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James Reeves oral history interview by Robert Cardin, August 3, 2010

James A. Reeves (Interviewee)

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Robert Cardin: Good afternoon. This is Robert Cardin. Today is August 3, 2010. I’m at my residence conducting an oral history interview with Jimmy Reeves, commercial fisherman, for the Gulf and South Atlantic [Fisheries] Foundation project with the Fort Pierce fishermen on the Oculina Bank HAPC [Habitat Area of Particular Concern]. Welcome, Jimmy. Would you please state and spell your name?
James Reeves: James Allen Reeves.

RC: Go ahead. You can relax. You don’t have to try to speak into the—

JR: Oh. James Allen Reeves II. R-e-e-v-e-s.

RC: Okay. Is your nickname “Jimmy,” right?

JR: Yes.

RC: Okay, Jimmy. Hey, Jimmy, when were you born?


RC: What day and month and all that?

JR: 2-6-66 [February 6, 1966].

RC: All right. Were you born in Fort Pierce?

JR: Yes, I was born here and raised in Fort Pierce.

RC: Are you married now, Jimmy?

JR: No.

RC: Do you have any children?

JR: No.
RC: How much schooling do you have, Jimmy?

JR: High school diploma.

RC: Do you have any other jobs besides fishing?

JR: No.

RC: Have you had other jobs besides fishing?

JR: Yes.

RC: What was that, Jimmy?

JR: Odd jobs: boat yard, maintenance, charter boat—

RC: Charter boat?

JR: Sport boat.

RC: What were you doing with the charter boat?

JR: Captain.

RC: I mean, just—

JR: Mate, captain. I’ve done just about everything.

RC: What did you all fish for?

JR: Everything that swims. (laughs)
RC: Everything that swims?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Did you do that here just in Fort Pierce?

JR: No, up and down the East Coast from Ocean City, Maryland, to Fort Pierce, the Bahamas.

RC: Cool. So you’ve been around a little bit. That’s nice. Jimmy, do you currently own a boat?

JR: Yes.

RC: What kind of boat and how long is it?

JR: I own three king mackerel boats. The boat that I fish myself is a twenty-nine foot Dyer.

RC: Just for the heck it, how do you spell Dyer?

JR: D-y-e-r.

RC: So, you got a twenty-nine Dyer, and what else do you have?

JR: A twenty-three Prowler and a twenty-five Conn Craft.

RC: Conn Craft?

JR: C-o-n-n Craft.

RC: All right, Jimmy. Are all three of these commercial fishing boats?
RC: Thank you. All right, I’d like to ask you some questions about the Oculina Bank. How familiar are you with the Oculina Bank?

JR: Fairly familiar, from way back when I actually fished there.

RC: What did you fish for in the Oculina Bank?

JR: Mainly grouper and snapper.

RC: Okay. Jimmy, do you know why the Oculina Bank was designated as an area to protect?

JR: Because of the Oculina coral, the habitat.

RC: Okay. And is there anything else you can tell me about the Oculina Bank?

JR: From what I understand, it’s a spawning area for gag grouper and other bottom fish.

RC: Do you know, like, what kind of bottom fish are in the Oculina Bank?

JR: Grouper, various snappers, triggerfish, amberjacks.

RC: All right. Jimmy, what do you think about the closure of the Oculina Bank to anchoring and bottom fishing?

JR: I don’t think that the anchoring was really detrimental, you know, as far as—we never anchored. We power fished over it, mostly. Rarely, we did anchor.

RC: Okay, Jimmy, can you explain to me what you mean by power fishing?
JR: You face into the current, and you stem the tide, and your bait drops back to the area where you want it, really.

RC: So, by stemming the tide, you’re moving but you’re trying to troll, or what are you trying to do?

JR: In a perfect situation, you’re not trolling, you’re not moving forward. You’re hovering in one spot stemming the tide and letting your weighted bait drop down to the area, to the ledge or whatever.

RC: So, you try to hold the position like you would if you were on anchor?

JC: Yeah.

RC: Okay. And then, what do you think about it being closed to the bottom fishing, that part of it?

JR: I think it was unnecessary to close it to bottom fishing. I can understand shrimp trawls and stuff, guys going in there with bottom trawl gear.

RC: Right. Well, has the closure of the Oculina Bank affected your fishing, and if it has, would you please tell me how?

JR: It cut out an option where we can’t even—we can no longer have an option to go out there and bottom fish. Now, I mainly kingfish—king mackerel.

RC: Can you explain to me a little bit about what you mean by an option?

