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Albert Ashley oral history interview by Terry Howard, May 31, 2010

Albert Ashley (Interviewee)

Terry Lee Howard (Interviewer)

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Terry Howard: Good morning, this is Terry Howard. Today is May 31, Memorial Day, 2010. I am at the home of Albert Ashley conducting an oral history with Albert Ashley 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, Albert. Please state your name, spell your name, your place of birth, and your date of birth.

Albert Ashley: It’s Albert Ashley, A-l-b-e-r-t A-s-h-l-e-y. I was born in Sebring, Florida, in 1939.

TH: Okay. Your date of birth, what date?

AA: It was November 3, 1939.

TH: 11-3-39 [November 3, 1939].

AA: Right.

TH: Very good. When did you move to Fort Pierce?
AA: In 1947.

TH: What brought you to Fort Pierce?

AA: I came over with my parents. My dad went to work for Mentone Equipment Company over here, or it was International Harvester then.

TH: Okay. How old were you, then, when you came, 1946?

AA: I was in the third grade, so I guess nine. I guess I was nine.

TH: Okay. Well, if you were born in thirty-nine [1939], that would be seven.

AA: Seven?

TH: Yes, sir.

AA: Okay. Well, I was seven. (laughs) Well, I was in the third grade.

TH: How old were you when you got married?

AA: Twenty-nine. (radio static)

TH: Twenty-nine? You were married for how long?

AA: Ten years.

TH: Ten years. Do you have children?

AA: I have one.

TH: How old is he or she?

AA: She’s forty-two.

TH: Forty-two, okay. How much schooling have you had?

AA: High school.

TH: Twelfth grade. What do you do for a living?

AA: I’m retired.

TH: What did you do?
AA: Well, I owned a telephone answering service over in the central part of the state.

TH: Oh, okay.

AA: And then I moved over there—oh, I can’t remember what year it was now. We moved over there and then I moved back here. I worked for Bernard Egan’s [Bernard Egan & Co.].

TH: Oh, Egan Groves?

AA: Right. Egan picking company.

TH: Okay, that’s Bernie Egan?

AA: Bernie.

TH: B-e-r-n-i-e. How do you spell Egan?

AA: E-g-a-n.

TH: That’s what I thought. Okay. Did you have other jobs?

AA: No, no.

TH: Okay. Have you worked in the fishing industry?

AA: No. I had a Saltwater Products license years ago, and then when they got the special permits, or federal permits and all, I did not get those.

TH: What king of fishing did you do?

AA: Well, bottom fishing and a few kingfish. I didn’t have a commercial boat like yours.

TH: Okay. Do you own your own boat?

AA: Not now.

TH: Okay. Did you own a boat?

AA: Yes.

TH: For a long time?

AA: Yes.

TH: What kind of boat was it?
AA: Well, the one that I started on, that was a Wellcraft.

TH: Okay.

AA: It was twenty-three feet, and then I had a Topaz after that one.

TH: Okay.

AA: And then when I sold the Topaz—

TH: How long was the Topaz?

AA: Twenty-six [feet].

TH: Okay. You sold it and—

AA: I sold it, and I just go with Billy Yates now on his boat.¹

TH: Okay. Now, I’d like to ask some questions about the Oculina Bank. One thing I forgot to ask is: is your one child forty-two?

AA: Forty-two.

TH: A girl?

AA: That’s her.

TH: Okay.

AA: (laughs) Yeah, that’s Kellie.

TH: Okay, a lady.

AA: K-e-l-l-i-e.

TH: K-e-l-l-i-e. Okay. How familiar are you with the Oculina Bank?

AA: I know roughly where it is. The exact boundaries, I’m not sure of. I fished that area before had a—before they closed it.

TH: You had fished it before they closed it?

AA: Yes. It’s probably been fifteen or eighteen years since I’ve been there. So, I don’t know how long it’s been closed. When did they close it?

