canopy road because the trees would arch over the road. It was nice shade. I still like the Australian pines. I'm an environmental consultant and I did Australian pine removal for a long time. A lot of animals do enjoy them and they do provide shade. It makes a nice sound when the wind blows through them, and they have a lot of nice qualities, and I think they've been maligned a lot simply because they've fallen out of favor. It's like bell-bottomed pants. Everyone wants to cut the Australian pines down.

We really are on a precipice right here where we built Land's End. You sort of have an ephemeral existence, where you realize that at any time a hurricane could come and wash the

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

Michael and Joani became water skiers. Michael is about ten years older than I am, and Joani is about five years older than I am, and they both were very good looking girls. Everybody would come by the marina with their water ski boats, and they would get asked to ski, and they got quite good at skiing, and I never got quite good at skiing myself. I was more interested in the boats. I was interested in what made boats run fast. Back in those days, a boat with a thirty-five was really considered to go fast, a thirty-five was really considered a big motor. Sometimes I used to drive the boats for my sisters while they skied. My sisters were invited to ski at Cypress Gardens. It really was just a family affair, and if mother wasn't cooking sandwiches and my dad wasn't cooking sandwiches, then the girls were cooking them so that was the way we lived.

We were right on the water, so there were funny stories. There was this one guy who was kind of a dandy. He was a nice guy but was kind of a little fancy. He had a new car and he always dressed well. We were sitting at the bar and we had these windows that looked out, and this guy had his car next to the house. He came in and he told my dad that he has this new car, this

convertible. My dad said, “You mean that one that is rolling in the water right there?” The guy didn’t put his emergency brake on and it just rolled into the water, and there is nothing worse that you can imagine than having a car being immersed in the saltwater. It was just kind of funny. That, and having two hundred kids dancing on the roof. We had a few problems with kids who were selling alcohol out in the parking lot. They got in trouble because they were caught for doing that. It was just a crazy kind of atmosphere to be raised in, but it was fun.

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

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

See the first Australian pine trees they planted. It was in the very first stage of building the house when they planted the first Australian pine trees. Everybody tells us that we ought to cut them down, but I was a professional, cutting down other people’s Australian pines. My sister Michael really didn’t want to cut them down, and I really didn’t want to cut them down either. Pileated woodpeckers live in them, corn snakes live in them, an Eagle landed on one. So, at some point you are sitting there looking at them. There’s an island over there, Sister Key, where they did an extreme Australian pine removal where they wanted to cut down every Australian pine. I went down to the town of Longboat Key and said, “Can’t you do it in stages? Can’t you do just a few of the Australian Pines—10% or 20%—and leave the big ones? Why do you want to do this radical change?” I went over to the island just the other day to visit and we saw that they left one tree. We saw in that tree there were three osprey sitting there, because it was the only place that they wanted to be, because there used to be all of these nice Australian pines that are gone now. It is like this environmental consulting thing: at some point you get disgusted with some of this stuff that you have to deal with, people with this attitude. My uncle said... One of his greatest quotes, when he was on his death bed someone asked him what he did during his life. He said “I thought I would be an intellectual, but it just didn’t work out.” He was a very bright and funny

man, and he used to talk about the man who lived upstairs who was *a very modern guy*, and he would stress the “n”. It just makes you laugh. With each generation there are these people who think they have all the right answers and the right thought. You just sometimes get steamrolled by a culture who is just on their way to nowhere and doesn’t have a clue.

Fishing was great, another pasttime here, was just fishing. It was more fishing. Even to this day we seldom freeze fish. I remember fresh fish and we had people bringing fish all the time. So fishing was just a way of getting good food. I go down to the supermarket and I look at fish from China and Indonesia and a lot of the fish is treated with chemicals, I guess to keep it from spoiling. It has a nasty taste. For me to be able to go out here and catch fish it is a gift, I do it as often as possible.

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

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

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

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

Just a sweet little house. Most of the furniture was handmade and what wasn’t handmade were antiques. People don’t realize that in the old days when you had a place out on the island, you

didn't want anything that people would steal. If you had a nice brand new refrigerator you might come back and find it gone. We always filled the place with stuff that we thought nobody would steal, and it was just a simple lifestyle. All windows would open up. Of course we had screens, because mosquitoes were bad.