JR: Well, it was years ago when I did fish in the Oculina Bank, and I could hop from my kingfish boat onto a bottom fish boat, usually with really experienced captains who knew the area really good, and I’d go with then as a crew member.

RC: Okay. So, when I asked you how did that affect you, it just limited your options? I guess you mean it’s limiting your ability to catch the trip limit?
JR: Yes, yes.

RC: Okay. How ’bout you personally? Did you always go there as a mate on other boats?

JR: I have fished there by myself at times. But really, when I was doing it real serious, I was usually as a mate on another boat.

RC: Okay. If anchoring and bottom fishing was still allowed, was not prohibited, would you fish there now?

JR: Definitely.

RC: Okay. What about—I guess it’s been sixteen years. What about during that period, do you think you would have been fishing there?

JR: Yes.

RC: Okay. How would you have fished and for what, Jimmy?

JR: Power fished for grouper and amberjack.

RC: That was, what, bandit line or hook and line?

JR: Bandit line.

RC: Bandit?

JR: Bandits.

RC: So, you used a power operated—
JR: And a rod and reel; we did do a rod and reel fishing there, too; jigging.

RC: What would you be fishing for in Oculina Bank at this time, if you could?

JR: Grouper.

RC: Just grouper in general?

JR: Grouper in general, and amberjack.

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

JR: The fleet’s gotten smaller since I began, as far as the overall—

RC: What fleet do you think has gotten smaller, just the commercial boats in general?

JR: In general.

RC: Okay. Is there any other changes you can think of?

JR: Now, we basically—most of us—go king mackerel fishing.

RC: Why is that, Jimmy?

JR: Because Oculina Bank is closed. (laughs)

RC: Oh, okay. Thank you. Excuse me. We covered that one. Jimmy, have you had any experiences with law enforcement within or regarding the Oculina Bank?

JR: No.
RC: Okay. Now, Jimmy, I want to talk to you about your fishing history, specifically. What is your earliest memory of fishing and how old were you, like fishing with your grandpa at the lake or what have you?

JR: I grew up here and I fished with my grandpa Reeves when I was a real young kid, and I spent most of my weekends or summers in the city marina on a steel hull, a forty-two foot boat he had there named the *Safari*.

RC: I mean, what would your earliest memory be, like, five years or something?

JR: Yeah, fishing in the city marina catching groupers and stuff, sheepshead. (laughs)

RC: Oh, okay. Jimmy, how did you learn to fish? Who taught you?

JR: My grandpa and my father.

RC: Okay. Jimmy, is there, like, a point in a time when you decided to become a fisherman? How did you decide to become a commercial fisherman? I mean, do you remember a time or a reason?

JR: I remember—well, I always wanted to be a fisherman, even from the beginning. It just seemed like I wanted to do that. And then when I started fishing on my own, me and a buddy of mine, we were fishing out of a seventeen foot Mako, an outboard boat, and we’d just gotten into it and we’d see the kingfish boats unload over at D&D Fish House.

RC: Excuse me. You said, “D&D?”

JR: D&D Fish House, over at Taylor Creek. It’s where Harbortown is now. Harbortown Marina is there now.

RC: How long was D&D there, a long time?

JR: It was there as long as I can remember, up till when it closed.
RC: It closed because Harbortown bought ’em out or something?

JR: Yes.

RC: All right. Thank you. Jimmy, when did you start to work as a fisherman at Fort Pierce—I mean, as your job?

JR: I guess eighteen.

RC: Eighteen.

JR: But I fished with my dad, you know, and he was paying me.

RC: What, from fourteen or ten or twelve?

RC: Yeah, fourteen. Twelve, fourteen years old.

RC: Okay. So, you started mating at fourteen.

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. What did you fish for, let’s say, when you first started at fourteen on your Mako?

JR: On the Mako, we did a little snapper fishing, king mackerel fishing.

RC: Okay. How did you fish for, let’s say, the king mackerel?

JR: Troll.

RC: Is that, like, a live bait fishery or was it trolling lures?
JR: We did both. We live baited, and hook and lined, and jerk bugged.

RC: Okay. Who did you fish with at that time, you said?

JR: On the seventeen foot Mako?

RC: Yeah.

JR: A buddy of mine named Paul Rudinsky.

RC: And who owned that boat?

JR: Paul’s mother owned it, I think. It was his boat. I mean, we were in high school.

RC: Right. How were you related to Paul?

JR: High school friends.

RC: Okay. Of course, I think you said it was a seventeen Mako?

JR: Yeah, seventeen Mako.