¹ Joseph “Billy” Yates, Jr. was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O6-00024.
TH: I think not till ninety-four [1994] for fishing, for bottom fishing. We’ll get to this in a minute.

AA: Okay.

TH: In 1984, they outlawed dragging, but we’ll get down to that in a minute, here. I just wanted to know what you know right now.

AA: Okay. That’s all that I know of. I didn’t know what it was, but I knew that there was a lot of fish out there.

TH: Did you identify it as the peaks?

AA: I got some numbers that said peaks on ’em. I think there were some down in the low 100s and then they went—the highest I have was up in the 400s.

TH: That’s feet of water? Four hundreds what?

AA: Four hundred feet.

TH: Your numbers?

AA: LORAN.

TH: Okay. From a thousand, that would be the longitude?

AA: It’d be the longitude. The north number would be the 400s.

TH: Four hundreds, that’s north of Bethel Shoals?

AA: Northeast of Bethel Shoals.

TH: Northeast of Bethel, okay.

AA: The main one that I fished more were the 200s, and that would have been south—260, I think.

TH: Okay. That’s your top LORAN number.

AA: Right.

TH: Okay. Now we know where it is. Why do you think, or why was the Oculina Bank designated as an area to protect?
AA: All the reef, you know, rock formation, I suppose. It was not accessible. As eighty-five foot, it was a little bit deeper than most people, didn’t have the pressure on it that eighty-five foot did. Then, when the current wasn’t running, you could anchor, catch fish well. One time I saw a boat anchored out there, a commercial boat. The tide was running north pretty good and I looked (inaudible) probably north of him, a half a mile, and I looked in the water and saw fish wallowing around there over there. I went over there and I gaffed a twenty pound grouper, and then in a few minutes I looked again, and there’s another one. The current was running so fast when they were cranking ’em up that these were—you know, they’d bring them out, and bring it up, and (inaudible) and the thing would break off. I gaffed a half a dozen grouper that—it was on top. (inaudible) get half way up (inaudible). I didn’t know what was down there. I know there was a lot of fish.

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

AA: No, sir.

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

AA: It’s fine with me. (TH laughs) It’s too deep for me to go fishing. (laughs)

TH: It’s about 150 to 160 feet.

AA: Well, something like that. They need someplace for ’em to go run and hide. Need those fish to get out there and get some of the pressure off of ’em.

TH: Okay. Has the closure of the Oculina Bank affected your fishing?

AA: Not mine. I just chose not to go anymore.

TH: Okay. If anchoring and bottom fishing in the Oculina Bank was not prohibited—in other words, if you could still do it—would you fish there?

AA: Me, personally, I wouldn’t. I’m seventy years old. (laughs)

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

AA: It’s not near as good as it used to be. You could go anyplace. I remember when I used to go down the beach in a boat and look down at the reef. You could see fish of all descriptions running across out in front of your boat in the shallow water and the ocean. Those were real colorful (inaudible) fish and turtles. Anywhere you wanted to look over the reef, you’d see fish moving. You can’t do that anymore.

There was some reefs up off Vero [Beach] that, in the sixties [1960s], was just live coral everywhere. We use to go up there and get lobsters, and someone decided it was real easy to use Clorox to run lobsters out the reef. So, they’d take bottles and they’d squirt up under there to get
’em a lobster, and that Clorox immediately killed the reef. The last time I went up there it looked like a moonscape. There wasn’t a living thing on that rock up there. There was no fish there. There used to be a lot of ’em. You mentioned Sam Crutchfield a while ago; he and I went up there one time.\(^2\) I can’t remember what time of year it was. This was forty foot of water and we had a bait well full of mullet. And we anchored on the thing and we were catching gag grouper, fifteen to twenty pound gag grouper, just as fast as you could put down there. We used to go at night and catch mangrove snappers.

TH: That’s in Vero Cove?

