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Oculina Bank Oral History Project
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Interviewee: Roger Rucker (RR)

Interviewer: Terry Lee Howard (TH)

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[Transcriber's note: This interview takes place outdoors at a public marina. There is audible background noise from the wind and from nearby construction work.]

Terry Howard: Good afternoon. This is Terry Howard. Today is May 17, 2010. I'm at the Cracker Boy Marina in Fort Pierce, Florida, conducting an oral history with Captain Roger Rucker for the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation's project with Fort Pierce fishermen on the Oculina Bank HAPC [Habitat Area of Particular Concern]. Welcome, Roger. Please state your name, spell your name, your place of birth, and your date of birth.

Roger Rucker: Roger Rucker, R-u-c-k-e-r. Place of birth, Columbus, Ohio. Age, sixty-one.

TH: Date of birth?

RR: 5-9-49 [May 9, 1949].

TH: Okay. When did you move to Fort Pierce?

RR: In 1973.

TH: What brought you to Fort Pierce?

RR: Sunshine and the ocean.

TH: (laughs) Okay. You wanted to fish?

RR: To fish, dive. I was a commercial—I was a part-time commercial diver and dive instructor in Ohio.

TH: Okay. Are you married?

RR: No.

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

RR: Yeah, three.

TH: Okay, and how old were you when you first got married?

RR: Nineteen.

TH: Nineteen. Okay, and how many children—you have three children, and can you tell me how old they are?

RR: Twenty-five, thirty-seven, and forty-one.

TH: Okay. How much schooling do you have?

RR: Twelfth grade.

TH: Okay, and go back to your children: what are their sexes?

RR: Males, three boys.

TH: Three boys? Okay, cool. How much schooling do you have?

RR: Twelve years.

TH: Twelve years, high school. Do you have another job besides charter boat—?

RR: Yeah, I'm a yacht contractor; fiberglass, paint work. You know, commercial fish, commercial dive, some, and work on yachts; and private duty charter, you know?

TH: That's charter business.

RR: Yeah.

TH: Do you currently own a boat?

RR: Yes.

TH: What kind, length; could you describe your boat, please?

RR: It's a twenty-seven foot Tierra, a 1985 model sport fish which I run charters on and commercial fish.

TH: Okay, and how is it powered?

RR: It has twin 190 horsepower Volvo diesels.

TH: Okay. Now, I'd like to ask some questions about the Oculina Bank. How familiar are you with the Oculina Bank?

RR: I know of it, I guess mainly through Harbor Branch¹, other bulletins we get from marine fisheries, and of course I troll over it a lot, and mark a lot of the bottom, and see certain different—what do I want to say?—activities and structures from my bottom fishing.

TH: Okay. Have you heard it referred to as “the towers”?

RR: As the towers?

TH: As—yeah, as “the peaks.” Peaks.

RR: Peaks, yeah, I've heard of it referred to as the peaks. Yeah, right yeah.

TH: Okay. Why was the Oculina Bank designated as an area to protect?

RR: I thought it was for—first of all, I don't know first of all, but I guess they found some living coral out there, and I guess that the breeding grounds for some of our local fish that inhabit the reefs are bottom fish.

TH: Okay. Is there anything else you can tell me about the Oculina Bank that you know about it from your experience?

RR: I just enjoy fishing over it, and it's good for charter fishing, you know, to troll over it.

¹Harbor 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.

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

RR: Well, if they've got living corals out there, by dropping anchors you're going to probably tear up your bottom and destroy habitats and the living coral that's trying to make a comeback. Bottom fishing, again, I guess, has been hit pretty hard and we really have no sanctuary or breeding grounds for our fish to live relatively safely and mature and grow. You know, a farmer keeps breeding stock. A fishermen needs to have breeding stock somewhere, so I reckon this was an idea to help that: by closing certain areas so that fish can have an area that they can live in, and breed and lay eggs and mature.

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

RR: I don't think it's affected my fishing. I really don't do that much bottom fishing. I do a lot of strike fishing with the trolling, which we troll over the Oculina [*sic*] Bank area looking for bottom structure that, you know, of course would hold bait and other fish in the area, which you might find a wahoo or dolphins which are migrating through the area.

TH: If anchoring and bottom fishing in the Oculina Bank was not prohibited—I mean, if you could anchor and bottom fish there, would you fish there?

RR: I guess if it wasn't prohibited, I'd fish there, yeah.

TH: Okay. How and for what?