RC: Center console boat?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. Where did you all go to fish when you first began fishing? Can you show me on this map?

JR: North of 12, north of 12 Buoy.
RC: The point there, that’s the 12 Buoy.

JR: All throughout this little reef area.

RC: All right. Well, that’s the fifty-five foot shelf bottom.

JR: For us, a big adventure was to go to Bethel Shoals and bottom fish.

RC: Oh, really?

JR: That was one of our main—

RC: So, you’re pointing outside of the Bethel Shoals Buoy. I guess you (inaudible) offshore bar?

JR: Yeah, offshore of Bethel is that area.

RC: Now, that’s the horseshoe of the offshore area.

JR: Yeah.

RC: All right. Thank you. Where did you begin fishing? I guess we’re here at fifty-five, you said?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Fifty-five feet. And then you would move out to ninety feet in some cases?

JR: We fished inshore, too, all along the beach on the inshore (inaudible) mangrove snappers and such.

RC: All right, just the beach reefs or the bottom out in thirty-five feet?
JR: Beach reefs.

RC: Okay, thirty.

RC: During what months of the year would you say you fished north of 12? Is that, like, an all-year thing?

JR: Mostly in the summertime. We were really limited what we could do with the boat in the winter months, as far as the rough seas went.

RC: So, say, May, June, July, August, that time? Okay

JR: Usually, I’d go with somebody who had a bigger boat then.

RC: Well, back to the Mako. How long did those fishing tips last?

JR: All day.

RC: Just day trips?

JR: Yeah.

RC: If you had guests, what would have been an average trip?

JR: A good trip for us then was between 115 to 250 pounds.

RC: About 200 pounds, average?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. Once again, where did you sell your catch? I assume that would be D&D?
JR: Yeah, D&D was the—we also sold them to little restaurants, and we actually sold fish to Piggly Wiggly Supermarket.

RC: Oh, really?

JC: I don’t even think when we were fishing out of that Mako—I don’t even think we needed federal permits.

RC: Yeah, most things you did. Oh, yeah, the federal permits is all from the nineties [1990s] and newer, basically.

JR: I don’t even remember it. I remember guys about the Saltwater Products License. I was fishing before the Saltwater Products License.

RC: That was in the eighties [1980s], the Saltwater Products License.

JR: We would just go fishing and pull into D&D, and the guy there at D&D, he owned the bait shop up recently. You probably know the guy.

RC: Which bait shop?

JR: The bait shop up by Publix when you go up by the St. Lucie Inn. It’s a hotel now.

RC: Right. I can’t remember his name

JR: He had that bait shop. I want to say it’s Dave Davis, but I don’t think it’s—

RC: No, it’s not.

JR: It’s not him.
RC: You see a guy every now and then who catches bait for them.

JR: But that guy would come down there and he would say, “You boys can take ninety cents a pound now for your kingfish, cash money, or you could play the odds and get a check like everybody else.” And of course, being, you know, sixteen and seventeen year olds, we always opted for the cash.

RC: Right, right. Well, that’s interesting, Jimmy. You mentioned that you would move to the offshore bar and snapper fish?

JR: Yeah.

RC: What would a trip like that be? What kind of poundage do you think you would get?

JR: A good day for us would be 200 pounds. And we’d have a mix of snapper and grouper.

RC: And that would be back in D&D, once again?

JR: Yeah.

RC: You sold grouper at the same place? Okay. For how many years did you fish out of this little Mako?

JR: Throughout high school.

RC: Okay.

JR: I think actually, during that time—actually, that was like in junior high. When I was in high school, I had bought that twenty-four Stapleton from Eddie Black, the *Playboy*.

RC: Okay. That was a twenty-four Stapleton.
JR: And before that, I was fishing with my dad. He had a twenty-four foot, an outboard boat with a Johnson [motor], a 140 horse[power] Johnson on it.

RC: Well, let me back up a bit here. When we were first talking about the Mako, you said that sometimes you would go out on bigger boats.

JR: Yeah.

RC: What are you referring to there?

JR: Bigger boats—I don’t think I ever swordfished during that time frame. That was later. That was when I was about twenty-five. But I would go with Bob Pfeiffer on the *Lucky*. He had that thirty foot—or Billy (inaudible).

RC: Okay. So you would go with Bob Pfeiffer or Billy Minute?

JR: Yeah. Bob was Billy’s stepdad, and he had a—my boat was docked over at his little marina over in the inlet by Pelican Yacht Club. He owned a little apartment. You remember there? Right by—it was 7-11 there, and I had my—

RC: So, Bob Pfeiffer was the father?