AA: Yeah, up offshore. There’s a place there in forty foot of water that’s way off. I didn’t think anybody knew about it. The last time I went up there, you couldn’t get a bite. The eighty-five foot reef, you can still get enough fish to eat, I guess, but it’s nothing like it [was]. They either got a spear mark on ’em or a hook hanging out of their mouth or are skinned up. (laughs)

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

AA: No, I’ve not been there since. They would have reason to come and stop me.

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

AA: Before the first grade, on a bridge there at Lake Istokpoga. There was a bridge that went across, a little wooden bridge that went across to the house, and I had me a dog fennel pole with a sewing thread string on it with a worm tied in the middle fishing down there and catching guppies with pot gut minnows.

TH: What kind of a pole?

AA: Dog fennel, those little bushes that grew up in cow pastures.

TH: Dog—

AA: Dog fennel.

TH: How do you spell fennel?

AA: F-i-n-n-e-l [sic], I guess.

TH: Dog fennel. Tell me again how you caught the fish?

AA: You take a worm and tie him in the center and let both ends, dangle it down, and put it down in the water and the minnows will grab either side of the worm and you pull him up on the

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\(^2\) Samuel Crutchfield was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O6-00032.
ground, catch him, put him in a jar. (laughs) When you got a jar of ’em, you dump ’em back out. That was my earliest fishing.

TH: You’d use the minnows to catch what?

AA: I’d throw ’em away. That was all I was fishing for.

TH: Oh, the minnows. You were fishing for the minnows. Okay.

AA: We moved to Fort Pierce and my first saltwater fishing was at the Little Jim Bridge. We all were using cane poles. I can remember the first time we went we had live shrimp, and it was drizzling rain and the sand flies ran us off the bridge, but we were catching mangrove snapper and trout.

TH: With cane poles.

AA: With cane poles off the old wooden Little Jim Bridge. And then we’d fish off of the big high concrete slab where Mango Mattie’s [sic] is. That’s the first snook that I ever caught. The slab was there. I don’t know what the use, but the Navy had it for some reason. I don’t know if it was tying those TP [torpedo] boats up. But right where Mango—

TH: Mangrove Mattie’s Restaurant on South Hutchinson Island.

AA: Where that seawall is there. It was thirty foot high, probably, and a big slab of it up over. That’s where we saltwater fished. Daddy found out that—he’d get a cast net. It wasn’t soon before he got a cast net and catch mullet. Then we’d catch them jack crevalles using mullet for bait on cane poles and we’d eat ’em. We thought they were delicious. (laughs)

TH: Okay. Where did you go to fish when you began fishing? So, you just told me a couple places. Did you mostly go fishing in your own boat? When did you get a boat, or did your father get a boat?

AA: I got a boat. My dad never got a boat. The first boat I got was probably forty years ago, and it was a nineteen foot West Wind and it was used when I got it. That was the first one I got for a saltwater boat.

TH: Do you know how old you were?

AA: Well, let’s see. Forty, thirty.

TH: Thirty years old.

AA: Mm-hm.

TH: Who did you fish with, mostly?
AA: Well, in high school, I worked for George Archer on a charter boat and that’s where I met little Don Raffey’s daddy. He did the White’s Tackle Shop.

TH: His father’s name?

AA: Was Don, also. Don Raffey. Little Don’s dad worked for the WRA radio station, and he was friends with Buck White and he’d go fish on George Archer’s boat, the Victory Two. I mated on that boat in high school, then after I got out of high school for a couple of years.

TH: That’s Victory T-o-o?

AA: T-w-o.

TH: T-w-o. Victory T-w-o. Okay. You mated while you were in high school?

AA: Yes, on the weekends.

TH: Okay. So, mostly you fished with George Archer and Don Rafferty, Sr. [sic]?

AA: Raffensberger.³

TH: Raffensberger, I’m sorry. During what months—okay, what did you fish for? During what months did you fish for what fish?

