

Interview Log

Interviewee: Rhonda Aaron **Tape #:** MAAF/KF/MD/FTI.26.99.235

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault **# of Tapes:** 1 of 1

Date: 1/26/99 **# of Sides:** 2

Location: Dorchester Co. Library, Cambridge MD

Topic: foodways, muskrat cooking, trapping, family traditions, church

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: File name: mdft235.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN01.26.99. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker]; "quotations indicate direct transcription."

Rhonda has won the cooking competition for the National Outdoor Show for several years. She is a member of the Mills family; well known for their trapping skills in S. Dorchester. the interview took place at the library where she works and there is some background noise audible.

BEGIN SIDE A

States name

[brought in baby muskrat mounted on drift wood]

caught by god child philip gootee in 1997; deciding which to mount: if really big or really small; expensive to get mounts done;

taxidermist: Ronnie Newcomb in Church Creek, a friend of theirs

learning trapping and muskrat cooking: family traditions; mother is a Mills and had four brothers, all trapped; Thomas, Arthur, Shriver and Wilson;

her mother, Nellie Flowers skinned in 1 ' outdoor show as a child; around age 5; sister Edith did too

Rhonda helps with outdoor show; decided to enter cooking contests; then decided she wanted to skin with the women; been practicing all month; goes for quality rather than speed or quantity.

Brother works with her on this; uses his short cuts: one cut on the tail, secret thing you do when you turn the hide inside out; pull up with hands and need upper body and hand strength

Mom skinning: has a photo at home of mom; lots of small children skinning on stage; those old timers that skinned then are dead; mother remembers it, got a nickel for skinning; held at old state theatre

History of outdoor show is with the outdoor show committee: see Pat Elsley, Helen Peele, Billy Newcomb, Sonny ruark, but Helen and Rob are co-chairs; also see Christina Seeman

Doris Lewis is Helen's mother who also skinned in the early shows; AND Helen's grandmother (mother of Doris Lewis) is a world champion. Miss Willie Keene

Rhonda grew up on Hooper's Island; father a waterman; mother from Golden Hill, her mother's father was a farmer and trapper and liscensed game breeder for state and bred Canadian geese.

Families still live close by each other; pond where breeding was done is right there too;

Brother trapped with uncle and a friend named Buster Creighton and they "were hard trappers" 7 days a week during season; brother learned to trap and mom would skin; then brother learned to skin; then always at the house after that.

Rhonda's husband and brother trapped together; sell fur to Vernon in Vienna at Delmarva Fur traders but closed up this year; he's a farmer; now don't know where to sell them; only getting 85cents for hides

Have been to Zander's furrier in NJ

Warmth of fur; fur fashion show at Outdoor show; how not cold enough here for them;

Cooking: uncles still make turtle pie; lots of preparation for turtle; made it for Outdoor show one year; BBQ things make anything taste better; BBQ venison that she cooks; likes to use fruit punch; makes deer jerky, good for being on the boat

Doesn't cook muskrat the traditional way with lots of sage and onion; prefers being creative with recipes, changing them; experiment with them; 1 year she competed she made recipe with pineapple and mandarin oranges and muskrat; got there and won and then had to have a name for it; so called a friend whose husband is hawaiian and named it "Maui Muskrat"

Likes to be different; decided to do it on her own; loves cookbooks and particularly cajun cookbooks; will combine recipes; hard for her when cooking to write something down or know it because she doesn't write things down or measure things at all; has to do the recipe twice if she wants it written down; doing it once it is in her head and then you have to taste things; white pepper gets hotter longer you simmer it

Cooks game on top of woodstove on cold days; makes it really tender

Muskrat is in their blood; love it; not the money you get for them but the process of catching them of being in the marsh; just in their blood; uncle Shriver who is 77 still goes in the marsh everyday, just like the watermen

Crab pickers at her mother's crab house that are 80 and still picking; work at 3 a.m until 1 p.m.; just do it;