JR: Yes.

RC: And Billy Minute, could you spell that for me, “Minute”?

JR: I used to remember how to spell his name, but it’s spelled real funny.

RC: Okay. All right, thank you. You mated on these—

JR: Yes, yeah. I mean, we’d share duties.

RC: So, let me get this straight. Bob owned the boat?
JR: I believe Billy owned the boat, and he kept it at Bob’s house and he let us use it.

RC: Okay.

JR: Billy had a swordfish boat at the time named—it was that Light Dream boat, that big number one hull that was docked down there at the next dock over next to Bob’s house. I think it was named *Judy H III*.

RC: Okay. But the boat you were fishing on, the—

JR: Was the *Lucky Too*. It had previously belonged to, I believe, Sam Crutchfield\(^1\), and I’d seen pictures of it in a magazine just recently.

RC: Really?

JR: That boat, with lines of snook lined up behind it. That’s how long ago that was, when Sam Crutchfield was chartering that boat. He must have been snook fishing it in the inlet, and I’d seen it in *Indian River Magazine*.

RC: Oh, really, old magazine?

JR: Yeah, an old magazine.

RC: Jimmy, what kind of boat was the *Lucky Too*?

JR: Offshore thirty, but I believe most of the guys most of the guys said it was a Thompson hull. Just like Cleve Lewis’ boat.

RC: Okay. How did you fish whenever—you fished in the *Lucky Too*?

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\(^1\) Samuel Crutchfield was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O6-00032.
JR: Yeah.

RC: What did you fish for in the *Lucky Too*?

JR: Snapper and grouper, all the time. Bob didn’t like kingfish.

RC: How did you fish for the snapper?

JR: Bandit reels.

RC: Okay. So, you fished with Bob Pfeiffer, but the boat belonged to Billy Minute?

JR: I believe it did. I can’t remember. It may have belonged to Bob, ’cause Bob actually sold that boat to a guy named, Charlie, who tried to kingfish it. But things just didn’t work out, and I don’t know whatever happened to that boat. I wanted to buy that boat in the worst way, that *Lucky Too*, ’cause it had a Caterpillar 3208 diesel in it. And I just couldn’t—he wanted, like, fourteen grand for it.

RC: And back then that was a lot of money.

JR: That was back then. For me, that was a lot of money. I mean, I could garner up $7,000 or $8,000, but it was just out of reach. (laughs) So, I had to settle for the Stapleton with the little 360 gasolines, 318 Chrysler gas engines in ’em.

RC: How were you related to these people?

JR: I kept my boats docked there. My dad kept his boat there. My uncle kept his boat in that area just—

RC: Just friends?

RC: Okay. When you were mating on the Lucky Too, where did you go fish? Can you show me on the map?

JR: Mainly a place called Jeff’s Reef.

RC: Are you pointing at the south end of the Oculina?

JR: Yeah, the south end somewhere. Now, Bob was funny. When I was fishing on that boat with him, he kept a towel up by his LORAN, and when I would get monkeying around by the LORAN where I would be liable to see the numbers, he would actually throw a towel over it so I couldn’t go in and tell anybody where we were. (laughs) But I had a pretty good idea, because Jeff’s Reef was one of the main spots.

RC: How deep do you think that was? Do you remember the depth?

JR: I think it was around 240, would be where—

RC: That would be around the bottom.

JR: Yeah. We were fishing in about 240 feet of water, and there was a fellow named—who was really a really good bottom fisherman—named Phil Peterson. I don’t know if you remember that guy.

RC: I remember the name.

JR: He’d anchor up out there. He liked to anchor there. Now, he’d anchor out on the sand and stem his boat back to where he wanted it.

RC: Like—

JR: And he’d come in with big catches, huge sea bass, black sea bass.

RC: Really? During what months of the year did you fish out there with Bob?
JR: Year round.

RC: All right. How long were your trips?

JR: Day trips. Once in a while, we’d make an overnight trip, but it was rare.

RC: Okay. What do you think your average trip’s catch was—say, of grouper?

JR: When I went with Bob, probably between 250 and 400 pounds.

RC: Of?

JR: Of grouper; mainly grouper and amberjack.

RC: So, 250 to 400 pounds would be grouper and amberjacks combined?

JR: Mainly, we caught grouper. We weren’t targeting amberjacks when I went with Bob.

RC: Okay. Where did Bob sell the catch at?

JR: D&D; and he had other markets, too.