AA: Well, in the wintertime it’d always be chasing sailfish around; and summertime on the beach, kingfishing. Then, we’d go down to the wrecks and we’d catch amberjacks and—

TH: The wrecks?

AA: Southeast wrecks and 12A wrecks. That was before LORANs. You had to get beach marks to line ’em up. On a cloudy day, you didn’t know if you were gonna find it or not. (laughs)


AA: Sailfish. In the spring with George, it was all trolling. You always fished—once in a while we’d go bottom fishing, but not very often. Mostly, it was trolling.

TH: Okay. And then how ’bout the fall—I mean, the spring?

AA: Just kingfish and dolphin.

TH: Dolphin.

³ Don Raffensberger was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O6-00007.
AA: Tried to catch a sailfish.

TH: Okay. This is a general question. How long did a fishing trip last?

AA: Well, on that boat you needed to leave at eight [AM] and come back at five [PM], on the charter boat. But I’d go on mine daylight till when the fish stopped biting. (laughs)

TH: Daylight till the fish stopped biting?

AA: Yeah.

TH: Okay. On an average trip when you went with yourself, when you took your own boat out, what was an average trip catch?

AA: Two hundred pounds of grouper was not uncommon.

TH: That was a lot.

AA: Was not uncommon.

TH: Okay. So, grouper probably became, like, your main fish?

AA: When I went, it was grouper and snapper.

TH: That’s usually—

AA: And when the kingfish was on the beach, I’d go kingfishing.

TH: Troll kingfish?

AA: Troll king with live bait, kingfish.

TH: What was the live bait you trolled for kingfish?

AA: Kayaks with a threadfin.

TH: Okay. What did you fish with for grouper?

AA: Spots and croakers. (laughs)

TH: Okay.

AA: And kayaks and mullet.

TH: Live, if you could?
AA: Live, mm-hm.

TH: Okay. In the Fort Pierce area, where else do you go fishing? You said the Northeast Grounds?

AA: Yes, and I’d go anywhere from all the way past the—you start east at 12 Buoy and then up to east of Bethel Shoals Buoy.

TH: Okay.

AA: You’d go anywhere in that eighty-five foot reef.


AA: Yeah, just rod and reel with a—

TH: Okay.

AA: We’d use a 6/0 with a—I’d use 100 pounds test line with a 125 leader.

TH: Okay.

AA: Stout, solid brass pole and 10/0 hooks.

TH: Ten-aught hooks. Okay. Now, who do you fish with mostly when you go out fishing?

AA: Now, Billy Yates.

TH: Billy Yates. Okay. You already talked about what months you fish for what fish, average trip: 200 pounds of grouper. How ’bout kingfish, average kingfish; has that intercept changed?

AA: There’s not as many as there used to be. There’s still a few of ’em. I guess they caught the other day a fifty pound one. The boys from Okeechobee won the tournament with fifty pounds.

TH: That’s not bad.

AA: But they used to—if that bait was in there it was more fun to watch ’em jump, chasing the bait than it was catching ’em.

TH: Okay. For how many years—okay, are you still fishing?

AA: Yes.

TH: What do you fish for now?

AA: Speckled perch.
TH: Perch, speckled perch?

AA: Speckled perch.

TH: What’s another name for speckled perch?

AA: Crappie fish. That’s what northern people usually call ’em. (laughs) They’re crawfish.

TH: Crappie. C-r-o—how do you spell that?

AA: P-p-y, I guess, or i-e?

TH: Yeah, it might be—anyway. So, you fish freshwater now, mostly?

AA: Mostly.

TH: Where do you fish?

AA: Around Frostproof.

TH: Frostproof, Florida. Okay. So, how often do you go offshore now, if you go with other people?

AA: A couple times a month.

TH: You go twice a month, still?

AA: Well, we haven’t been for seven months, but hopefully, it’ll be a couple times a month. When the snook was open, we’d go snook fishing a little bit more often than that.

