

NOTICE

Materials in our digital Oral History collections are the products of research projects by several individuals. USF Libraries assume no responsibility for the views expressed by interviewers or interviewees. Some interviews include material that may be viewed as offensive or objectionable. Parents of minors are encouraged to supervise use of USF Libraries Oral Histories and Digital Collections. Additional oral histories may be available in Special Collections for use in the reading room. See individual collection descriptions for more information.

This oral history is provided for research and education within the bounds of U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Copyright over Oral Histories hosted by the USF Libraries rests with the interviewee unless transferred to the interviewer in the course of the project. Interviewee views and information may also be protected by privacy and publicity laws. All patrons making use of it and other library content are individually accountable for their responsible and legal use of copyrighted material.

Oculina Bank Oral History Project
Oral History Program
Florida Studies Center
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: O6-00009
Interviewee: David King (DK)
Interviewer: Terry Howard (TH)
Interview date: March 11, 2010
Interview location: Subway shop, South Beach neighborhood, Fort Pierce, Florida,
Transcribed by: James E. Scholz
Transcription date: May 13, 2010 to May 24, 2010
Audit Edit by: Christine Toth
Audit Edit date: May 30 to June 3, 2010
Final Edit by: Mary Beth Isaacson, MLS
Final Edit date: August 31, 2010



[Transcriber's note: This interview occurs in a public setting. Background noise is evident.]

Terry Howard: Good morning. My name's Terry Howard and today is March 11, 2010, and I'm at a Subway shop on South Beach in Fort Pierce, conducting an oral history with Captain David King of—

David King: Little Adam Charters.

TH: Little Adam Charters. For Captain David King of the Little Adam Charters, for the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation's project with Fort Pierce fishermen on the Oculina Bank HAPC [Habitat Area of Particular Concern]. Okay, (laughs), and with that, David, would you please state your full name?

DK: Harry David King.

TH: Okay, H-a-r-r-y?

DK: Right. D-a-v-i-d K-i-n-g.

TH: Very good. Where were you born?

DK: Fort Pierce.

TH: When?

DK: Nineteen fifty-seven, February 3.

TH: February 3, 1957.

DK: Yup.

TH: Are you married?

DK: No.

TH: How old were—okay. Do you have any children?

DK: Yes, I do.

TH: How many?

DK: Three.

TH: Three; and ages?

DK: Thirty-three, twenty-six, and sixteen.

TH: Wow.

DK: I know. Something every ten years or so.

TH: Cool. How much schooling have you had?

DK: One year of college; graduated from high school.

TH: Okay, and do you have another job besides charter boat captain?

DK: Yes, I have a Subway sandwich shop that I own.

TH: Very good. What other jobs have you had, briefly?

DK: I had a job when I was sixteen at A&P Grocery store bagging groceries. Didn't like it—went fishing. So, as soon as I got out of high school, I pretty much fished. I had a couple of little part-time jobs in between fishing, but never a steady job besides fishing.

TH: Very good. Do you currently own a boat?

DK: Yes.

TH: What kind and length? Describe your boat.

DK: Twenty-eight foot Bonaventure; it's a custom—it's what they call a day boat: cabin in the front, open in the back. I use that for my chartering.

TH: You have an outboard?

DK: Yup. 225 Evinrude outboard, single.

TH: Okay, one 225 Evinrude. Now, some questions about the Oculina Bank. I'm gonna start with some questions about the Bank and then I'm gonna finish with that; and between, I'm gonna ask you some questions about your fishing.

DK: Okay.

TH: To begin with, how familiar are you with the Oculina Bank?

DK: Fairly familiar, as much as—that's what I've done my whole life, so I know what—

TH: Did you fish there quite a bit?

DK: I fished there a lot before the closure, yes.

TH: Okay. How familiar are you with the Oculina Bank? Why was the Oculina Bank designated as an area to protect?

DK: My reason was—they said it was overfished and the coral was disturbed. I did see pictures that Harbor Branch had taken, you know, of the big chunks of coral that were turned over.¹ So they did that to protect the Bank and make it a spawning area for grouper, snapper, et cetera.

TH: Something unique about the coral?

DK: Well, yeah, it's one of a kind. I guess it's the only place in the world that this kind of coral grows, so they wanted to protect it.

TH: Okay, "they" being—

¹ Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution at Florida Atlantic University conducted scientific research referenced in the Oculina Bank closure. It is a non-profit oceanographic institution dedicated to marine and ocean research and education operated by Florida Atlantic University.

DK: National Marine Fisheries, I believe.² Yes.

TH: Okay. Is there anything else you can tell me about the Oculina Bank, that you know about it? Tell me about, for example, what was fishing like out there before the closure?

DK: When I was, like, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old, I'd go fishing with Denny McGauran, which is one of the early kingfish bottom fishermen. I used to go on the *August Moon* party boat. I've been fishing since I was itty-bitty; got my first boat at, like, eight. They would go out there at certain times of the year and catch the grouper and the red snapper. They didn't really anchor; they would just kind of power the boat into the current real slow, and we would fish. At nine, ten years old, they'd give me a hand line of 150 pound test monofilament and some gloves and tell you to hold on. That was my first experience of a grouper. As soon as I did that, it was just out of control. I had to do that.

TH: So you were—

DK: I was hooked for grouper fishing my entire life. And they were—you know, they were thick out there. We would get a lot of days of five, six, seven, eight hundred, [a] thousand pounds, and we would come in. Denny was good. Denny McGauran was one of the best at the time. He had the old *Grey Goose*. They built it, like, three houses down from my grandmother.

TH: That was a Lindsey.

DK: Yeah, that was a neat boat.

TH: Nice boat.

DK: I think it was thirty-six feet, I think. Maybe—

TH: Thirty-one foot length.

DK: Was it thirty? It was neat, though. It was a neat boat, but we had a lot of fun on that.

² NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] National Marine Fisheries Service.

TH: All right. Anything else you know about the Bank?

DK: Well, it was just a great fishing spot. I mean, there was always fish there. You marked 'em on the recorder. Even in the old days they had the little scopes, and they just had lots of fish everywhere we went, from Jeff's Reef [a local fishing spot] on down all the way up to the north. We would fish up off Bethel Shoals. But there was about a fifteen mile strip that we fished pretty regular.

TH: Now, Bethel Shoals is inshore.

DK: Yeah, it's right straight inshore of Oculina Bank.

TH: Oculina Bank, okay. There are some ledges between Bethel Shoals and the Oculina Bank, the Hoosier Indiana Rocks?