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

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

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

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

My Father and Grandfather were from Barbados, one of the oldest family in Barbados. I was in Barbados and talked with the head of the historical society of Barbados, and he was a relative of

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

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

We had an aluminum boat with a Mercury Hurricane 10 hp motor on it. We used to use that; it was our boat. One time before the bridge was built, I remember my dad forgetting to tie the boat, or he pulled it up on the beach without tying it up, and it was floating away and a lightning storm was coming in. He was swimming after the boat because he felt stupid that he had not tied the boat up. Of course, it was nobody's fault but his. As the boat was floating out the pass, my father was swimming out, and one of my earliest memories of my father as a kid was sitting out on the porch with all the family members, watching dad swim out after the boat and my mother screaming "Let the boat go, Frank!" But he wasn't going to let it go. That was our only transportation. That's what we had in the early days, was one boat, an aluminum boat with a motor.

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

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

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

My mother was from a cultivated family. Her great uncle was John Savarese and he was a very successful businessman in Tampa. He had a fish house which was one of the most successful businesses in Tampa and they lived on a street. Right now it is part of the historic district in Tampa, one of the areas they've set aside and they had a house there, 809 South Willow, and it

looks today like it did back then. Because it's part of a historic district, the whole street looks the same, and I actually went in the house where my mother was raised and I told the people I was part of a historical society. I offered and did give them some old pictures of the house where my mother lived. It was a very nice house in Tampa. Back in those days it was probably the latest thing, these wooden houses with the porch in front.

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

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

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

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

Aunt Eni, Aunt Irene, she was beautiful when she was young. She had some nice features, very Italian looking. She married a ship captain and his name was Charlie Wilkinson. Charlie Wilkinson was a very successful ship's captain. He had a ship that used to sail from Tampa to New York, and this was back in the days when they sailed. He looked like a real robust character. He went up to New York and had a couple children with Irene and then started fooling around with the showgirls in New York. He, I have a dresser in my room that he bought for a hundred dollars in New York City, and brought it down to her on a boat, or who knows how. Probably just to cover the fact that he was seeing a showgirl. Then he finally left her for a showgirl, and I remember Aunt Eni being in a nursing home. You would go see Aunt Eni, Aunt Irene, and you would never know when you see somebody in a nursing home, it was a sweet little nursing home, but you would never imagine that she was such a beauty when she was young. That she had this history of... I like to think of her as Helen of Troy, this woman who launched all these ships. There are pictures of her launching the ships and that is one of the ships there. You can see the size of the ship. That is one that would sail to New York and you can see Charlie Wilkinson, he was a scoundrel to leave her with two children and to run off with a showgirl in New York. I guess that's the way it was.

That's just people... Relatives, I grew up with these pictures. My mother would thumb over and look through, and had them in a box that she kept under her bed, and would hand them to me and tell me who they were. It is just a fun history to have.

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

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

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

That is us with the raccoons and the beagle. We had a beagle. Beagles were nice dogs, except they like to run and hunt a lot. They would take off and run and you would just lose them. You couldn't keep a beagle from hunting, and they would take off all the time and run. The beagles would get bitten by rattlesnakes and come back. A lot of the animals that got bitten by rattlesnakes would survive. We raised 'coons and the beagles right next to each other, along with the monkey. My dad had rattlesnakes in the back of the house and my dad would say "Don't fool with the rattlesnakes. Don't you show anybody the rattlesnakes." Of course the first thing you would do is show your friends the rattlesnakes, like you knew what you were doing. I had a rattlesnake strike one time and he hit my shirt and fell out on the ground. I had to go out and tell my dad I had been in the cage. He had to put the rattlesnake in the rabbit cage because... You don't want to put a rattlesnake in a rabbit cage because when you go and open the cage there was a ledge, he struck at me from that ledge. I'm talking about big rattlesnakes, five-footers, it was not unusual to have big rattlesnakes. We had them in the house and we had them in bags. He was an expert at handling rattlesnakes and it was just an interesting life. I became fascinated as I grew older, and I caught rattlesnakes myself and he showed me how to catch them, but I don't do it very often. I don't make a point of doing it. I might do it to rescue a rattlesnake and release him somewhere else. It's an esoteric sort of talent.

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

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

There he is with a bear. He was authentic. I'm not saying he was like the Crocodile Hunter or anything like that. He was a professional snake handler, horse handler, and he worked as a horse trainer. He was good with all kinds of animals: bears, raccoons, birds, dogs.