Changes: not catching as many muskrats but nutria are exploding; not sure if it's related; Helps trapping if really stuck; story of going out a couple of times; how tired you get, put her in a duck blind and came back for her later; very tiring doing all that walking

If tide low in a.m husband will fish traps and then when son gets home in afternoons has his clothes lined up at the door; heads off if tide is low;

Government and state marshes; bid on them each year; talk to Shriver about retired muskrat trap and his hall of fame;

Tools and kitchen while cooking; does two recipes for outddoor show; kitchen is a big mess; silent secret can't tell anyone; loves tomato base for muskrat; also good BBQ and with rice;

Trapping only income for farmers in winter and that's why it's a strong tradition in Dorch. Then also watermen would tong until end of Dec. then trap Jan and February and tong again for March;

Take orders for muskrats from regular customers; have lots of orders; she usually takes the musk out of them on the hind legs; husband will cut off heads and legs, son skins

Making jerky: liquid smoke, garlic powder, soy sauce, onion powder, worchestshire, brown sugar, cajun spices; marinate overnight; uses food dehydrators; jerky comes out small from muskrat

Customers: deliver next morning; people in Cambridge are most customers; supply to church dinner too, about 90 out of 140. No problem getting rid of it; hidden economy

Insider outsider issues with muskrat; people who eat it and don't; used to be lots of places that serve it as main course;

Elliot's Island firehouse has large muskrat dinner just before outdoor show on Thursday; Pam and Wiley both skin and so they know about it; rhonda talks with Pam regularly and talked about how many hundred's of biscuits they ahd to make etc;

Good fundraiser because brings people out who are curious about the taste and then those who just love it as a meal; their church does muskrat and chicken combo just in case you don't like it; "down that far in the county you've got to give them a choice"

Church: built structure on side of little kitchen that was originally a school house from Kerwin's Neck, moved it up then built new addition; small congregation about 30 people; how brings everyone together;

Mother grew up down road from church and always comes to church functions; church newsletter; have family fun night where they all play board games and cards; Karom and 58; only guys play 58; describes last Sunday when several guys got together at their house to play 58 and played for 4 hours; played when she was younger but doesn't play anymore

Cookbooks at home: piled up; always collected them prefers the older ones; ingredients that she's never heard of, likes the cajun ones best; hardest part is trying to make a rue; base of all cajun dishes; son likes to cook

Cooks muskrat in pan baking in oven in fruit sauce; then pick off meat from bone; will cook in sancRge but removes it so only get the flavor;

Son comes to outdoor show only on Saturday "for you know, all those things that they like" like the duck and goose calling etc.

Son watches the muskrat cook on wood stove on Friday night (if cold enough) while she is at the outdoor show;

"badmitten bones"

people who come to outdoor show just to try muskrat; now that she takes part in show she isn't really there for the day; practices skinning in morning and cooking too; then arrives with food for competition and stays for skinning;

diff between skinning at home in the garage and up on the stage skinning at show; couldn't block it out the first year; 2n^d year better; skinning so late almost midnight and so really worn out by then

[phone call, pause tape]

performance aspects of being on the stage skinning; blocking out everything; getting a "bad rat": meat sticks to hide and won't separate; takes forever to skin; also nicks in the fur from a fight rat was in; not visible at time but once skinned it is visible and then disqualified;

LA people bringing their own rats still alive and kill them just before show; easier to skin something that's warm; hide comes off easier; our rats are caught on fri or sat; better to

skin little rats; likes a certain sized rat to skin; uncle saves 3 small females for her;
females easier to skin; usually been in marsh for hours, rats kept in sack on back; it's cold
and so skin doesn't come off so easily; whole environment is cold: water, ground air etc.;

Son competing

END SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

[tape problems at beginning; sounds like tape not running through at right speed; was
immediately flipped over from end of last side and no indication of speed problems on
that side at all]

sense of place question

Rhonda would take photo albums, cook books, indian artifact collection; with her if she
had to leave area; also take crab knife and oyster knife, and pygmy goat