DK: Yeah, there's some—Indiana Rocks; they all have different names. Tommy's Rock is one of 'em, they call; that's one's just a little bit south of there. But there was a lot of rocks. There's actually rocks all over that area, right there.

TH: Okay. What do you think about the closure of the Oculina Bank to anchoring and bottom fishing?

DK: I can understand the anchoring part.

TH: Because?

DK: Because I know the anchor does cause harm to the coral. As far as with the fishing, you know, I did see the pictures that they based a lot of their reasons for doing it. I mean, I saw—I worked with a couple of guys that worked at Harbor Branch in the seventies [1970s] and eighties [1980s] that would fish with me, and they showed me those pictures that they took of—I mean, they showed rocks twenty, thirty foot wide, just tumbled over. Stripes going through there where they had drug the, you know, the fishing nets and the trawls through there.³ And I know that's what did the major damage. I mean, every time I looked at those underwater videos that they showed us, never did I see what I thought my fishing line could have done, you know? I don't see how—I know if you break off your line, you get some monofilament down there, but I don't think it had 1 percent to do with the damages down there. The anchoring could damage it, but

³ Stripes are a type of fish like sheepsheads.

all the damage I saw that was—you could tell. All right, look at this damage. It was big chunks that couldn't have been done by a twelve pound anchor or my fishing line. So I was a little upset about that. I mean, it's been closed a long time. That was one of our spots that we spent the spring, and the summer, and the fall fishing. We didn't fish it in the wintertime 'cause we didn't need to. But that was our bread and butter for the summers.

TH: As a charter boat captain, that was your bread and butter for bottom fishing.

DK: Right, for going out and getting a couple of grouper. We didn't—I haven't been able to catch that many [anywhere] else. You went out there and spent thirty minutes, forty-five minutes, caught your fish and left.

TH: Okay. But it was the dragging of the shrimp draggers—let's make that perfectly clear—that you feel like—

DK: In my opinion, it's those shrimp dredges and the nets that they drove for those shrimp, was what caused it. We saw those boats out there a lot. I mean, they would be—they'd come just inshore and anchor during the daytime; at nighttime, they'd be right back out there. We really didn't really fish it at night, because you catch more snapper than you do grouper; but when you get out there at daylight, they're just pulling out of the area.

TH: Gotcha. Has the closure of the Oculina Bank affected your fishing, and how?

DK: Well, it has made it harder, because that's how we caught all our grouper in the spring, summer, and fall. Now we have to rely on the inshore, which—we still catch fish, but it's definitely impacted. Plus, you can go out there if you have somebody that wanted to just have fun catching fish with the amberjack out there. There's just numerous tons of amberjack that you go out there and you fight. You let 'em go because you don't usually keep more than maybe one amberjack to smoke; but [when] we catch amberjack, man, let 'em go.

TH: 'Cause they're a good sport—

DK: Oh, they're a great sport fish. That was one of our best. Somebody says, "Hey, I want to go out there and have my arms hurt," we'd go out there and hurt 'em with the amberjack.

TH: (laughs) If anchoring and bottom fishing on the Oculina Bank were permitted, would you fish there?

DK: Yes, and I'll be the first one.

TH: (laughs) For how and for what? You said grouper.

DK: Grouper, snapper, amberjack.

TH: Okay. Overall, how has fishing changed since you began fishing in Fort Pierce? You fished here all your life. How has it evolved?

DK: It's definitely not as good as it was. There are certain fisheries that—I think, personally, the red snapper is better now than I've ever seen it in my life. The year—I guess it was 2005—we caught a thirty-seven pound [and] a thirty-two pound. I never used to catch fish like that around here. In any given day, you can go out there now and catch fifteen pounders—I mean, regularly—and we didn't do that growing up. Grouper fishing has declined. I mean, there was massive amounts. I mean, I'm sure there is; we can't go fish that now, so, I don't know if they're out there or not. But, of course, it's harder to fish now. We have better equipment, so I know the fishing's not as good as it used to be, but you've also got a lot of pressure now.

TH: Can you elaborate on the better equipment, how that's affected the fishing?

DK: Well, it's easier. You know, everybody had a LORAN-A back then, which you had to line up all the little lines and get 'em—which is a little more difficult. The old timers that I would fish with when I was young—I mean, Gene Hayes was one of 'em I fished with for five years, and he was as good as it gets. We would stop on the way out swordfishing and stop on a rock and drop and catch a hundred pounds of grouper, and we'd eat. I mean, it was nothing to go stop on one of those deep rocks and just drop hand lines. Me and Kevin Goff would be working on his boat. But it's definitely a spot missed.

TH: So you're saying because of the better equipment, these rocks, certain rocks and ledges, are fished harder?

DK: Well, they're also—with the new type equipment—

TH: And divers, too.

DK: It really—you can see every detail of a rock, every ledge undercut. And like you say, with the commercial divers, they're just—there's a lot of 'em out there right now. You know, when we have a cold water influx, and the fish will not bite, and they rock up underneath the divers. They hurt 'em bad. I mean, they get a thousand pounds like it's nothing.

TH: So again, the fishing has, some fishing has gotten better. You say the snapper fishing has gotten better. Do you know why that would be, or do you have any ideas or theories?

DK: Well, we're only allowed to keep just a handful of fish, which makes a difference. I mean, we just always had stocks of small fish, but in the last five or ten years, the size has just increased, increased, increased now to where you can get your limit almost every day. You know, it has to be twenty inches just to keep a fish, which is a nice fish. They're just thick; the red snapper are thick right now. They're almost—now with the closure—are a nuisance, because you can't anchor on the rocks; you have to anchor inshore to stay out of the red snapper or the grouper. There are grouper on the reef right now, thick.

TH: Okay. Have you had experience with law enforcement in, within, or regarding the Oculina Bank?

DK: Yes, I have.

TH: Can you elaborate?

DK: Okay. The Oculina Bank has a borderline of, like, 80°0'0" on the longitude-latitude. One day, I was out fishing, 'cause there're still rocks inshore of the Oculina Bank, all the way into like 135 feet that we can fish. Well, I was fishing one day on it and one of the jets flew over, and I knew what he was doing. He flies right down the edge; he's been up there a million times. I keep doing my thing, fishing. So he sweeps over me two or three times. I keep fishing. An hour later, a Marine Patrol boat comes from inshore, and he goes, "You're fishing in the Oculina Bank." And I said, "Well, no, I'm not." [Man says] "I'm not leaving here till you get on my boat." We write down the LORAN numbers. So, we get on there, we write it down, and I show him where I'm at. They make me follow him to the dock. When we get in there, they go, "Well, you weren't even in there." And I go, "Well, okay." So, they were enforcing it, not really even knowing where they were.