RR: Probably, then, it would be to do bottom drops.

TH: For?

RR: For grouper, snapper.

TH: Okay.

RR: Yeah, and of course they're in there, too, your amberjacks.

TH: Amberjacks.

RR: They're mixed in with that, yeah.

TH: Okay. Overall, how has fishing changed since you began fishing in the Fort Pierce area?

RR: I would say, overall, since I really got involved in the charter part of it in eighty-five [1985], it's gone. I would say sport fishing as far as your daily catches, annual catches, has decreased—and probably a lot—in the past five to eight years.

TH: What do you attribute that to?

RR: I would say pressure, on the fish.

TH: Commercial, charter, recreational?

RR: I would—I'd probably go both. Recreational, definitely. On recreational fishing, definitely on our area, I would say, or, you know, the east coast of Florida. Commercial, being that we target migratory fish, I think our commercial—and it's not our commercial, I think commercial industries farther south are devastating our fish that would normally come this way. That's just kind of my own thought.

TH: Which fish are you talking about?

RR: Your dolphin, maybe wahoo, other fish are imported that are caught commercially out of this country.

TH: Ah, okay.

RR: I don't think they make it here, anymore. I think the commercial—that part of the commercial industry, not so much our commercial industry. I think it's commercial industries in other areas that aren't regulated like we are.

TH: Central and South America?

RR: Yeah, that are devastating our recreational fish, which then also hurts commercial fishing in this area.

TH: Okay. Have you had any experiences with law enforcement within or regarding the Oculina Bank?

RR: No.

TH: I want to talk about your fishing history, specifically. What is your earliest memory of fishing and how old were you?

RR: Well, maybe a little bit up north in a river on a lake when I was in Ohio. Actually, when I moved to Florida in seventy-three [1973], I jumped right into spearfishing and lobster diving, and a very small amount of recreational sport fishing. By 1980 I got a captain's license. By 1985, I broke into the charter fleet as a mate and a captain, and started charter fishing really seriously in 1985 on.

TH: Okay. What's your earliest memory, again? Let's go back. And how old were you when you began fishing in Ohio?

RR: Teenage years. And that was just a little bit on a pond, you know, catch a catfish, catch a little bass, you know? That wasn't—I didn't do a lot of it, but just a little bit now and then. I

really got into it when I moved south to Florida, because that's what I came here to do: fish, dive, be on the boat, around the water.

TH: Do you recall how old you were when you first fished in Ohio?

RR: Teenage years.

TH: Okay. How did you learn how to fish? Who taught you?

RR: Well, in the beginning when I first moved here in seventy-three [1973] for spearfishing and lobster diving, and then a little bit of trolling, I was kind of teaching myself. But really, I learned when I broke into the charter fleet with Captain Kenny Moore on the *Hooker*.

TH: Okay, Kenny Moore.

RR: And that would be, really, in eighty-five [1985], 1985.

TH: That's K-e-n-n-y M-o-o-r-e?

RR: —o-r-e, yeah. Captain Kenny Moore.

TH: On the *Hooker*?

RR: Yeah.

TH: Now, how did you decide to become a charter boat captain?

RR: Well, after getting down here and getting involved in fishing and realizing I liked it more and more; always enjoying the outdoors because I grew up on a small farm; a fascination for the ocean and God's country, which is someplace that nobody owns; every day is a different day. I just couldn't think of what could be better than goin' out recreational charter fishing, having fun at something you love to do and maybe introducing other people into it, you know, certain times a year.

TH: Okay, so when did you start fishing this—you've already said this, but I'm just going to be a little repetitive. But when did you start fishing in the Fort Pierce area, age and year again? Seventy-three [1973], and what age were you?

RR: Let me go back. That's forty, forty-one years ago. I'm sixty-one now.

TH: You're in your mid-twenties.

RR: Yeah. I was in my mid-twenties, then.

TH: Okay. Were you fishing commercially, recreationally, or working in the charter boat sector when you first started?

RR: When I first started, I was just recreational fishing, but, you know, commercial diving back then for grouper and lobster.

TH: Did you need permits back then to catch—

RR: No permits were needed.

TH: That's what I thought. What did you fish for again? Lobster—

RR: Yeah, we'd go for lobsters, grouper, and snapper.

TH: And you, basically—when you first started, you spearfished?

RR: Yeah, I was spearfishing, yeah.

TH: Okay, except for the lobster, of course.

RR: Correct.