That's my dad and my aunt on a sunfish. We were some of the first people in Florida with the Sunfish sailboats. I tell people it was so long ago that it was when sunfish were made out of plywood. They had a boat called a Sailfish that just kind of disappeared. The Sailfish didn't have a cockpit. So anybody who sailed a Sunfish can imagine that a Sunfish without a cockpit is not a very cool boat. So the Sailfish disappeared and the Sunfish became one of the most popular boats ever. They produced 300,000 boats. We had Sunfish as kids, and my job was to teach people how to sail the Sunfish. So I was always doing sailboat rescue missions, since I was a kid, trying

to help people out. I became a lifeguard because somebody was in the water drowning, and I ran out and saved her life. I saw everybody was having a hard time getting to this girl because she was in the middle of the pass. So I ran up on the bridge, dove off the bridge and swam to the girl, and said “Hey, don’t worry... Everything will be fine,” and I rescued this girl. The next thing you know the head of the lifeguards came and said “Kid, are you the one that saved that girl?” I said yeah. He said “Well, you’re a big kid, aren’t you?” I said, “Yeah, pretty big.” He said “We’ll make you a lifeguard.” He said, “You’re 14. When you are 16, we have a test we call the lifesaving test I want you to take... When you’re sixteen.” So I was a lifeguard when I was 14 with no lifesaving or anything just because I was a good swimmer. It was a nice atmosphere, a family atmosphere at the business. You can see my dad sitting behind the counter, and me sitting behind the counter with him, and Joani my sister. Joani was a runner-up to Miss Florida, and my sister Michael has always been considered striking—a big real-estate person now, but she has always been considered attractive. I think a lot of the boys came to Land’s End just to look at Michael and Joani.

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

My dad, one of the most famous pictures taken of him is of him throwing the cast net. It was a picture taken from down in the water, looking up. He got with the photographer and directed the photographer and said “Why don’t you get down in the water and take a picture of me casting the net? It will look like I’m throwing the cast net over you.” This photographer had a good camera... Actually, the editor of the local newspaper took the picture of my dad throwing the cast net, with the clouds in the background. It was just a nice picture, and it won an award at the New York World’s Fair in 1964, so it won an award for regional photography. We still have it. It’s a famous picture.

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

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

A lot of his brothers settled in Florida so we would have family reunions, and it wasn’t uncommon to have 20 or 30 people come down for a family gathering and have a picnic and a nice time. My mom was a sweetheart, she was soft spoken. She really didn’t talk much, but the more you got to know about her the more you liked her. The more you realized she just deferred to my father. My father was the storyteller, he told everything, but she had just as rich a history

as he had. Not that my father talked a lot, but my mother really didn't talk about her history at all, and then to find out that she came from the family that had the first passenger-carrying boat from Tampa to Sarasota. Only because people started bringing it up and bringing her pictures did you really understand that. She was quite a good-looking woman. My mother was raised at the Academy of the Holy Names. Her father was shipwrecked in the Cayman Islands and then came home and died of throat cancer shortly after that. So her mother had to get a job. She was from a fairly wealthy family and came from being from a wealthy family, and then out of circumstance her father lost a load of cotton in a shipwreck. Then he didn't make it back for several years, and then when he did make it back from the islands he died, and her mother had three children and so she was raised by nuns, actually, in the Academy of the Holy Names and she loved the Catholic Church. Her religion was its own reward. She was very religious and it answered most of her questions. Whether there was a God or there wasn't a God, it didn't matter. She read Thomas Merton and that mystical side of the Catholic Church, and it was a nice thing for her and she had a lot of nice memories of the Academy of the Holy Names.

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

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

The umbrella and the beach... that is pretty much what they had going on in the early days, just a lot of good fun. They had a Doberman. It was a pretty striking couple. The fishermen in Cortez remember them coming down, this big, strong man and his pretty wife, cute children and Doberman pinchers. I had one of the Cortez fishermen, a woman fisherman, tell me "I remember your mom and dad. I forgot my water jug and I came and asked if I could get some water out of their well," and that's how they met. That's why people were really nice in the old days. When you're in a boat, you never know when you're going to need help or who you were going to need help from. So people were just courteous. You wonder why boaters always wave at each other? You never know. Your motor wouldn't start... it's common that your engine wouldn't start. You don't want to be flicking off someone who you could ask for a tow. The pass has changed completely. My dad used to wear casual outfits. He wore what they called "Banlon shirts," with the little collar and they would button down half way down. He smoked cigarettes, which is too bad, but that's not what killed him. He used to wear flip-flops and khaki pants, and it was sort of like his uniform. He was a raconteur and had an Indian motorcycle when he was young, and had an injury to his elbow and was always complaining about his arm, and he would do like *that* and you would always hear it crack. He said that was from his motorcycle accident, and of course he was training horses. He used to take green horses and train them. People wouldn't bring you a horse that was easy to break. People would bring him the worst of the horses. He said that a horse got him by the finger when he was a young man, maybe 14 or 15. It pulled him around a corral or whatever, and he said he thought that the horse was never going to let go. He was moving as fast as he could because he didn't want to lose his finger. If you looked at his finger it was just masticated, bigger than it should be. It was bent and it didn't move. He would point somewhere and it was bent and all gnarled up. He had lots of stories, and he looked like Santa Claus at the end, with the beard, and he died of cancer. He went in and got the exploratory examination and they said he had cancer and he said "I don't have the kind of money to pay for

treatment.” That’s what he did, he just went home. He didn’t want to put the family through coming in and trying to save his life. It is just the way they did it in those days. He died when he was 68. He was born in 1900, so 68 was when he died. In those days it doesn’t seem so long ago. I don’t think that they differentiated dying from old age and dying from cancer. If you were that old—70 years old, 65 years old—I really don’t think they knew that much about it, they just said he died of old age. He just died of natural causes or whatever.