Has some of her mother's crab knives

Photo albums would be important because what they do in south part of county is so diff
than what they do in the north part; farming in north part and their environment makes it
diff ; full moons and tides regulate life;

Survivalists in southern part of county; trap, fish, grow what they eat; still can many
things; her mother pickled all the things served at the dinner;

Husband is a waterman and working at marina gootee's marina; working with her uncle;
also does some carpentry work; traps; husband is always there when son got home from
school; "I was the one who took the steady job with benefits"

Loves being out on boat with husband and son; also go arrowhead hunting together as a
family {Rhonda's conversation is characterized by talk of family]

Proging in the marsh; did it on dates with husband before married;

Leads: nellie Flowers; lives in fishing creek; 397-3272
Thomas and Shriven call Thomas at night; 397-3112
Looking for boat builder and model boat builder

So busy in summer; you just go and go and go and go; unreal; so tired in the summer;
winter time is only time she can grow fingernails; crabs on her vacation with her
husband;

Story of friend from watertown NY; outsider in the community story

How they take these things for granted;

Interview Log

OH 259
spacious
tape
lots of kitchen
sounds

Interviewee: Rhonda Aaron
Tape #: MAAF/KF/MD/FT2.27.99.236/612

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault # of Tapes: 1 of 2

Date: 2/27/99 # of Sides: 2

Location: In Rhonda's home, golden Hill MD

Topic: cooking muskrat; muskrat trapping, community life

Corresponding Photography Log #: yes

Comments: File name: Mdft236.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN022799. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker]; "quotations indicate direct transcription."

This tape was recorded the morning of the National Outdoor Show cooking contest. Rhonda entered two dishes: red beans and rat, and rat creole. I arrived early to watch and help her make the dishes. We also skinned some muskrats in the afternoon.

BEGIN SIDE A

How long the day is on National Outdoor show days; her schedule for this community event; [picking through the meat for the small bones of the muskrat]

Conversation with Wiley Abbott; firehouse muskrat and chicken dinner on Elliott's Island; at the church this year;

How she cooks the muskrat before beginning the recipe; all muskrat thoroughly cooked before being added to dish; marinates in teriyaki, duck sauce, beef boullion; slow cooks for one day;

Takes 6 rats to fill pot; had to borrow 6 from the church because tide didn't come in on time; will replace them later; takes entire day to cook rats then another day to make recipe;

Other recipes she has entered; BBQ, jambalaya; [phone rings]

Her son is across the street at Rhonda's uncles cooking rats;

Family competition

How Thomas cooks all the rats for the outdoor show; how he's 60 and still does that, starts on Friday night;



Chili recipe; how you gear your recipes to male or female judges; chili didn't score with the women judges too hot; how she tries to find out how many male and female judges there will be;

How you pick judges; Dan who will be a judge has no relatives down here at all and his wife doesn't even know what a muskrat is let alone cooking one; neutral judges;

Her mother's muskrat dish; how Nellie [her mother] got up at 5, went to firehouse and did some volunteer work for firehouse dinner;

Hooper's Island firehouse dinners description; Ruark's; crab picking and firehouse connections; W. T. Ruark Fishing tournament in June;

[neighbor kid comes by with rats]



back to firehouse dinners; community support; recent rash of fires;

now start cooking; start with the shrimp one first;

rules of contest: allowed to do anything; no rules; muskrat has to be in there; only rule;

finding a pan; how rhonda works in the kitchen [see FN for more details]