So, it ruined my whole day. I had a charter; it made the people really mad. It was a bad experience, over an imaginary line that goes down the ocean. It's hard to patrol that, anyhow. There's lots of fishing inshore of it, but there was no—I mean, as soon as they got on the boat,

they wrote down the numbers. The guy that wrote the numbers didn't even know that that was not even in the Bank. We had to go in and meet one of the officers at the dock. That was probably in 1995; I think it was the middle nineties [1990s]. That's my only experience with them offshore.

TH: Ah.

DK: That wasn't very good. I lost a charter out of that.

TH: Is that the only experience?

DK: That's the only experience I've had with the Bank itself.

TH: Now, your fishing history, specifically: your earliest memory of fishing, and how old were you?

DK: I would say I fished at three, four, five years old off the docks in the Indian River at St. Lucie Village. Got my first boat at eight years old. Dr. Meeko, the original baby doctor in Fort Pierce on the drive there, gave me a boat. I rowed it till I caught and mowed enough yards to get a motor, and it's been boats and motors since, ever since. Never not had a boat in my life.

TH: (laughs) Cool. So how did you learn to fish? Who taught you to fish? You just—

DK: Self-taught. As a young age, the commercial aspect, when I got into the teens, was taught by some of the top-notch commercial fishermen around. Gene Hayes—

TH: Gene Hayes.

DK: —Denny McGauran; Joanna McGauran, which was Denny's wife; Brian Goff. Brian Goff was a good fisherman. Those were the main guys I stuck with and fished, and they were good. They were good at what they did. I mean, I got every aspect.

TH: So when and how did you decide to become a charter boat captain?

DK: Well, I was in school. I was taking people fishing on the weekend when I was, like, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, in my boat. As soon as I graduated, I worked at A&P for five days, didn't like it. I was bagging groceries, trying to figure what I wanted to do in life. So, I started commercial fishing. I went to work for Gene Hayes in 1975.

TH: And Gene Hayes was running what kind of a boat?

DK: He had a forty-three [foot] Marine Management hull. It was a roller rig boat part of the year, it was a kingfish boat part of the year, it was a swordfish boat part of the year. It was a long-line—

TH: *Miss Bess*?

DK: *Miss Bess*. Good as it gets. Best fisherman on the planet, I thought.

TH: Gene?

DK: Gene was, yeah.

TH: Side note: was he easy to work for?

DK: Gene Hayes, they called him "Short Day". That was his nickname, because a short day to him was like twenty hours. (TH laughs) You started before the sun came up and you finished after it went down. We caught a load of bluefish one time, and we were picking the fish out of the net; the sun came up twice while we were picking the same load of fish, like thirty-six hours. Yeah, "Short Day" was his name. I learned to appreciate fishing with Gene.

TH: Okay. He's a character.

DK: Yeah.

TH: Let's see, where were we? So, when did you start in Fort Pierce area? Okay, we already got that. Were you fishing commercially, recreationally? We pretty much covered that.

DK: Both.

TH: What do you—so, your preference for what you fish for now, as a charter captain, what do you fish for?

DK: My target fish would be grouper and snapper. That's what I made my—pretty much—living doing, catching grouper and snapper: bottom fishing.

TH: How do you fish for them? Bait and lures?

DK: I like to use live bait, you know, rod and reel, with my clients. We go out and catch live bait, go anchor up.

TH: Explain the live bait catching.

DK: Live bait; you use, like, sabiki rigs, which is six small hooks on a rig, you go into the schools of greenies, sardines, [and] cigar minnows.

TH: Usually around the buoys?

DK: Usually they're around the buoys, or you find them with the birds, or locations over the years. You know where they like to hang out. We would go catch bait, keep them in the live well, use those for bait during the day.

TH: And then how did you rig your bottom gear?

DK: I used a slip sinker rig 99 percent of the time, where it's just your line with an egg sinker slit on it, a swivel, [and] a leader with a hook on it. It's very simple, yeah.

TH: How much weight?

DK: Anywhere from four ounces to sixteen, depending on the current.

TH: Okay. You already explained who you fished with and who owned the boat. You're just neighbors with those people, mostly.

DK: Yes, next door neighbors. Yeah, we all lived together.

TH: When you began fishing, you fished the river. Did you fish snook?

DK: I fished the river growing up. I've seen sawfish, I've seen it all.

TH: Sawfish in the river?

DK: Oh, yeah. I've seen quite a few over the years, growing up.

TH: Okay. During what months of the year do you fish for?

DK: Twelve.

TH: Twelve months, okay. (laughs) Now, is there a best time for grouper and snapper?

DK: I would say the best time would be November till August.

TH: Okay.

DK: Yeah, there's a pretty good period there. I mean, you have peaks and things, but there's about a nine month period, ten month period, that we really target them.

TH: So—this is a general question—how long does a fishing trip last? You mentioned that fishing with Gene Hayes one time lasted thirty-six [hours]. (laughs)

DK: On a charter trip, an average trip would be anywhere from five to nine hours. A commercial trip could be five hours to forty hours.

TH: You still do commercial trips at all?

DK: No.

TH: Okay. This is a tough question.

DK: Yeah, I pretty much gave up my commercial licenses when I got my captain's license. I didn't really commingle the two.

TH: Okay. It's difficult.

DK: It is, yeah.

TH: Average catch, average trip's catch, what's a—

DK: Let's see, there's a lot of years involved there.

TH: Yeah, that's a tough one. We were all—every time I've asked that, I'm kind of embarrassed about it, because—

DK: You know, if you go back to when I fished with Gene Hayes, if it was mackerel season, we would catch 20,000 to 40,000 pounds a day. You know, mackerel, we'd fill his boat up, we'd come, we'd pick 'em out. And then, on a charter boat day, it could be 100 pounds of bottom fish, you know, some kingfish and dolphin. So there's—it could be 100 to 40,000, depending on the day and the time.

TH: And the kind of fishing you're doing.

DK: Right.

TH: Okay.

DK: But we could always catch a good catch, even up till the present.

TH: Do you recall Fort Pierce ever being known as “the fishing capital of the world”?

DK: Yes.

TH: Was it?