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

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

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

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

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

There’s John Savarese at Land’s End the place that we are right now. The little boats, I love that picture of the little sailboats that sailed out. Because the big boat could only get so close to shore,

most of these bays had gradual sloping shorelines. So you couldn't go out, except for a few spots with deep channels you had to go out maybe 100 yards before you could get 3 or 4 feet of water.

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

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

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

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

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

My sister Joan was always considered real beautiful. She was real athletic and kind of quiet... you know, shy. They kept funneling her into these beauty pageants. She had to be Miss Longboat Key, and of course she won the Miss Longboat Key pageant and then she had to be Miss Manatee County and she won the Miss Manatee County pageant. Then she was in the Miss Florida pageant and I guess she could have gone farther, but she just didn't want to be in any of it. One time she was going to a beauty contest, or something to do with her beauty thing, and she

was giving me a hard time and I slung a fudgesicle across the house and it hit her in the lip and her lip swelled up. When they came to pick her up to go to contest she couldn't go because she had this swelled lip. It was one of my finer moments, because I was kind of mad at her and threw a fudgesicle a long ways and it hit her in the lip.

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

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

That is my sister Joan with a knife to my throat... Now isn't that a nice picture? I really believe that child services should have been brought in at an early age. She has been doing that to me ever since too.

That is the Rough Riders. That is my uncle Joe and my cousin whatever who was. They had the Spanish American War and they were the Rough Riders that came down to Fort Brooke in Tampa to get on boats to go down to Cuba to fight the Spanish over some trumped-up war that probably had no good reason at all.

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

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

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

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

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

Aerial photographs are always interesting. I don't understand why people don't get more into them. It's almost like people say "That's past history... What's the use in knowing that?" The thing is that if you don't know history you are bound to repeat it. There are a lot of things that can be learned by looking at what happened. So if you took pictures of the area wherever you're interested in, and you look at what happened, the earliest aerial photographs, and then aerial photographs from 1940, aerial photographs from 1960, you can tell a lot. You actually go back and say "Why did this happen? Who allowed this to happen?" You could find what councilman, or what congressman, or whatever had done things wrong in order for that to happen. I remember driving over the Skyway Bridge and people said "Do you see this curve?" And I saw there is a curve in the bridge, and they said "that's the Bill Dean Curve." They said it used to be called the Bill Dean Bridge. Apparently, Bill Dean used to work for the State Department or whoever built roads, and he owned some property so that the road actually took a bend and went across his property. Whether that actually happened I don't know, but things like that actually do happen. I think when the last governor went out, he had worked for Arvida. When he went out of office one of the last things that he did before he went out of office was that he had a road built to nowhere. The road went right through property that Arvida owned. You look at these things and you say "*Wait a minute, this is illegal. People can't do this with public funds*". They can't reward people that are obviously rewarding them for doing it. I honestly believe that that would be a very productive thing in this society if people would look back on these things. I've done that myself and I'm just surprised that more people don't do it, Photoshop details and say *Look: Here's where they took bay bottom where there was no high land and dredged sand in it and made land*, and you can go to a certain point in time and say *Was that legal, or was that not legal?* I've done that, but I haven't seen many people interested in doing that kind of work: comparing old aerial photographs and new photographs.

Everything was handmade around here. If you wanted a sign, somebody says *I saw a sign made out of rope*. You just took rope and laid it down in cursive. You just let the rope flow around and write whatever you want, Land's End, and then you just nail it down. Or, put stainless steel screws in it and make a sign. We've done that ever since: the hand-painted signs up there that say whatever we did. If you look, it says "sailboat rentals three dollars an hour." That was me, the sailboat guy, I taught people how to use the sailboat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One thing that is interesting, as somebody that is in environmental studies, is people tell you things and you go... *What? Wait a minute, that's a pretty profound thing*. One time I read somewhere that the sea level had risen a hundred feet in ten thousand years. So that's a pattern and a definite thing that they've got checked out. So if you go... in ten thousand years the sea level has risen a hundred feet, you would say that in a thousand years the sea level would rise ten feet. In my last 60 years here the water has risen over one half a foot, how interesting.