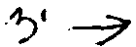
how she decides what to make; prefers cajun recipes

church suppers; turkey dinners; other cooking events

[peeling shrimp] how you flavor the food and add the muskrat last

how she adds things and never writes them down; makes a recipe hers; making the rue

does crafts to; done at night in winter; her schedule: home from work at 5:30, do dinner, skin muskrats [husband and son do not skin what they trap]; take dog and goat out to play; 10 p.m. time to do crafts;



get shrimp in bulk from NC in 501b boxes from WT Ruark; eat them all winter; chopped up the vegetables yesterday; cooking time is short but the dicing is the longest; makes homemade tomato sauce in summers;

what complements muskrat: not cheese, tomatoes ok;

competition

how people line up to taste the dishes from competition; 10-12 dishes enter

don't eat it at home a lot because they have a market for it; sell it rather than eat it; once or twice a year at early part of season "like crabs in spring"; [more a symbolic food]

making the me; first time she made a rue story

experimenting with cooking and food;

making pies for the outdoor show at the fireball in Fishing creek; Nellie making pies;

food at the outdoor show: oyster puffs, chicken, string beans, potato salad, cole slaw, deserts, bread,

folklore about onions and crying; put them in the fridge

working at a restaurant at age 14; learned cooking from Mildred who attends their church; cooking soft crabs from Mildred; have to use House of Autry Seafood breader; already seasoned;

lift the back shells, put wet mustard and old bay in there; bread with this and fry them;

Mildred and sisters were cooks at restaurant; Rhonda used to chop everything;

Shriver wanting to cook against her; family joke

Nellie arrives with her entry for the traditional category;

How Nellie made her entry of cabbage, onions and muskrats

Nellie making pies from 5 a.m.; made over 100 pies

Nellie's sister, Edith, home working on her recipe [phone rings, Nellie answers it]

Nellie working the kitchen all day

[tasting the food]

Rhonda talking about her mother; "Flowers' ridge" on Hooper's Island; family history

Fur market today; what to do with the hides now; selling in DE for only 46 cents; researching on the internet for a sales market; fur in fashion now on coats etc;

Other local dishes the area known for: kale, cabbage, fried chicken; stewed tomatoes; foods she had when little; slippery dumplings; duck and dumplings; not scalloped potatoes, not mac and cheese;

Story of cousin cooking food for them one day when little; cooked duck livers and gizzards thinknig they were chicken livers; [chicken livers are a big thing on the island too, served at all chix dinners and oyster chix dinners]

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

Spices; experimenting; husband's tastes

Not using a measuring spoon or cup etc. just throwing it in; pours into hand and judges;

Exchanges between LA Cameron parrish people and Dorchester co.; recipe exchanges between women;

Presentation of food

Starting the second recipe; one dish she was going to use, a wrap, and thought the wrap wouldn't work, would get soggy;

Cooking without recipes; not being able give out most recipes because made up as you go along

Cooking venison: fruit juices; put all the left over veggies in with it; cherry and pineapple juice is good; venison served at church socials; using these ingredients can disguise the taste of wild game; psychology of what you are eating and its name; how "rat" turns people off,

Canning things;

i Outdoor show; how it started; mother participated in the first outdoor show; beauty pageant origins; muskrat bathing suits; out in the snow in fur bathing suits; her cousin modeled the suits; and someone still has the suits; show in Cambridge and then moved \down here;

Our pets

Personal conversations

Her husband's work; travel they do;

Cake baker in the area; Jehovah's witness makes very fancy cakes; [see slide]

How she makes a crab cake: [woman above] makes a layered cake and the design in the icing is a crab basket with crabs crawling on top of the cake.