TH: Who did you fish with? Who owned the boat?

RR: There were several of us. I dove with a gentleman by the name of Dwight Blackwelder.

TH: Can you spell the name?

RR: Last name? Dwight, that's be—

TH: D-w—

RR: D-w-r-i-g-h-t [*sic*] Blackwelder, B-l-a-c-k-w-e-l-d-e-r.

TH: Welder, okay.

RR: Welder, Blackwelder.

TH: Okay, and the first name again?

RR: Dwight.

TH: There wouldn't be an R in Dwight.

RR: Dwight

TH: D-w-i-g-h-t.

RR: Yeah, yeah.

TH: D-w-i-g-h-t.

{{{0:12:00.3}}}

RR: Dwight. Some with Bobby Cardin².

TH: Bobby Cardin, okay. So that's B-o-b-b-y C-a-r-d-i-n.

RR: And then he had his boat, Dwight had his, and then I had a small boat. We all kind of had our own boats and we just team up and used each other's boats.

TH: Okay, these were just friends?

RR: Yeah, we were just friends, associates, all were doing the same thing back then.

TH: Where did you go to fish when you began fishing, or where did you go to dive when you began?

RR: The offshore bar east of Fort Pierce. The ninety foot; seventy, eighty, and ninety foot was the base of the thing; you go east to northeast to southeast.

TH: And you would dive in ninety feet of water?

RR: Ninety feet of water.

TH: Okay, and these were just friends. Can you show—well, let's see. During what months of the year did you fish for what?

RR: You going back to the beginning or, like, to now? What do you want to know?

TH: This is back at when you first started. What months of the year did you dive for—well, all of these things, mostly.

RR: Okay, the grouper and snapper were like a winter—November to May/April. They seen them move in, now everybody knows they're comin' in to mate, meet up, lay their eggs, and by spring they move on. So, late fall, October, November, that would pick up. Your lobster season always started there in August and goes to the end of March. After that, that's when we started leaning into more sport fishing, or I would get more into sport fishing then, because lobster season closed. By the end of May your grouper start to thin out; there's not much to do on the bottom.

TH: And then you start—

²Robert “Bobby” Cardin is one of the interviewers for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project, and was himself interviewed. The DOI for his interview is O6-00038.

RR: Right, when you get into the fishing aspect of it then, both recreational and charter fishing, your winter months now could be targeting mainly November, December, January, and into February. Your sailfish, a recreational fish, mixed in with that; you'll get your occasional dolphins that are migrating through. You have some kings, and possibly a wahoo. After that, into the springtime we get into a major dolphin run, bull run, there sometime in the latter part of April into June, starting out with smaller peanut dolphins working up to thirty-five, forty, fifty pound bull dolphins, occasional run with them for a few months. Then summer, water gets hot, things thin down again, kingfish seems to be the target of summer months or some limited bottom fishing; and an occasional peanut dolphin, cobias. Cobias are summer, spring, and summertime.

TH: And wahoo?

RR: Wahoo, that's always a surprise, just never figured them rascals out. They're just—they just surprise you. They can surprise you at any time.

TH: Yeah, well said. Okay, so an average fishing trip lasts how long? And this is a hard question, I know.

RR: Yeah. If we're in the charter fleet, a day would start leavin' the docks at seven [AM] back at the docks at four [PM]. That would be a basic charter day, and I don't think a recreational fisherman's much different than that, you know? Sometime around daylight, and everybody's back, you know, late afternoon; you got a boat to clean, things to do. So, you know, you put in eight, nine hour days at sea, and lock down your set up, and close down time.

TH: Okay, an average trip's catch? I guess we're talkin' charter here, an average charter catch?

RR: Well, like I said, in the past five to eight, ten years, I think there's been a drastic drop. This weekend there's a tournament goin' on for recreational fishermen that had seventy-five boats in it. I would say that probably 30 percent of the boats had a hard time finding the fish. I would say the rest of the boats would have anything from a couple to half a dozen, seven, eight fish. Yeah, there was a big fish caught, and maybe a big fish and few nice fish; most fish were small. Our boat had four bites, four fish. The day before, one bite, one fish. So certain times a year it can be a lot better. As we get into the heat of the summer, the surface bite does slow down, the water gets hot. The migratory fish are, I would say, gone to where the water's cooler and the bait's—they've gone with the bait. Winter months, yeah, you might go and get you five or six dolphins, maybe a couple of sailfish bites and a surprise wahoo in the winter months, November—that's after Thanksgiving into February. March is a month that's like—I call it a change of the seasons; doesn't seem to be a lot happenin' in March. Mother Nature's changin' and the fish are trying to figure out what to do. April, we kind of look at our spring bite might kick in; things start again.