RC: Okay. How many years did you fish—

JR: Actually, my dad owned a seafood store on U.S. 1. I don’t know if you remember it? It was right next to Paco’s Tacos.

RC: What was the name of your dad’s fish market?

JR: Tiki Seafood.
RC: Okay. Was he like a wholesaler or a retailer?

JR: Retail.

RC: Retail seafood. All right. So, you sold to D&D and maybe to Tiki Seafood?

JR: Yeah.

RC: How many years did you fish on the Lucky Too with Bob?

JR: Until Bob died. Well, actually, he got a different boat before he passed away, and they sold the Lucky Too. I'd say probably about seven years.

RC: Seven years.

JR: At least seven years.

RC: Why did you stop fishing for the groupers and amberjacks in the Oculina Bank? Or, why did—excuse me. I guess right now—why did you stop fishing on the Lucky Too? Because Bob died?

JR: Yeah. Well, we actually fished on a boat. I want to say the boat’s name is the Marcliff. [It] had a funny name, and it was a Bertram, a twenty-nine foot or a twenty-five foot Bertram, like Moby’s [Paul] boat, but it was smaller with twin engines in it. But we pretty much—I think that’s the boat we were fishing on when the closure came, and I may have been fishing with Billy when that all happened.

RC: By closure, you mean?

JR: The Oculina Bank closure.

RC: Okay. So, when you were fishing on the Lucky Too, fishing for groupers in the Oculina Bank, what brought that to an end?
JR: The closure.

RC: Okay. You stayed at that—Bob died, or something?

JR: Yeah, Bob died. I can’t remember exactly when, but I was fishing with him as he got sick. He died from cancer. And when he was sick, I fished with Billy a number of times to keep the boats active.

RC: Oh, then you started fishing with Billy?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. So then, when did Billy stop fishing for the groupers and stuff? Is that what you referring to as the closure?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

RC: By closure, you mean the 1994 closure to the bottom fishing and all that?

JR: Yes.

RC: Bottom fishing and all that?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. What did you do next?

JR: We moved inshore and we fished—limited fish—bottom fished inshore on the offshore bar in a real small amount, north of 12; but then I mainly kingfished.

RC: Okay.
JR: And I was kingfishing, you know, from the get-go. For me, bottom fishing was a good sideline. When the kingfishing was slow—

RC: Then you’d bottom fish?

JR: I bottom fished with them guys.

RC: Well, it sounds like you jumped on the boat anytime you wanted to.

JR: Pretty much.

RC: Were they going, like, every day when you were kingfishing?

JR: Yeah. They’d go without me. I mean, they’d go and hunt up other mates and stuff like that. I mean, it was a pretty tight-knit little community down there on the inlet where we were. You know, you didn’t have any trouble finding somebody to go fishing with.

RC: There was either a boat going or someone that wanted to go, one of the two?

JR: If your boat was broke down, you could go fishing, you know, within a day or two with somebody else.

RC: Okay. So, I guess that puts us at ninety-four [1994], when the closure stopped your bottom fishing. Then you said you started relying more on kingfishing and some bottom fishing?

JR: Yes.

RC: Okay. How did you fish—okay, now when you started switching from the grouper to the kingfishing, who was you fishing with then?

JR: I kingfished alone.
RC: You mentioned earlier about having a twenty-four Stapleton; when did you get that?

JR: I had that boat when I was fishing on these boats. I was at their dock.

RC: Okay. So, you just tied off there and you’d leave your boat sitting there and go fishing with them?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. So it must have been pretty profitable to have your own business and go grouper fishing.

JR: Yeah. It was a nice change-up, too. And you could play the price better. You know, when the price of kingfish was down, you could go out and bottom fish. (laughs)

RC: So, that’s what you’re talking about, your options. You had more options?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. Well, that makes good sense. Thank you. So, now I guess we’re at ninety-four [1994] and the Oculina Bank closed, and then you started relying on the kingfish.

JR: And also, when you first start kingfishing, there’s a learning curve. And it’s nice to get your feet wet with these guys, you know, like Bob and Billy. They taught me a lot about kingfishing. Now, they were standoffish about teaching me about bottom fishing. That was their thing, more or less. I got Bob Pfeiffer’s book of numbers. (laughs)

RC: Problem is, it’s probably all numbers you can’t fish anymore.

JR: (laughs) Yeah. Bob showed me.

RC: Okay, now we’re at ninety-five [1995], and you’re kingfishing on your own. How did you fish for the kingfish?
JR: Troll. I wire lined, bug lined fished.