TH: Okay, so you go—at least in the ocean—twice a month and snook fishing a couple—two or three times?

AA: Yeah.

TH: Snook season is when?

AA: Well, you can’t fish ’em now until September, and you can only catch one, and he’s got to be between twenty-eight and thirty-one inches. And I guess if he’s thirty-one and the game warden’s mad at you, he’ll step on his head and make him thirty-one and a quarter and arrest you.

TH: (laughs) Okay. Are there some months that you go—so, you fish more frequently during the months you can catch snook, though?
AA: Yes.

TH: That would be from September to—

AA: Well, it used to be they’d close it in June, July, and August, and December and January. But now, they closed it, they didn’t open it. Let me see, snook is December, I think? Isn’t it?

TH: I think so.

AA: They used to open it up in August, and now they’re gonna—I don’t know what it is now.

TH: Okay. So, what do you use for snook, for bait?

AA: Threadfin.

TH: Threadfin. And you catch those?

AA: Yes.

TH: How?

AA: With a sabichi [Sabiki] rig.

TH: Okay. Do you fish in the ocean or in the river [Indian River] for the snook?

AA: In the river and the power plant.

TH: Down at the power plant on the ocean side?

AA: Yes.

TH: Okay, and then in the river near the Inlet [Fort Pierce Inlet]?

AA: In the Inlet.

TH: Okay. And you fish mostly with Bill Yates. Does he own the boat?

AA: Yes.

TH: Okay. Are you related to this person in any way?

AA: No.

TH: And you go—you just told me—mostly snook fishing. When you go in the ocean, where do you go, other than snook fishing?
AA: In the eighty foot, eighty-five foot, anywhere from east of the power plant to east of Bethel Shoals.

TH: Okay. How do you decide where to fish?

AA: Just guess. (both laugh)

TH: Just guess. Okay. All right, finally, I’d like to talk about how your fishing has changed over time regarding the Oculina Bank. In 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? The Oculina Bank was initially closed to trawling, dredging and bottom longlining in 1984; trawling, dredging and bottom longlining. Did this affect your fishing? Nineteen eighty-four.

AA: It didn’t affect mine, but I saw those rock shrimp boats dragging out there, and I also saw ’em dragging out there after they closed it. They’d drag ’em at night and they’d anchor up on the outside of it. Then at night, they’d go into it and trawl anyway.

TH: Okay, interesting. In 1994, the Oculina Bank was designated 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?

AA: No, because I’ve never been there since it was closed.

TH: The first time?

AA: The first time.

TH: Okay. That was 1994. In 1996, all anchoring was prohibited within the Oculina Bank. Did this affect your fishing and if so, how?

AA: I didn’t go.

TH: Okay. You already quit going. In 1996, trawling 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 a bottom longline, trawl or dredge was prohibited in the expanded area, as was anchoring by any vessel. Was you fishing impacted by this regulation and if [so], how? That’s when they expanded the area.

AA: No. Just east of Bethel Shoals, there’s an old place in 105 foot of water, and that’s out of it and that’s as deep as I’ve been.

TH: Okay.

AA: I’ve lost my anchor there one time and I got Bobby to go get it in 105 foot of—
TH: Bobby who?

AA: Cardin.⁴

TH: Okay.

AA: I caught it and what it ended up being, a shrimp net. It broke off on the rocks and (inaudible) I couldn’t break the (inaudible), I pulled and pulled and pulled. It wouldn’t—and it gave enough. Hell, I just cut the rope. The next time I saw Bobby, I told him what it was and he went and got my anchor. That was horrible.

TH: Did you leave a buoy on it?

AA: I just gave him the number.

TH: Oh.

AA: I hated to give my number, but he got my anchor. (laughs)

TH: All right. Now, he’s got a new fishing number. Okay, 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, et cetera?