TH: Okay. What did you—for how many years did you fish for all these fish? Well, I guess since you started in 1980, seventy-three [1973]?

RR: Yeah, I would break down seventy-three [1973]—(coughs), excuse me. Seventy-three [1973] to eighty-five [1985] was either more or less on and off commercial diving, still dive instructor, learning some of the aspects of sport fishing, documenting my time so that I could get a captain's license. And then, eighty-five [1985], 1985, was when I finally got asked to start stepping in on the charter boat with Captain Kenny Moore and mate, and then up to running his boat and then on to run others. Really, the seriousness of charter fishing didn't really get kicked in till 1985 on.

TH: Okay, you just answered the next question, what do you fish for and how; you just explained that. Now, tell me a little bit about the gear that you used and the bait you used for—let's start with the dolphin. What do you troll?

RR: Mainly a mono rig, a single hook rig with either a strip ballyhoo belly on it—er, I mean, a strip bonito belly, or a rig ballyhoo, a swimming ballyhoo. You can do a live bait, you know. Some people go out there and do all live bait; you can use a dead bait or a live bait.

TH: Okay. Slow trolling with—

RR: Slow trolling with the dead baits. (inaudible)
(construction noise in background)

TH: With the live bait, too?

RR: Yeah (inaudible).

TH: Okay. Let's see here. You used the same gear for troll—you just mentioned for trolling for kingfish, or for everything. How about sailfish?

RR: Sailfish, you would probably downsize your hook. We're getting into the circle hook now: we want to release our fish. We want them hooked in the mouth, in the bill. We don't want them to get the chance for that hook to get in their mouth and snag them in the gut or some place that's gonna maybe do internal damage. So, all tournaments and a lot of recreational fisherman now are switching mainly in the sailfish season when they're specifically targeting sailfish with a circle hook.

TH: Okay.

RR: Sometimes throughout the year guys will continue on with the circle hook. But, yeah, we're trying to, because it is a recreational fish and we just—we always release these fish and we're trying to keep them in the water unharmed so future generations can catch them. Wahoo, you need a wire. You would use the same basic ballyhoo, bonito strip, mullet, but you want to throw in a piece of mono wire—

TH: Per liter.

RR: Per liter instead of monofilament.

TH: Okay, you—who do you work with? Now, you own your own boat, is that correct?

RR: Yes.

TH: Do you have a mate?

RR: Yeah, I have several boys. My son is one of them, and then I have a couple other guys I call just depending on who's available.

TH: Okay, where do you go to fish for, say, kingfish?

RR: Kingfish from mainly what we call the inshore bar, forty-five to sixty foot of water, and then on out to the seventy, eighty, and ninety foot of water east of Fort Pierce to southeast and northeast of Fort Pierce inlet.

TH: Okay, how about dolphin?

RR: Dolphin, I would say your direction would be the same. We would probably start lookin' there on the offshore bar around ninety foot of water and continue on out sometimes as far as 600 feet, and maybe even farther on rare occasions, lookin' for conditions of something fishable to get you to migratory there.

TH: That's where you might fish over the—for dolphin and sailfish, that's where you might fish over the Oculina Bank?

RR: Dolphin, sailfish, wahoo, yeah. We would definitely be out there usually in the vicinity trolling over the Oculina Bank.

TH: Okay, how do you decide—okay, let's see. You covered—okay, how about grouper? Where would you go to target grouper? You say you don't really much—

RR: I don't really bottom fish. I'm really a scrag fisherman. I mean, they are on, you know, like I said there on the springtime or—late fall through the winter and spring they're on the offshore bar. They're targeted regularly there by divers, and you can anchor up and catch grouper there. The wrecks to the southeast hold them, but out there the artificial reef holds grouper/snapper just—certain times a year are better than other times of the year. So, I just know in those places, some of which I might dive in there and see them. You have rocks and reefs, you'll have bottom fish.

TH: On the average, how far do you go offshore to fish, on average?

RR: Average, I would say within—let's go six to fifteen miles.

TH: Okay.

RR: (inaudible)

TH: How do you decide where you will fish?