RC: Who did you fish with? By yourself?

JR: By myself, and my dad.

RC: Okay.

JR: We had a number of boats.

RC: Oh, God, I'm gonna back up again here! You said something about fishing the Oculina Bank with your dad. Is that the same?

JR: Well, as I learned—

RC: Oh, from Bob and Billy.

JR: —from Bob and Billy, then we tried to transfer it over onto my dad's little kingfish boat. But we were more or less limited. We didn't have the bandit reels or the bottom machines or anything like that. But we could go out there and conceivably catch a hundred pounds of grouper. You know, if the kingfish weren't biting, we could go out and find the general area where we fished and drift across it.

RC: So, you actually did go fish it?

JR: Mm-hm.

RC: So, how did you and your dad fish it? What gear was that?

JR: What kind of gear?
RC: Yeah.

JR: Kingfish gear, electric reels and rod and reel fishing, jigging. We caught a lot of grouper jigging.

RC: And the kingfish reel, I assume you meant a bug reel?

JR: A bug reel.

RC: But you dropped it at the bottom?

JR: (inaudible) weight on it.

RC: Pull up on your cabin and—

JR: Yeah.

RC: So, you’d convert your kingfish reel into a—try to make it like a bandit.

JR: And it worked, but it wasn’t like the big *Lucky Too* with two bandits; you know, it was pretty rudimentary. Here we were using—we were trying that.

RC: And when you all were doing that, was that like a day trip or just an afternoon trip?

JR: A day trip. You know, we’d kingfish in the morning, and if the kingfishing was slow we’d troll offshore and catch a few dolphin.

RC: Catch you a hundred pounds of grouper, you said?

JR: Yeah.
RC: Well, that’d be a heck of a day. These days, a hundred pounds of grouper and kingfish, that would be some good money. So, how long did you and your dad do that? Was it the closure date you were referring to?

JR: Yeah, it affected my dad too, the closure did. I mean, it pretty much put the Oculina Bank out, off limits totally.

RC: Okay, and that was your dad’s boat. I think it was also a twenty-four Stapleton, you said?

JR: No. He had a twenty-four foot outboard with a 140 on it, then he had a twenty-six Stapleton we fished out of, and I had the twenty-four. Then, when he decided to go out of the fishing business, I sold my twenty-four and bought his twenty-six from him.

RC: Golly, Jimmy. All right. (both laugh) So, when you and your dad fished together, you fished a twenty-four foot boat or his twenty foot Stapleton?

JR: We fished his twenty-six Stapleton.

RC: Okay. All right. And now we’re into when you were kingfishing on your own.

JR: Yeah.

RC: You owned the boat. It was a twenty-four Stapleton. Where did you go to fish when you were kingfishing on your own there?

JR: Offshore bar, from Sebastian to Palm Beach.

RC: So, on this map here, you’re pointing there just offshore of Bethel.

JR: Yeah.

RC: And then that’s down towards the—
JR: Yeah, the Northeast Grounds, throughout here.

RC: All through the bar there?

JR: Yeah, all through the bar there—

RC: Down seventy-five and—

JR: (inaudible), all along there.

RC: So, you said you went all the way to, like, Palm Beach. What depths would those be?

JR: Same depths, ninety foot.

RC: Same depths.

JR: Sixty to ninety foot.

RC: Okay. And then you said north of our map here, you said you fished all the way to Sebastian?

JR: Sebastian, Pelican Flats, was about the farthest north back then I went.

RC: So, in summary here, it sounded like you were kingfishing close to home and grouper fishing in the Oculina Bank, and now all of a sudden you’re talking about fishing kingfish into a relatively large area?

JR: Yes.

RC: So—
JR: Well, when the Oculina Bank closed, instead of going to the east, you start chasing kingfish farther north than south.

RC: So earlier, once again, you kept referring to options. So, your options to stay close to home was taken. Okay. Oh, interesting. This is really interesting. Okay, the twenty-four Stapleton you owned, what was the name—what did you call that one?

JR: That boat was the *Playboy*.

RC: The *Playboy*?

JR: Yeah. It had a pink rabbit on the transom.

RC: During what months of the year did you fish the *Playboy*?

JR: Year round.

RC: How long was a fishing trip on the *Playboy*?

JR: Day trips, occasional overnight trips, but that was, again, a rare occurrence.

RC: How much was your average trip’s catch?

JR: I’d say 200 pounds of kings or better.

RC: Okay. Where did you sell the *Playboy*’s catch?

JR: I believe by then D&D was gone, and I moved to Hudgens.