DK: Well, I guess somehow—the other counties somehow pulled that off. They called it that, but they never named it that in the earlier years. So they lost the rights to that.

TH: But it was a promotional thing?

DK: Oh, it was a promotional thing to bring people down, you know, for fishing. I mean, when I was a little kid, a lot of the Chip Shafers and some of those guys that were in the heydays, I was just learning and watching.⁴ So, I mean, that’s when they really called it that. They still call it one of the fishing capitals of the world.

TH: Excellent fishing here?

DK: Excellent fishing. As good as it gets.

TH: So let’s see. For how many years did you fish for? Well, depending; when you were young, you were commercial.

DK: I’m fifty-three; probably forty-nine years, I’ve been fishing, whether it be on a dock or on a boat.

TH: Okay. You started off in the river with little boats and you fished commercially with neighbors and learned. And then you finally got a captain’s license and began charter fishing.

DK: Yes.

⁴ Chip Shafer was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O06-00002.

TH: Okay. Why did you stop fishing? Well, why did you stop fishing? Because, I guess, you're spending time here now.

DK: Well, yeah, I got another business, so I kind of split my time with the business. The business; I'm here more than I do fishing now. Also, with the grouper closures, the red snapper closures—which is my fish that I catch—it kind of forced my hand to do other things.

TH: How long is the grouper/snapper closure for?

DK: The grouper opens back—one of them opens at the end of March, April 1, and red snapper doesn't open till the end of May, I believe. One of 'em is a six month closure, the other one is a four month closure. Plus, vermilion snapper are closed right now, too.

TH: If the above was not—being charter boat captain, repeat the above question. Okay, we already did that. What do you fish for now, and how? We talked about that. Who do you work with? Who owns the boat? You own your own boat?

DK: Yes, I own my own boat.

TH: Okay. How are you related personally? Where [do] you go, where do you fish, on the map? But where do you fish now that the Oculina Bank is closed? Okay, as soon as April 1 grouper opens, where would you fish mostly for grouper? If you could fish for grouper or snapper, where would you fish with the Oculina Bank being closed?

DK: With Oculina Bank being closed, we'll fish, you know, anywhere from 70 feet to like 105 feet off those inshore reefs that are inshore there. That would be my target area, between Fort Pierce and Bethel Shoals, probably. I would say between the power plant and Bethel Shoals is my little range that I fish regularly, yeah.

TH: Okay. And a fishing trip; you said nine hours?

DK: Yes, on a full day.

TH: That's a full day. Do you do three-quarter days or half-day trips?

DK: Half-days are five hours.

TH: Okay. How long does it take to get to the fishing grounds with your boat?

DK: If you kept running, you'd be there from thirty to forty-five minutes. But usually, we stop to get bait, so thirty to forty-five minutes' run time.

TH: Okay. On the average, how far offshore do you go?

DK: From one mile, if we're kingfishing the beach, to 12 point whatever it is, to the edge of the Bank out there, inshore of the Bank.

TH: That's what everybody said, myself included. I always say ten to twelve miles, you know, and sometimes inshore.

DK: And if we're live baiting kingfish on the beach, that would keep us in close.

TH: Okay. During what months of the year do you fish for kingfish?

DK: All year.

TH: Grouper? You already mentioned November to August.

DK: November to August would be my prime.

TH: Red snapper?

DK: Year-round.

TH: What else did you mention?

DK: If we can catch 'em, or keep 'em.

TH: Did you mention amberjacks?

DK: Amberjacks, pretty much year-round, the best being spring, summer, and fall.

TH: Okay and those are the main target fish. Wahoo, sailfish?

DK: Wahoo is like—I do, in the summer. We'll kingfish, dolphin, wahoo, sailfish, stuff like that.

TH: Trolling?

DK: Yeah, usually a slow-troll live bait.

TH: Okay, just slow-troll live bait. Okay, very good. How many years have you been a charter boat captain?

DK: I believe I got my license in eighty-eight [1988]. So, it'll be twenty-two years.

TH: Okay. We're winding down. We're going back to the Oculina Bank. This is what we're gonna go through. Finally, I'd like to talk about your fishing. How has your fishing changed over the time, in regards to the Oculina Bank? Since 1984, several changes have been made in the regulations of the Oculina Bank. I'd like to know if any of these regulations affected your fishing, and if so, how? And that's the printout I want to show you. In 1984, the Oculina Bank was initially closed to trawling, dredging, and bottom long-lining. Did this affect your fishing? If so, how? In 1984?

DK: Is that when they closed it? You could still fish it, but you couldn't anchor?

TH: You couldn't trawl, dredge, or bottom line. They didn't stop anchoring yet.

DK: It didn't affect us 'cause I could still fish it just as good, 'cause 99 percent of the time I didn't anchor there anyhow.

TH: That's what we keep hearing. And that's what you just—

DK: So there was not really an effect.

TH: That's called power fishing?

DK: Power fishing, yeah.

TH: Okay. In 1994, the Oculina Bank was designated as an experimental closed area where fishing for and retention of red snapper or snapper/grouper species, was prohibited. Snapper/grouper fishing boats were also prohibited from anchoring. Was your fishing impacted by this regulation? That was 1994.

DK: Yes.

TH: And it was 1995 that you had the run-in with the law?

DK: Yes, it was soon thereafter. They started using that jet to patrol it immediately—not immediately after; we didn't see it that many times. But yeah, it affected [me] because then it took away our area; that was our prime area.

TH: Do you see that as affecting your charter business?

DK: We just had to adapt. I would say it affected some of our customers that only wanted pure grouper, but I had to learn how to catch other fish to supplement the difference, because yeah, it did. There was an effect on it. We had to completely change our style of fishing: we had to go to a shallower fishing technique, which took a different—you know, you don't drift on the shallow like you do, you had to anchor when you fish inshore. Just because there wasn't as much current, you didn't move as much. So I started anchoring more inshore after I had to leave the Bank. They closed the Bank, literally.

TH: In 1996, all anchoring was prohibited in the Oculina Bank. Did this impact your fishing? If so, how?

DK: Well, as of eighty-four [1984]—ninety-four [1994]—we couldn't anchor anyhow. So, there wasn't really much of a difference there.

TH: Right. In 1996, trawling for rock shrimp was prohibited in the area to the east and north of the Oculina Bank; they extended the area of trawling for rock shrimp. In 1998, this area was incorporated into the Oculina Bank HAPC fishing for bottom, with bottom long-line, trawl, and dredge was prohibited in the expanded area, as was anchoring by any vessel. Was your fishing impacted by this regulation? What I'm not sure of is—I think it outlawed anchoring, but it still doesn't say grouper/snapper; you couldn't fish for grouper/snapper in that expanded area? I'm not sure.