Animal rights activists arrive at Outdoor Show; story of how that happened and what the effects were; "just deal with it"

Reason for trapping; over population of rats; getting your food from the environment around you rather than the store; only having bacon and scrapple when you killed a hog; only had chix when killed chix in summer;

Food on demand; seasonless meals

Starting the new recipe;

[move outside to skin while things cook]

skinning techniques: more leverage on the ground
[windy]

why Rhonda doesn't wear red;

Abbot cut: how it works, who developed it;

Strength you need to do this really; 3 pushes and then turn the skin back; people who have helped her learn

Once skin is back you cut ear to ear, then around the eyes; work side to side then cut the mouth and pull up

You have to leave one eye in the socket in the contest; can't rip them out

Easier to skin if warm;

Story of her grandfather; farming all summer and trapping all winter; cuts you get;

Knives they prefer to use; get from furrier in OH; get all the trapping magazines; Justing belongs to fur trappers assoc. of MD;

Things her brother taught her and how he was working with her for the competition

Calls the competition a "performance"

Have to put your foot on the tail to pull the skin

Brother: if you have a fear of cutting yourself then you shouldn't be up there

Getting a "bad rat"

Serving their customers;

END TAPE

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Interview Log

Interviewee: Rhonda Aaron Tape #: MAAF/KF/MD/FT2.27.99.237/613

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault # of Tapes: 2 of 2

Date: 2/27/99 # of Sides: 1

Location: Rhonda's home, Golden Hill MD

Topic: skinning muskrat, cooking muskrat; National Outdoor Show;

Corresponding Photography Log #: yes

Comments: File name: Mdft237.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN022799. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker];-"quotations indicate direct transcription."

side a Rhonda and I are outside talking while she skins some muskrats for her customers and for practice for the competition that night. there are some wind background noises.

BEGIN SIDE A

[outside skinning]

salt water rats; tougher than the others; don't want those in the competition; how she feels about her technique this year;

tools; tools for nutria;

building the strength in your hands;

things she learned from Shriver and Thomas; better to skin the smaller females, not as tough

how used to cut before the Abbott cut; other techniques in the area

Abbotts really innovated the skinning with the one cut technique;

The teddy bear that is always auctioned off;

Physicality of skinning especially after doing 20 for a customer or so;

Justin inspects the hides when she is done; can't have any nicks to sell them;

Larry doesn't skin or compete; he only traps; [Larry arrives home]

Gets larry to eat the spicy dishes; how he and other men are burning a marsh today before the show

Larry asks me to skin the nutria, but I'm not strong enough

Rhonda says we've had a good day together;

[pause while we go inside for larry to taste food]

[back outside]

what they do with the entrails etc.

removing the musk

in march the musk taste gets stronger; takes musk out of the deer too

accidents when skinning

[dog barking in the background]

family history; mother's family was farmers and trappers then Nellie married a waterman and they didn't trap but now the family is mixed; farmer's notorious for duck hunting; memories of deer season growing up; food gathering, preserving

how her grandmother taught them to shell lima beans and peas; made it a contest; making home made rootbeer;

canning factories; stories of staying with grand mothers while mothers worked at canning factory; stories of grandfather; called a car a "machine"

END SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

END TAPE

Interview Log

Interviewee: Rhonda Aaron
Nellie Flowers

Tape #: MAAF/KF/FT1.26.99 235/612
235 & 236

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault

of Tapes: 2

Date: January 26, 1999

of Sides: 3

Location: Dorchester County Library, Cambridge, Maryland

Topic: Delmarva Folklife Project
foodways, muskrat cooking, trapping, family traditions, church

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: File name: mdft235.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN01.26.99. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker]; "quotations indicate direct transcription." Rhonda has won the cooking competition for the National Outdoor Show for several years. She is a member of the Mills family; well known for their trapping skills in S. Dorchester. The interview took place at the library where she works and there is some background noise audible. Ms. Aaron is loud and clear. Ms. Feltault is often difficult to hear.

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BEGIN SIDE A (tape 235)

R.A.: -- Aaron, and I live in Golden Hill.

K.F.: Okay. And tell me about this rat that you have brought in for me to see. Is there a story with that?

R.A.: This is our little, this is our little baby rat. And one of my Godchildren, Philip Gootee, caught this, and he caught it in March of 1997. It's right on the back of it.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: And we have a real big one at home that we decided to have mounted, and we had this little tiny one we wanted to get mounted.