AA: Those areas are still being fished, the ones that are closed. They’re still fishing ’em. I don’t know what—

TH: Do you want me to read it again?

AA: Yeah.

TH: What do you think about the use of closed areas to fishing compared to other types of management regulations?

AA: It’s fine with me.

TH: You’re okay with the closed areas?

AA: That’s fine with me.

TH: Okay, as opposed to quotas, closed seasons, et cetera? What do you think is the fairest, best way to manage the fisheries; you know, for the fish and for the people and everybody and everything?

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⁴ Robert “Bobby” Cardin is one of the interviewers for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. He was also interviewed by Terry Howard; the DOI for that interview is O6-00038.
AA: Well, gosh, I don’t know. (laughs) Don’t let too many people go fishing, I guess. I have no idea. I don’t know.

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

AA: Not as good as it is now.

TH: You think it’s still on down?

AA: Yes, yes.

TH: Okay. You haven’t seen any improvements in fishing?

AA: No, it’s gone down since I can remember, in my memory, just year after year.

TH: And it’s still on that downward spiral?

AA: I think it is.

TH: Okay.

AA: Look at the head boats. Go and watch one of those head boats come in. When they used to come in, they’d hand their fish up on the side of the boat when they’d come out of the jetties, and most of ’em would be red grouper and snapper. You go there now, they don’t hang ’em up, and if you watch one of ’em come in, they got them beeliners, California reds, in the buckets, you know. (laughs) If anybody has a five pound fish on there, it’s unusual. (laughs) And they used to—they’d go to Ten Minute Reef and catch good fish, and they won’t do it now.

TH: What do you think has caused the change?

AA: Just fish traps, longlines, power heads, too many people. But I remember, you know, I’ve seen those fish traps. They’d tie ’em together. They was down at the Southeast Wreck one time and I saw one. They had the wreck circled with these fish traps, and they’d pull one up and it’d be as—they were bigger than the back of a pickup truck. And they’d wench the thing up, get the corner up, and dump everything out of it in there, and they were dumping it in that deep water up there, too.

TH: The Oculina Bank?

AA: Yeah. They were dropping ’em there. That helped. They’re just too many people chasing ’em, too many people chasing ’em. Those kingfish—how many kingfish boats are here now?

TH: About thirty, barely.
AA: I remember when, going out in the fifties [1950s], late fifties [1950s] or early sixties [1960s], and if it was foggy and you turned the motor off, you could hear a roar out there, and there was where the fleet was. It mainly went between [buoys] 12 and 12A, but was the old buoy we used out there. And you would hear a roar. There was hundreds, at least a hundred. You’d just hear the whole roar. You’d be miles from ’em, and you know there’s not enough—what’s your average catch now?

TH: Hundred pounds. (laughs)

AA: Okay. They were getting a thousand.

TH: On a good day, 200 pounds.

AA: Yeah, I remember, and I’ve seen those big net boats. Were you here when they was running those things? I’ve seen those things with one in every (inaudible). I saw when they were catching—

TH: Spanish mackerel?

AA: Well, those were bait boats. Remember the Razor, the bait boat? All right, they run—Billy Yates was on another boat. We were down at Frederick Douglass Park. And this fellow at the Razor was going down—he was coming from the south and there was one little bunch of bait down there, just north in probably thirty-five feet of water just north of the Frederick Douglass, and this boat was coming from the north. And the next day there was an article in the newspaper about this mysterious fish kill [that] came up on the beach. They had run the net around a bunch of blunt nose pogies, or pilchards; I don’t know what they call the little blunt noses. That’s not what they wanted. They wanted the kayaks. That’s what they wanted. So, they circled these blunt noses up and look and see what it was. By then, they’d run out of oxygen. All of ’em died. They let ’em out. They floated up on the beach. Now, the next day, this was in the newspaper, so, there was just one bunch of kayaks here. And Billy was on Glenn Strunk’s boat from Vero [Beach] and I was on my boat—

TH: Glenn who?