DK: Did they talk about the area east of it that they closed?

TH: (indicates on map) That area.

DK: Oh, they went north. That didn't affect me because that was north of the area that I fished, and I didn't really fish deeper than that. So personally, with my charter boat, that ruling didn't affect me 'cause I didn't really—once they closed it, I didn't go out there. I couldn't anchor, I couldn't fish it. It became a closed zone. It was a no-no, so we kind of quit going there. So being east and north of it didn't affect me, personally.

TH: Fort Pierce?

DK: Yes.

TH: And that would affect, probably, the Sebastian people.

DK: The Sebastian people probably were not very happy.

TH: Okay, but I'm not even sure. It doesn't say that they prohibited for 1998—in the front page, this page right here, 1998. What's that say?

DK: (reads) (inaudible) to include rock shrimp, close the area. (inaudible) within the expanded area, fishing with a bottom long-line, bottom trawl, fishing pot, fish trap, is prohibited, as is anchoring by a fishing vessel. The prohibition on fishing for and retention of grouper/snapper remains in effect only within the smaller closed area.

TH: Okay. So you could still catch grouper.

DK: So you could still fish offshore of it, which there wasn't—I don't know how deep that was 'cause I didn't really fish it, but, I mean, the inside edge is like 150 [foot] something. This offshore edge that I used to know of was like 230 or 240 [feet]. So I really don't know what was beyond that.

TH: It was probably too fast; the current probably was too fast to—

DK: That outside drop-off that went from 185-190 to 220-240 was our cream of the crop, and that was in this area here. So, beyond that, I didn't even know there was rocks out there. I never fished deeper than that. I mean, we'd go tilefish out here, but that didn't have anything to do with it.

TH: All right, interesting. Okay, now, these next two questions—the next question's probably the most important question. I want you to take your time, and I want to spend some time elaborating.

DK: Open it up.

TH: Let me read this whole thing. The designated—the designation of marine areas that are closed to fishing is being used more frequently as a fishery management tool. What do you think about the use of closed areas to fishing, compared to other types of management regulations, like quotas, closed seasons, ITQs [individual transference quotas]?

DK: Okay. I guess what they're asking is what do I think about closures versus permanent closures, kind of? Because like it is now, it's closed for good.

TH: Yeah, they're using these—

DK: A closed area means it doesn't matter what you do, you can't catch: so it's a quota, it's everything in one.

TH: They're using these more and more frequently, and I wondered how you think of this if this is a management tool, compared to quotas, closed seasons.

DK: Quotas, closed seasons, in my personal opinion, are better than complete closures. Plus, they have to think about user groups that are using the most, i.e. commercial divers. Say we had ten days to go catch grouper out there, and you had 100 fishermen with hook and line going out, they're gonna catch 200 grouper a day, maximum, if you're allowed two fish per person per day. One commercial dive boat can go out there and get 200, 300 grouper in a day. (laughs) That's a very tricky question. Closures work better, I think, if they close 'em certain times of the year, but you're allowed to catch 'em other times of the year. I mean, if there's a certain area where they're spawning and you don't want to catch 'em, I can live with that—as long as when they're done doing their thing, you can go back and catch 'em the rest of the year. Now, when you—quotas are when you reach a certain amount; that's the most difficult one, I think, because how does people know what recreational people catch and it's not reported? How do they come up with these quota numbers? Quotas are tricky on a fish like a grouper and a snapper, because if you've got 1,000 recreational boys that went out there, and 100 of 'em caught a few fish, nobody knows what they've caught. The only way to know is what commercial numbers are brought in on trip tickets and things like that. So quotas are misleading, I think. I don't know how the quotas—

TH: How 'bout limits?

DK: Trip limits, number-wise, I think that's fine. I have no problem whatsoever if it was just one grouper per day, one snapper per day, of each species, because I don't need to catch a boatful. If I have four customers and I catch four grouper, I'm a happy camper. I don't need forty, like in the old days when I was—I mean, I don't need that. So, having restrictions on the amounts and the size limits, I don't have a problem with at all. I think that's the best tool for making the fisheries be repaired, because if you know if there's tons of fish out there and you only keep certain fish, you've always got the older ones that breed and you got the young ones that are protected, I don't think you're ever gonna hurt the species.

TH: So, I guess what I'm asking you—again, we'll reiterate this, because this is important. The fairest way to manage fisheries in Florida is how?

DK: I'd say the fairest way is using—

TH: For everybody.

DK: —is using size limits, amount limits, kind of like what they have now, where you're allowed one fish per person. And also, I thought a good thing they did that is now on every license is not allowing the crew or the captain on a charter boat to keep fish. That helps keep the number down. You used to—if you had six people on the boat, you'd keep six fish. Now, if you have four customers, you're only allowed one grouper per customer. So that, I think, is one of the best regulations they have out there to protect the species, having a size limit and amount limit.

TH: How about—you did mention on the Oculina Bank some things that you thought were okay because of the coral. Can you elaborate again?

DK: I thought by not anchoring, and just allowing, you know, drift fishing or power fishing would—a fishing pole, no commercial, you know, where you use fifteen pound leads and fifteen hooks—with a recreational, would, you know, one hook, one lead, you don't seem to harm the reef. The pictures I saw, I didn't see anything where, like, there's a single piece broke off; it was massive destruction and then good right beside it. I mean, there was beautiful coral, and then there were paths of destruction. I mean, this is the pictures that I saw. I haven't, you know, seen it since then. I have seen people since then that went down there with those underwater videos they have now, and to this day, there's some beautiful white stuff sticking up. I don't know how to compare it, because I don't know what it looked like beforehand. But I don't think by using my fishing pole with one hook, one lead, and not anchoring, that it's harming the reef, in my opinion.

TH: All right. Okay, this is important. So you think closed areas, possibly for anchoring or dragging, but not for single hook poles—

DK: I don't think single hook usage without anchoring is harming the reef.

TH: Okay. How 'bout commercial fishing, bottom fishing?

DK: I used to do that. I mean, we'd anchor, we'd power fish, we did all kinds of ways back when you could.

TH: Trip limits?