K.F.: Now I know, I've talked with a few trappers and some taxidermists as well, and I'm curious as to how do you decide which one you're going to mount and which one you're not going to mount? I mean what makes one special over another?

R.A.: Well this is one of the smallest ones we've ever caught. So we go, if it's a real extremely large one or a real small one, then we, then we put it in the pile to maybe save.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: It's not real cheap to get those mounts done, so you have to be selective.

K.F.: And who does your mounts?

R.A.: We chose Ronnie Newcomb in Church Creek.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: He's a friend of ours.

K.F.: Okay. Now how did you get interested in trapping and cooking muskrat? Is that something you grew up with?

R.A.: Oh, yeah. My mother is a Mills, and she's part of the - there's four Mills brothers that were trappers. Her father was a trapper, and the four brothers all trapped, and Thomas - it was Thomas, and Arthur, and Shriver and Wilson, and it's just two left now. And my mother skinned in the first outdoor show as a child. She was either five or six years old, she and he sister, Edith.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

R.A.: So I've helped with the outdoor show since it's been done in the south part of the county. I volunteer and I help. And when they decided to have the cooking contest, I decided to enter it. So, you know, I did pretty well, and so I continued, but then something struck me that I wanted to skin. So I decided, you know, I'm going to skin with the women. So I decided to do that and practice, and I've been practicing all this month. And I'm not real fast, but you know, I go for quality instead of for the quantity, I think. But my brother is working with me, and he told me, he says there's some shortcuts that you have to take. He said you've got to do them in order to compete. So I've been working on them.

K.F.: And what are the shortcuts?

R.A.: Well it's that one cut on the tail.

K.F.: Oh.

R.A.: And there's a secret thing that you do when you actually turn the rat inside out to - there's something that you do with the hide. You kind of pull it up, you know, with your hands. You have to be really strong.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: It's the strength that you have in your hands.

K.F.: It looked like it took a lot of kind of upper body strength -

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R.A.: It does, it does.

K.F.: -- to really do that.

R.A.: It does.

K.F.: And, I guess, with the raccoons too, I've noticed they were much tougher to skin.

R.A.: Oh, yes. And they usually skin those on a pole.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: It's much easier to skin and pull down on a pole.

K.F.: Okay. And doing back to your mom skinning, was there a women's competition then at first?

R.A.: I don't think there was a woman's competition then, but I don't know if it was all ages or what, but I'll show you that picture. I have it at home.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And it was a lot of small children on the stage.

K.F.: Okay. So there was always a gentlemen's skinning competition?

R.A.: I, I don't know. I really don't know, because most of those old timers that skinned in that, I'll have to ask mom about that.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

R.A.: She remembers it well. I mean she remembers she got - she got like a nickel or something for skinning. It was just a really small sum, you know, for getting up on the stage, and I think that was at the old state - it was the state theater, I think she said. That was at a different location, see, it was at the very beginning.

K.F.: Okay. Yeah, I'm really interested in sort of the history of the outdoor show.

R.A.: The outdoor show committee does have it.

K.F.: They do.

R.A.: They should have most of it.

K.F.: I'll have to talk to Helen.

R.A.: Yeah. You need to talk to Helen or Pat Elsley is one of the other -

K.F.: She was at the dinner the other night.

R.A.: Yes, she was. Pat and - there's Billy Newcomb, and Sonny Ruark. But I think Helen is the, Helen Peele and Rob, they might be co-chairing it. There's Christina Seeman also.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: She goes back from when it was transferred down to the south part of the county.

K.F.: Okay, okay. Yeah, 'cause Helen said that her mom had skinned.

R.A.: Doris Lewis, yeah. And Doris Lewis's mother is a world champion.

K.F.: Oh, really?

R.A.: Yeah.

KR: Oh, okay.