RR: Some of that can do with your fishery reports through the week, if they're telling you there could be a, you know, bite in a certain area. That can determine it. Sometimes it could be the current runnin' hard. You know that if you get tied up in it, you could be a lot farther away from home so you may lean and do battle with the current in the beginning of that day. You know, fish against the current so you don't get so far from home. If fishing is iffy, like it's been here lately, sometimes we like to target and troll over Oculina Bank hoping that bottom structure has housed bait, congregating around some of this structure that might hold some of our migratory fish in the neighborhood that would occasionally feed on bait hanging out and we might luck out and catch our fish.

TH: Now, let's go back to the current again. Basically, the Gulf Stream flows from south to north.

RR: Yes.

TH: So, if you did not want to get too far away from home you would head out to an inlet in a southeasterly direction.

RR: More southeasterly and (inaudible) the current in the beginning.

TH: Right, so then you fish—you can fish to the north with the current.

RR: With the current.

TH: And you don't get that far away. Okay, clarify that. Sometimes you need to explain things as though you're speaking to people that know nothing about fishing. During what months of the year do you—we already went through that—do you fish for what fish. And how long does an average fishing trip last, you already covered that. Average catch. For how many years have you been a charter boat captain, since 1980.

RR: Yeah, well, 1980 I got my license, so—

TH: Eighty—

RR: Eighty-five [1985], I really started to use it, but I did—because of my documented time, I could get a license, but I really wasn't using it as a charter captain till eighty-five [1985].

TH: Okay. Finally, I'd like to talk about how your fishing has changed over time in regards to the Oculina Bank. Since 1984, several changes have been made in the regulations on the Oculina Bank. I'd like to know if any of these regulations affected your fishing, and if so, how? The Oculina Bank was initially closed to trolling, dredging, bottom longlining in 1984. Did this affect your fishing?

RR: Well, I don't think it affects my strike fishing, no.

TH: Trolling, dredging and bottom longlining was eighty-four [1984].

RR: Eighty-four [1984].

TH: You could still catch—you could still bottom fish there.

RR: You could still bottom fish there, which I don't do, but would've affected it.

TH: Okay, let me go on.

RR: Okay.

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

RR: Not my fishing, no.

TH: Okay, you did not—

RR: I did not.

TH: —bottom fish—

RR: I don't bottom fish.

TH: —that much. Then, in 1996, all anchoring was prohibited within the Oculina Bank. Did this impact your fishing, and if so, how? No?

RR: No, that didn't change mine. No.

TH: Nineteen ninety-six [1996], trolling for rock shrimp was prohibited in the area to the east and north of the designated Oculina Bank. And in 1998, this area was incorporated into the Oculina Bank HAPC; fishing with bottom longline, troll and dredge was prohibited in the expanded area, as was anchoring by any vessel. Was your fishing impacted by this regulation?

RR: I don't believe so, no.

TH: Okay. And the designation—now, this is where you talk about, you know, your feeling on HAPCs. The designation of marine areas that are closed to fishing is being used more frequently as a fishing management tool. What do you think about the use of closed areas to fishing compared with other types of management regulations such as quotas, closed seasons, et cetera? I'll repeat that for you. 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 such as quotas, closed seasons, catch limits, et cetera?

RR: Well, we have the Oculina Bank closed area here, but is it—I guess this is kind of a question, too. Is it really closed? Is it really being used as designed to be, in my thoughts.

TH: Be more specific, if you would.

RR: Like, who patrols, who governs this? I know we're governed, but who makes sure—

TH: Enforces.

RR: Enforces what's not going on, that we're not out there taking out the fish we're not supposed to. Yeah, I know a shrimp boat has a computer on board when they leave. Recreational fishermen, commercial boats don't. We're free to go and do what we want, and you answer for it when you come back to dock and the FWC [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission] man might be there to look at your catch. I like the idea of the closed areas for breeding grounds, but it has to be a closed area.

TH: You're saying the enforcement is a problem?

RR: It has to be enforced. It has to be a closed area year round, or whatever, and enforced to make it work.

TH: What if the northeast grounds off Fort Pierce, or the offshore bar and inshore bar east of Fort Pierce, was designated as an HAPC? Would that affect your fishing?

RR: That would affect my fishing, yeah.

TH: Okay, and a follow up to this: what do you think is the fairest, best, most equitable way to manage the marine fisheries? And again, go back to quotas, catch limits, closed seasons, HAPCs, protected areas. In your opinion, what is the fairest and most equitable and best way to manage the fishery for fish and fishermen included, for everybody?