DK: You need to have trip limits. I mean, they used to be really high, I mean, I don't know how many thousand. If you limited the trip limits—and one way to prevent the overtaking of grouper here, like for the commercial divers, is there's only a small window of about three months where the commercial quotas, if they were kept at such-and-such—you have emergency closures for

everything nowadays, if you have a freeze. When we have these big cold water upwellings that hit our—every summer between May and July, we have this frigid water move in; the grouper get underneath and they can get—sometimes, I know those boys have caught 10,000 pounds in a week for one boat. That's a lot of grouper. That's a fleet—

TH: You're talking about the divers?

DK: Yeah, the commercial divers, because they literally—I've seen videos. There'll be two buddies they work; the one guy shoots 'em and the next guy comes along, puts 'em in the bag, 'cause they just turn 'em around, shoot 'em. They're literally so cold, they can almost push 'em into the bag; they're so cold, you know, when it's fifty degrees on the bottom. How you regulate that would be tough. If there's commercial limits, that would limit that.

TH: For example, commercial limits, if they could only catch, say, ten per—

DK: Ten head per person.

TH: Per trip?

DK: Yeah, per trip; a one-day trip, not three-day trips at once or whatever. They used to be able to double your limits. Yeah, if there was trip limits on commercial the same way that there is recreational, I think that the stocks would rebound immediately. I don't think the stocks are in trouble, personally. I can take you out right now during the closure and it would be out of control just trying to get a line to the bottom. You'd either get a ten to fifteen pound red snapper or a twenty to thirty pound grouper immediately, right now. I mean, I was out there last week; you can't even fish. There's a fifteen mile stretch, and only seventy-five to ninety; you can't even fish. We don't even go there because you're just gonna hook fish that you can't keep.

TH: Okay. So that—let's make sure we cover this well. Anything else you want to add? If you were managing the fisheries—

DK: If I was managing fisheries, my thing would be I would stick with the size limits. You know, I'd make a size limit for the fish. Some fish, you just put a minimum and you keep anything above—like snook, they have the little slot limit. That's tricky, but we're not talking about snook. But amounts of fish per person, trip limits—you know, one fish per person, over such and such a size; the twenty inches or twenty-four inches, like they have for the grouper now. It's a great regulation, and leaving it at one per person is more than fine. You don't have to have two thirty pound grouper. One thirty pound grouper is great. Same with the red snapper,

allowing an amount and a size. I think you're never gonna overfish it, because there's not that many people that actually can go and do that, to be able to affect it where there gonna wipe out a fish. It's just not gonna happen. I mean, by doing that now, I think they're being—they're so abundant out there right now, it's crazy. For them to say it's a shortage, they don't go fish there. If they went, if I took them on a trip, they'd change their minds.

TH: Okay. We didn't mention kingfish. How has kingfishing evolved since you grew up here? That's an interesting one, kingfish and Spanish mackerel.

DK: Sam Crutchfield's *Lucky Too*, as a kid, was my idol; he was a charter fisherman guy, a great guy, friend of mine.⁵ When I'd get home from school, I'd get on my bike, fly down to St. Lucie Village, get my boat, head out the inlet, and I'd look to the left, 'cause he loved to troll the north beach for kingfish. So at eleven, twelve years old, there was smoker kings on the beach like never before. The bait pods—we didn't even have a cast net; I didn't have a quill. You would throw your bait with a little lead and a hook into the school, yank it, as soon you'd hook a greenie, you'd sink to the bottom, you'd hook a kingfish. You didn't need a cast net. It was really good. But that's when—

TH: That's before the drift nets targeted?

DK: That was just before the drift nets. That was in the sixties [1960s]. In the seventies [1970s], you know, the drift nets, I don't know when that started.

TH: The circle nets started in the seventies [1970s].

DK: Yeah, and then they did those offshore drift nets; still, to this day, I have a couple rocks I fish that still have nets on 'em, pieces of nets from the drift net days. They're pretty much decayed away, but you still get hung up in 'em and the divers pull pieces up. You still get pieces of net to this day, some of the high rocks where they drifted across, and they would get hung up.

(voices in background)

But the kingfishing is not—I don't target them as much, but when I do go target them, I usually can get my limit with no problem. And I think the same way: you gotta have the limits on them. You can't do size limits on—well, size limits is hard; you usually don't catch small kingfish anyhow. Using live bait, usually the fish is gonna be five pounds and up, usually. There are kingfish; that's never been a problem, catching the one or two fish per person. I still love

⁵ Sam Crutchfield was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O6-00032.

catching the smokers on the beaches; it's my favorite. They're still out there, but they're not as good as it used to be, not as good as it used to be. Whether these fish spawn south of here more, or north of here, I don't know. But when it's good, they're in there thick. But I do remember in the seventies [1970s] and eighties [1980s], going out and seeing 'em skyrocketing everywhere in the morning, just like missiles. That's a neat sight.

TH: Cool. So you do think that the ban on the net fishing of kingfish is—

DK: Is great. Personally, I've done both sides of it. I've been on the net boats that went and caught the kingfish. Now, on the other side, now I agree with the banning of the nets for the kingfish, definitely. I mean, I saw—I saw schools so thick that when they were going around in the wintertime, there would be a whirlpool eddy in the water going down, and it's—I've never seen anything like it. The schools would be going around in circles like a washing machine, and the water would go down two feet. And the first time that Gene Hayes showed me that, that's the only time I've ever seen anything like it, like a vortex in the water.

TH: Was he netting? Were they circling them?

DK: Well, they were—the plane was flying and they wait till right before dark and they'd set the net around, yeah.

TH: You could see if—

DK: Glen Black was the main cheese at the time for that. They would catch so many in the one net that they'd set them right before dark, and there would be so many in the one net that it'd take four boats to carry the one net in. We would go out with an empty boat with no net and come in with 40,000 pounds. So they had to stop that. I mean, you'd get 100,000 to 150,000 pounds in one set. I mean, literally, the water would be black with a vortex! I've only seen that twice in my life. If I could have had a video camera, it'd be the archive of the century.

TH: That's incredible.

DK: Yeah.

TH: I will tell you—I guess that I can tell this on the tape. You know J.C. Monroe?

DK: Yeah, I know who he is. I don't really know him.

TH: He told me one time when he was—he and Lester Revells came, and they're mackerel fishing, couldn't find any mackerel. So they set some smoker—they saw some kingfish right on the beach, they set a school of smoker kingfish, they had a circle net around 'em. The kingfish were too big for the net and they wouldn't get in the net. They swam around in a circle, like cattle in a feed line. He said he put a gaff hook down and gaffed one.