RC: And Hudgens had a market in Palm Beach back then, didn’t they?
JR: Yeah, yeah. So, when I fished in Palm Beach, I had free dockage. Free dockage and places—it was a good setup as far as fishing for Hudgens. That’s one of the reasons I liked fishing for them.

RC: So, you would fish for Hudgens from Palm Beach. You fished for Hudgens south of Fort Pierce, and when you moved up to Pelican Flats and stuff, where would you sell your catch?

JR: Sembler’s. Charlie Sembler’s.

RC: That’s in Sebastian.

JR: Yeah.

RC: How many years did you fish for kingfish in this manner?

JR: Forever.

RC: You mean till now?

JR: Yeah.

RC: So, that’s—okay. So, here we are, you haven’t quit fishing, you’re still kingfishing. You own three boats now. I guess you run them all the same way?

JR: Yeah. They’re all fishing for the same thing with the same gear.

RC: You said you still fish from Palm Beach to Sebastian. Are you still doing the day trips?

JR: Yes.

RC: What is your average catch nowadays?
JR: I’d say 200 or 300 pounds.

RC: Okay. Where do you sell your catch these days?

JR: Inlet Fisheries [Inc.].

RC: And that would be in Fort Pierce?

JR: Fort Pierce.

RC: What if you’re down towards Palm Beach or something?

JR: They have a fish depot in [Port] Salerno that we can unload at Inlet.

RC: What is that, like a co-op? What is that, a co-op?

JR: The port authority leases them that and they’ve got two fish depots there. I believe now it’s, what, Day Boat’s there, and Inlet can pick up.

RC: Some years it’s been Seafood Atlantic [Inc.]?

JR: Yeah, and when I fish up north in Sebastian there, it’s Seafood Atlantic.

RC: Okay, when you fish Sebastian, you sell to Seafood Atlantic?

JR: Yeah.

RC: And when you fish Pelican Flats, you sell to—

JR: Seafood Atlantic.
RC: Okay. That's what we're still—that's what you’re still doing today?

JR: Yeah.

RC: I’m going to have to find me another place on this list, what to talk about next. All right. Do you ever grouper/snapper fish anymore?

JR: Very rarely, very rarely.

RC: And why?

JR: Mainly because the Oculina Bank is closed. (laughs)

RC: All right. Jimmy, finally, I would like to talk to you about how your fishing has changed over 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 you, and if so, how? I’m gonna start by reading the question and pointing on the map. Okay, prior to 1984, you know, it was all open. Then in eighty-four (1984), you weren’t allowed to bottom longline or trawl in this closed area. Did that affect you?

JR: Yes.

RC: Bottom longlining and trawling?

JR: No, no. I never fished with a longline. Well, I tilefish—I didn’t tilefish. When I tilefish, I fished with my cousin on the Gambler.

RC: Oh, another boat to talk about. (laughs)

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. (laughs) We can miss that one. Well, then, right now, let’s talk about the Gambler a little bit. Can you tell me what deal that was?
JR: My uncles bought a kingfish boat, the *Gambler*, that’s presently at Inlet that Billy Curry owns. And when I was growing up, I also fished on that with my cousin, Eddie, and my uncle, Jerry: kingfished, tilefished with bandit reels.

RC: When was that, back in the eighties [1980s]?

JR: Probably. That was before—that was when I was really young. (laughs)

RC: Oh, really?

JR: Yeah.

RC: You already described the relationship to you. What was that, just for a couple of years or one year?

JR: Yeah, a couple years.

RC: Okay. All right, back to the Oculina Bank questions about the dates here. Now, in 1994, this area was designated as [an] experimental closed area. Fishing for and retention of snapper/groupers was prohibited. Snapper/grouper boats were also prohibited from anchoring. Was your fishery impacted by this regulation? This is the 1994 closure.

JR: Yes, yeah.

RC: Once again, how?

JR: Basically, we were no longer allowed to fish there, really.

RC: Okay, it’s a loss of income?

JR: Yeah.
RC: Okay, and as you described earlier, a loss of options.

JR: Yeah.

RC: Anything else?

JR: And I had an unlimited snapper/grouper permit, and then I was demoted down to a 225 [pound trip limit], the non-transferrable permit that I still have.

RC: How did the Oculina Bank affect that, as far as your permits being demoted?

JR: Well, I would obviously have been fishing in the Oculina Bank and got the thousand pounds that I needed to qualify for the unlimited permit.

RC: Oh, okay. You’re actually referring to the permit exclusions they made when they made it limited entry. It was based on your landings.