RR: Well, I'll go back to us as recreational fishermen and charter boats, when it was imposed that the limits came on us: dolphins, wahoo, the grouper's in there. We have limits, quantities and size, that we can catch. I guess that's a fair way. Size-wise, I guess, because we try to get fish that are big enough we're not killing juveniles; that, I think, helps. It's probably kind of like a quota system, too, in a way, because it's a daily thing. It's an individual or a boat thing that can be monitored daily. Your migratory fish, I guess that works for those, or a quota; your bottom fish, I don't know. Those fish, I'm not sure what would work. Having something like Oculina Bank where they can grow and breed and gives them a place to start as they move from there, fine. I don't know.

There's not an easy answer for that, I don't think. It's probably a combination; finding a happy combination will probably be impossible. It's probably something that we talked about earlier, when you were asking about our catches going down and the pressure: it's somethin' that's probably happenin' in all the industries. It's comin' too late. Recreational fishermen are comin' out of the woodwork like crazy. The pressure's on the fish, you know, it's just—

TH: You think most of the pressure's coming from the recreational end?

RR: It's definitely grown. I don't know so much about how commercial's grown. I think it's tough. I mean, I'm trying to do a little commercial fishing. I think it's tough to be a commercial fisherman. I mean, part of me, when I came down here, I thought that would be a great thing, to be a commercial fisherman. Maybe when I first got here, if I could learn quick enough, yeah, might have made a livin'. I think it's hard for a man right now to make a livin' as a commercial fisherman. You have weather, you have your quotas, you have all kinds machinery, you have all kinds of odds against you, right?

TH: Regulations.

RR: Regulations, yeah.

TH: I don't want to put words in your mouth.

RR: Yeah, everything is against you. And yeah, and I said it: I'm a recreational fisherman. I'm a combination of both. I've seen the recreation industry grow. It's grown in the past. I don't know if it's going to slow down now with the economy, but there has been a boom in the past five to eight years in recreational fishermen.

TH: Do you see that at the boat ramps?

RR: Yeah. Oh, yeah. You can see it in the size of the boat now. You can buy a thirty-nine foot boat trailer; ten years ago, twenty-five was your boat.

TH: You couldn't get a bigger boat on a trailer, now you can.

RR: Right, everything is adapted with the technology of horsepower, boats, motors, fuel economy, and, of course, fishermen or anglers finding out. Well, we didn't talk about tuna, but they build bigger boats now so that you can run a hundred miles and go catch yellowfin tunas and anything here in between.

TH: Okay. Thinking ahead to the future, what do you think fishing in Fort Pierce will be like in ten years?

RR: Are you sure you want me to answer that? (laughs)

TH: Yeah, do the best you can.

RR: If what I've seen in the past, like I said, five to eight years—you know, weekends like the past. We've always called the “hot times of fishing,” the “good times of fishing”; they're harder and harder to find. I mean, we have a good time out there every day, but your catch, your nice catches, are harder and harder to find. And yeah, it's going to continue to get worse. I don't know what's going to change it to make it go the other way, other than mankind, I guess. You know?

TH: Follow-up on that. You mentioned—you haven't mentioned anything about pollution. Is that a factor in this area? Do you see it as a factor in this area?

RR: Well, there are times we can be out there and we see that dirty black water, ten miles offshore.

TH: That's the freshwater runoff?

RR: Freshwater runoff, whatever it is; just black, dirty, nasty water, yeah.

TH: Freshwater.

RR: You know, it's freshwater, I guess, mixed in with it; just runoff from the canals west of us here. And at certain times of the year, I guess they must be dumping, which increases it and it just—water just turns. I call it black, dark-dark, for quite of a time, and of course, there doesn't seem to be much of a bite during all this. And the only thing I can say about—I don't know about pollution. I haven't been on the beaches diving lately, but last time I was there, a lot of the reefs along the shorelines are covered in sand.

TH: Covered in sand?

RR: Covered in sand.

TH: They used to not be covered in sand?

RR: They used to not be covered in sand. A lot of our rocks and reefs that were along—I mean, there are still some out there, but you go across there; it's just under the sand. Things have changed there, whether it's man putting sand there on the beach, Mother Nature takes it away, and it's covering up reefs.

TH: The reefs used to be healthy?

RR: The reefs used to be healthy.

TH: Okay.

RR: Within a quarter mile ashore.

TH: All right, Roger. I thank you very much.

End of interview