DK: Just free gaffing 'em, right.

TH: Free gaffed 'em, got 'em in the boat, and they ended up gaffing 3,000 pounds of kingfish in one night because they kept running around in circles.

DK: They're smart when they get that big, too. And they can see the net, you know, especially inshore. You get that phosphorus in your net.

TH: Anyway, I never heard of—that's the most—

DK: I haven't done that one.

TH: That's the most (inaudible) story I ever heard on catching kingfish, free gaffing 'em.

DK: Right.

TH: Thinking ahead, what do you think fishing in Fort Pierce will be like in ten years?

DK: If they stick with the size limits, the amount, the trip catch, you know, what you're allowed to catch per person—we're speaking recreational part now—I think it'll be great. I mean, we've got some of the best reefs on the planet off of Fort Pierce, twelve feet, fifteen, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty-five, seventy-five, ninety, all the way out. We have probably as good a reef place as I know on the planet. I've fished all over Florida; there's no better set of reefs. You go to Stuart, it's not like that. You go to Sebastian, it's not like this good. This is like the prime of the prime here as far as reefs. Recreational, you stick with the trip limits, so many fish per person, and size limits, I think it'll be just as good today as it is in ten years.

TH: How 'bout commercial?

DK: Commercial-wise, it needs some tweaking; it needs trip limits. There's a certain period of time, like if you wanted to put trip limits on groupers for the spring to fall, when that water gets cold—you know, ten fish per person or whatever—you will make a big impact on the amount of grouper that you get shot out here. And that's our resident fish that are here year-round that time of the year. It's not our spawning fish that have gone back to North Carolina and things like that. So, trip limits for them, just like the recreational. I don't think they're hurt now. I don't think—in ten years, they might even be better if they did it like that. I don't see 'em going down.

TH: One more time, let me go back to this other question. So, a designated marine area, closure areas—what if they started the Oculina Bank, if they came into shore [as a protected area]?

DK: That's bad. Yeah, if they do any more closures, it's gonna get to where there's not going be anywhere left to fish. Closures aren't—the one problem with that closure is you go out there and there might be fifteen boats trolling around in that closure area. You don't know what they're doing. I mean, there's no way to regulate a closed area like that. And closed areas, I don't think, is the answer, period, bottom line. And to make that Oculina Bank closure bigger to the west is a definite no-no, I would say. Definite no-no.

TH: That would affect—

DK: The Oculina coral is not in that shallow water, anyhow.

TH: But it's—okay, we're just talking about a marine habitat area.

DK: Oh, okay.

TH: How would that affect lives of charter captains, and how would the spinoff industries in Fort Pierce [be affected]?

DK: Well, it's bad enough like it is. If they make any more closures, it's gonna be to the point where you're gonna have forty charter boats to thirty to twenty to ten to just a handful. And they bring tourists that stay in the hotels that eat in the restaurants. There's a—it used to be major, you know, and it's not as big as it was already because of the regulation change. And, I mean, you're gonna lose the few party boats. There used to be three party boats, to two, to one, then there'll be no party boats. It affects commercial boats. The amount of commercial boats is way

down from the heyday. Hudgins and North Bridge and all that had docks full all the way to the end.⁶ Now, it's like a ghost town. There's boats there, but they're not leaving that much. Only the true George Kauls and the hardcores are still doing it, and they're still—you know, the ones that are still doing it are doing okay. But, I mean, there's a definite impact if you do any more closures.

Regulations, trip things and [regulations] like that aren't gonna hurt you, but closures for—I mean, I had to get a second job to be able to do it, because—and then when they did this grouper and snapper closure, it just made it so that I knew that I had to do this [restaurant managing], because the only job that I ever had in my life, I could not do it anymore, especially when they started taking away the groupers and snappers.

TH: Is there anything else you'd like to add? They are tough. If not, one interesting story that you can think of in your history as a fisherman. The vortex was fascinating.

DK: That was the most—I can visualize it, I can see it. I can run my recorder in my head right now and see that. I don't know of many people on the planet that's probably ever seen that. It was so vivid. I mean, I would say the vortex part was maybe fifteen feet around, and I bet you it went down to two to three feet. You might be talking a million to 2 million pounds of fish in that school, I would guess, 'cause they clip off a little edge of it and catch 150,000 to 200,000.

TH: They caught, I think, 2 million within a week or two, north of 12 [buoy 12], back then.

DK: I was there for that. I'm glad I was on both sides of it, though. I've seen the commercial end of it, I've seen the recreational, I've seen the charter boats, I've seen the three sides to fishing in Fort Pierce. And with guidelines, with the trip limits, with the size limits, I think it'll be fine. But you can't just make these blanket decisions to block off a whole area, that's gonna fix it, 'cause that's not a fix, too.

TH: That hurts everything.

DK: That hurts everybody. They go, "Oh, well, that's a law, just deal with it." But it affects so many people, so many lives: tackle shops down the road, manufacturers—

TH: Mechanics.

⁶ This refers to places where boats docked, including Hudgins Fish House and the North Bridge, where several fish houses were located at the time.

DK: The fallout is a bunch. Yeah, mechanics, right on down the road, they're just endless.

TH: Boatyards.

DK: Boatyards are getting smaller. Everything's getting smaller because of the industry changes. And it could be flourishing here. It could be a—I mean, I would like nothing more than to have five charter boats out there. If I could make it work, I would have 'em out there right now. That would be my ideal thing, to have Little Adam Charter World out there.

TH: Fantastic.

DK: Fishing stories?

TH: Yeah, one or two that come to mind.

DK: One of the most extreme cases would be—this was probably in 1991 or two [1992] or three [1993]. No, no, this was in the late eighties [1980s], before Hurricane David. One of the fishermen on the *William* told me that there was just an absolute acre, or two acres, of sardines on top of the [SS] *Halsey*, which is a wreck southeast of the inlet here. So five and six days ahead of a hurricane, a lot of times fish will bunch up. You have some really good catches. I was still commercial fishing at the time. So, we went out; we said we'll go snapper fishing at night and maybe get in one catch before the storm.

We went and anchored up on the *Halsey* and the sardines were so thick, they were pushed up on the wreck. That, right after dark, all of a sudden, the sardines disappeared. We didn't know what was going on, and all of a sudden, the water turned red. I think every mangrove snapper in the world came there, for maybe for protection, because of a pressure change with the hurricane. We caught that night—I mean, we weren't prepared to catch a big one. If we caught 500 pounds, we were happy—of mangrove snapper, which was a good night. We probably could have caught 20,000 pounds of mangroves that night. I've never seen 'em so thick. You literally just didn't use a weight; you just flip a line out. I used fishing poles; I didn't commercial fish with hand line. You flip a pole out into the distance, put it in the rod holder, go crank this one in, put that one through bait, and go over and crank this one in.