JR: Yes.

RC: And it was based on landings—what was that, in ninety-five [1995], ninety-six [1996], and ninety-seven [1997]?

JR: Yeah.

RC: And this closed in ninety-four [1994]? So, then your—

JR: I would have loved to have been able to take my own twenty-four foot Stapleton out there and do it.

RC: And basically, one thousand pound catch would have been the difference between—

JR: Having an unlimited permit or not having an unlimited permit. (laughs)
RC: My understanding of the unlimited one is they’re not transferrable or sellable, right?

JR: Yeah. That’s your permit entail. You can’t transfer it. Now, you can transfer it from boat to boat.

RC: But you can’t sell it as a money value?

JR: You can’t sell it, no.

RC: Like the unlimited permits have a $15,000 value or something. Is that what you’re referring to as one of your losses?

JR: Yes.

RC: Okay. Cool. Interesting. Okay, in 1996, all anchoring was prohibited within the Oculina Bank. That would be this deeper area on the outside and all that. Did that affect you?

JR: No.

RC: Why not? I mean, in ninety-four [1994] you said this closing the bottom fishing shut you out.

JR: Yeah.

RC: Why didn’t the ninety-six [1996] one affect you, because you were already done?

JR: Yeah. I didn’t fish off there.

RC: So basically, you haven’t fished the Oculina Bank since ninety-four [1994] when it closed.

JR: No.
RC: Okay. Here’s another one. In 1996, trawling of rock shrimp was prohibited in the area east and north of the designated Oculina Bank. That’s the south side area and that’s going up to the north. The area was incorporated into the Oculina Bank HAPC. Fishing with bottom longline, trawl, [or] dredge was prohibited in the extended area, as was anchoring by any vessel. Was your fishing impacted by that regulation?

JR: No.

RC: Okay. All right, we’re about done here. The designation of marine areas that are closed to fishing is being used more frequently as a fishery management tool. In other words, MPAs [Marine Protected Areas] are being used more and more frequently. What do you think about the use of closed areas?

JR: I’m scared to death of ’em.

RC: What do you think of them compared to other types of management regulations like quotas, closed seasons? As a management measure, what do you think of ’em compared to all the other stuff you see coming down the pike?

JR: I’m not sure what all’s coming down the pike. (laughs)

RC: I mean, we’ve seen season closures, size limits, trip limits. We’ve seen head count limits.

JR: Well, it seems like once the area’s closed, it’s a done deal. You’re just not going back there anymore in your future fishing.

RC: But as a management measure, do you think that has positive effects or is it all negative effects?

JR: I really don’t know, because I’ve done limited bottom fishing now inshore of that. But talking to the guys, I don’t see any benefit from it as far as, you know, more grouper being available inshore because of an offshore closure.

RC: Yeah, and I think back when they were promoting this, they were talking about overflows and—
JR: Yeah. That was gonna be the sanctuary and if there were gonna be so many fish, they were gonna come inshore.

RC: Spilling out of it, I remember it.

JR: And that was also, I remember—you know, at the time I wasn’t really that much—but the other guys talking about it like Bob and Billy and those guys, and Phil Peterson, who really did that bottom fishing out there, and I worked for him. There was a hope that once things got better there that we would be able to fish in a limited ability in that area. And it just remains closed, period, the end.

RC: Right, after sixteen years of experimenting. Okay. So, apparently it sounds like you described [that] you don’t like the MPAs as a management measure.

JR: No.

RC: So, which do you prefer, which type of management measures?

JR: Trip limits, quotas, seasons.

RC: Okay. So, what do you think the best way to manage a fishery is?

JR: Trip limits, spawning season closures.

RC: Okay. Thank you. All right, last question. Thinking ahead to the future, what do you think fishing in Fort Pierce will be like in ten years?

JR: Hopefully, it’ll be the same as it is now as far as regulations go.

RC: No, I mean about fishing itself. I mean, you know—it says, “What do you think fishing in Fort Pierce will be like in ten years?” I guess the ability to catch fish and fishing. Do you think it is gonna be good?
JR: Yeah, yeah, the king mackerel fishery seems great.

RC: Do you think that the king mackerel fishery is limited off through past measures?

JR: Yeah.

RC: Okay. All right. Thank you very much, Jimmy, for sharing your fishery history with us. Is there anything that you would like to add, sir?

JR: Nothing I can think of right now.

RC: All right, Jimmy. Well, it was very informative, and I would like to thank you. We’ll turn off the recording off now.

*End of interview*