AA: Billy was on Glenn Strunk’s boat.

TH: S-t-r-u-n-k?

AA: S-t-r-u-n-k. Yeah, he owned a funeral home there in Vero. And I was in my boat and we were going, circling, around the edge of the school and pulled in, and just about every time you’d go by, the kingfish would get it. Well, he was coming by and saw it and come and ran the whole—he circled us. And he was looking—I mean, he made it to me, and hell, he was gonna run over me and just dared me to get out of his way, you know? So, I got out of his way. Strunk’s boat was probably a thirty foot, and he circled him up and the net got under there and got hung up in his propellers. They called the Coast Guard and the Marine Patrol come down there, and their
attitude—the Razor’s attitude changed. (laughs) They was all doubled over trying to get the thing out.

But that bait—I mean, did you ever see the amount of bait they would pull up? They killed whole schools, and they had a dipper on there about the size of a Volkswagen. They’d purse it up and dip it down in there, and they were putting in five pound bags for bait, I guess. But I know that they put a hurting on the bait here for a long time. Then those longlines, I’ve seen ’em. I remember ’em catching the drift nets. They was webbing on the top of the 12 Buoy. I mean, they were so heavy they’d pull down—the 12 Buoy’s a big buoy. It pulled that thing down when they’d drift over it, and there was webbing on the tip top of that buoy. Now, the only way it could have got there, it had to pull the buoy down. You’d see that a lot of pompano around those wrecks. I went by Hudgins one day; I don’t know whose house it was up there—

TH: It’s Hudgins Sea Food.

AA: It was up there north of the town, where you did the interview at the boat yard up there. They had vats of African pompano that they were catching, and cobias; you couldn’t find a cobia for a long time. And those shark nets, they were using the shark nets under the pretense of catching those sharks. Well, you know what they caught was them forty-plus pound kingfish.

TH: From the beach.

AA: On the beach. That’s one of the (inaudible), you know? I remember going to the cove, and we had bait left over and I had all the kingfish I wanted, and you’d slow it and take live bait and throw it at the back of the boat, and them things jumped. And I had a step-on ladder—

TH: So the kingfish would jump?

AA: The kingfish would jump, chasing them bait that I was throwing over there. I had a step-on ladder on the back of that Topaz and I threw it up, threw a bunch out and they were jumping, jumping. I’ve had to shoo ’em a little back then, and I had to get everybody back in the cabin. The things would jump up, scared that they would get in the boat. (TH laughs) But one did come. With a step-on ladder, here’s a—

TH: Step-on ladder?

AA: Yeah. I just pulled it up and I had it snapped with a little crane snapped up here, and there was a little space right here. I had a twenty-five pounder jump up and hit between it and wedge there.

TH: Between the ladder and the stern of the boat?

AA: The ladder and the stern of the boat, and I (inaudible) we put him on in the box. I never touched him. (TH laughs) But there could be a half a dozen there in the air at the same time from inside of here to the road, just jumping.
TH: Maybe thirty, forty feet?

AA: Yeah, just jumping, there was so many of ’em.

TH: That’s the big kingfish?

AA: Yeah, the big, pretty ones. And there’s no fish. The longline, I’ve seen ’em running those longlines right down the reef with them big—when those grouper are spawning and pulling those groupers. They pull it too smart. LORANs are too smart. Well, not anymore. That’s all I got is LORAN. I was gonna—

TH: GPS, you gotta go to GPS.

AA: Yeah, I know it. For years—I was gonna change it, but I’m gonna change it tomorrow, I’m gonna change it tomorrow. Well, I procrastinated long enough. (laughs)

TH: With that, I’d like to thank you very much, Mr. Ashley, Mr. Albert Ashley. I’d like to thank you very much for allowing us to do this interview. Thank you very much.

AA: Okay.
End of interview