TH: Where you by yourself? Who were you with?

DK: I just had one other person. Kevin Goff was with me, Brian Goff's brother.

TH: Did you—your boat?

DK: That was—let's see, it was before I had the *Little Adam*. Actually, it was a Stapleton; a twenty-four—it was Brian's boat, a twenty-six foot Stapleton. I don't remember the name of it. Our box only really held 500 pounds, but we caught 500 pounds in like two and a half hours. You could have caught—just, they look like yellowtail, the stuff on the surface. It was unbelievable. That was one of the most fun with a fishing pole. Throw it out and crank one in, crank one in, until you go, just level the box. Instead of being greedy and keep filling the decks and all, we came in with ours. And then the hurricane came and hit us: that was Hurricane David.

TH: But you had how many pounds?

DK: We brought in—I think it was 590 pounds of mangrove snapper. It could have been 5,000, easy.

TH: That was right before a hurricane.

DK: That was right before a hurricane. I think it was in eighty-eight [1988]; Hurricane David, I think it was.

TH: We have time for one more story. I got an hour. That's a great story.

DK: Yeah, that was a lot of fun.

TH: Any great storms, or any—

DK: I've been—gosh, I just took the pictures home. I wish I'd have brought 'em today. I was fishing just off Bethel Shoals. It was a really calm day, less than a foot, slick calm, but it was overcast like this, with clouds. You didn't know, it wasn't windy. It was like one of those eerie days. We were catching bottom fish really good. I went to unhook a fish and was walking up front and I kind of glanced up. It's so weird I took the pictures home yesterday; I had 'em here. I wish I still had 'em. And I saw, like, a waterspout above me. You know how sometimes when they're high, you just see like a snake up in the sky. So you know, I looked at it and I went,

“Whoa!” Looked around, it’s beautiful, not windy. Unhooked the fish, went back. The next thing you know, I watched it and it dropped down about 200 yards from me, just a little spot in the water, kinda neat; we watched ’em. Next thing you know, it kept getting bigger and bigger. Next thing you know, it turned into just a massive funnel cloud. So now, I’m like, “Okay, crank you lines up,” ’cause it’s not even here to the—

TH: Did you have a charter?

DK: Yeah, had a charter. So I had everybody start cranking the lines up. Next thing you know, it started coming. So I said, “Never mind. Put your rod in the rod holder and sit down.” So I had to crank up the boat and take off and run away from it. So I took a series of six different pictures: overhead, small, big, running away from it behind me. And, I mean, this thing is giant.

TH: How wide was it?

DK: Dead calm. I would say it’s about forty to fifty feet around; which for a waterspout, that’s bigger than normal. And it was slick calm, but I got a series of six pictures: little, big, big. I’m hauling butt with the boat, with it kind of coming after that was kind of very—that tightened up my customers pretty good. (TH laughs) So I had to leave all the rods. The lines are flapping, and the anchor behind the boat. Had to take off running from this waterspout.

TH: The anchor—

DK: Everything was out, still.

TH: Flapping?

DK: I just took off and everything was flapping; a big mess.

TH: Did you have a ball anchor?

DK: Yeah, I had a ball anchor. I leave it on there, thank goodness, yeah. But that was—that tightened up some customers. Usually, storms are so scary, you know, in the summertime, the squalls you get caught in; you think you’re gonna get ahead of ’em. I mean, I’ve been out there and had to save boats. I’ll give you—this is a good one. A storm popped up in the afternoon. I came in to fifty-five feet, anchored up, ’cause I knew they were coming that afternoon.

TH: The summer squalls.

DK: Right before—I mean, it’s getting really dark. It’s like, usually, we’re in by 4:00; it’s like 3:15. I get ready to crank the motor up and the lady goes, “I keep hearing somebody.” And so I’m like, “What the heck? You know, there’s no boats around.” So it gets real quiet for a minute, don’t hear anything, and the lady goes, “I swear I hear somebody.” You know, so we’re looking around, maybe there’s somebody in the water or something. Quiet, turn the radio off, everything off. It’s starting to get bad and I want to crank up and go. And so she goes, “I swear I hear it.” So I said, “What we’re gonna do is we’re gonna pull up the anchor, I’m gonna leave my ball there.” I had a spot there. Next thing you know, we saw a little flash. I said, “Uh-oh.” Pulled up the anchor, pulled up everything, went over there. There was a diver in the water. No boat anywhere around. We went up to this guy in the squall and he’s going “Oh, thank God.” We pulled him in; he had his dive [suit] on, still had his goodie bag with lobster. (TH laughs) This was hardcore. So we picked up the guy.

TH: How far offshore?

DK: We were at fifty-five feet, straight out of the inlet.

TH: Eight miles, seven miles?

DK: Yeah, about seven miles, six and a half miles. So we picked him up and we go, “Where’s your boat?” He goes, “My wife’s in the boat, but she’s dead.” And we’re like, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! We better call the Coast Guard.” He goes, “She ain’t dead yet, but when I find her she’s gonna be dead.” (TH laughs) This guy had to—the honesty to say something funny like that. And so—

TH: How long had he been there?

DK: The boat was almost at Jensen Beach, but it was a hard south wind and a pretty good south tide. So he had been in the water maybe two or three hours. She left to go in, to go find somebody from the jetties to come back out and look for him. She didn’t have any clue with directions. She didn’t know it, so she went [to the jetties] instead of calling the Coast Guard. So now, I called the Coast Guard, and finally it had been reported that I had him. She was still inshore, you know, no boats to be seen. I was the only boat out there.

TH: Did they have a radio in their boat?

DK: Yeah, they had a radio. I don't know why she didn't call the Coast Guard. She just freaked out and went in to try to get some people off the jetties and come back and look for him. (TH laughs) But when he said, "She's dead," all my customers are like, "Oh, no!" So I ended up with a big bag of lobster. He dumped all the lobster out and gave me the lobster for finding him. Didn't care, didn't crack a thing. But when he said his wife was dead—"She's not dead now, but when I find her, she's gonna be dead." (both laugh) I can remember that one. That was a good story, though.

TH: Okay. Thank you very much for sharing your fishing history with us.

End of interview