R. A.: Miss Willie Keene.

K.F.: Okay. History on different -

R.A.: Well, see, I grew up on Hooper's Island.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And my father was a waterman, so you know, they - you know, they always did the crabbing

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and oystering and stuff And my mother was from Golden Hill, which was a little bit farther up. And her father, my grandfather, was a farmer, and then they trapped in the winter, and they did a lot of deer hunting and muskrat trapping. And he was a licensed game breeder for the State of Maryland back in the 50's. Ad he bred the Canadian goose, is what he did. He was a licensed game breeder.

K.F.: I've never heard of anybody doing that.

R. A.: The pond right where we live now, where my uncle lives, just two doors down, because it's all family right in that area, it's our house, and my cousin's house, and my uncle's house, and my other uncles across the road, you know, everybody is just still really close connected. But right in that front yard is the pond where the Baltimore Sun came down and took pictures of him.

K.F.: Okay -

R.A.: Yeah, yeah. But he was licensed by the state to do this.

K.F.: Okay. Do you have any idea like how many other people were licensed in the state to do this?

R.A.: I don't know, but Thomas and Shriver would know.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: That's my uncles.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And I'll ask them, and I'll get that information for you.

K.F.: Okay. So you really grew up with this. And do you remember your earliest experiences?

R.A.: Well, my brother, I had an uncle, and it was a real good friend of ours, Mr. Creighton, my brother when he got like maybe 8 or 10, would pal around with them on weekends, and they trapped hard. They were hard trappers, and they went 7 days a week -

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: --you know, during the entire trapping season. And so he kind of hung around with them and got used to it. And, you know, he really liked it, and then he got his first dozen traps, and he would bring his rats home and, you know, mom knew how to skin. And then my brother learned. And then, you know, then they just - it was always at our house after that, you know, as he got older. And then my husband went, when I got married, my husband and my brother trapped winter together. You know, they did pretty well. It was when the prices of the hides were a lot higher than what they are now. Yeah. We used to get \$1 for the meat, and maybe 9 or 10 for the hide, you know.

K.F.: Wow.

R.A.: And now you get 2 or 2.50 for the meat, and you get 85 cents for the hide.

K.F.: Really?

R.A.: So we're afraid we're going to get 85 cents this year.

K.F.: Oh, God.

R.A.: It's depressing.

K.F.: Well while we're on that topic, where do you guys sell your hides?

R.A.: Last year or the last 10 years or so, we've sold to Delmarva Fur Traders in Vienna. But we have been told that Vernon's closed up.

K.F.: Yeah, that's what I heard too.

R.A.: He decided, decided to quit. And he's a farmer, so -

K.F.: I wanted to talk with him too. I couldn't show up when he was open.

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R.A.: I know. It was odd times because we had difficulty getting in to sell the furs, you know.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: It was like 6:00 in the afternoon.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: 6:00 till maybe 9:00.

K.F.: Right.

R. A.: You know, so many - I don't think it was every night of the week. I don't know if it was every other night or whatever. But we always called to make sure. From down where we live to Vienna is a good -

K.F.: That's a drive.

R.A.: -- ride, yeah. You don't want to make it if he's not open.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: But that's where we usually sell. A few years back, my son Justin went with my cousin Carley up to Zanders up in New Jersey. It's a furrier up there. I don't know if they're still in business or not. It's called Zanders.

K.F.: I've heard a couple of people are selling to Delaware and New Jersey, and then apparently, those furriers are selling to Europe.

R.A.: Yeah.

K.F.: It's the only place fur is still really worn. Although, I see in some of the magazines furs making a comeback.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: So maybe-

R.A.: And they're so warm.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Have you ever had a real fur coat on?

K.F.: I haven't. I really haven't.

R.A.: At the outdoor show that Saturday night, we have that fur fashion show, and those coats are really, really hot. It would have to be extremely cold to wear them.

K.F.: Right, right.

R. A.: And like now, the last five or six years, we haven't had those really, really cold, cold winters.

K.F.: That's true, that's true. Yeah. I know the -one of the guys said that the furrier he deals with is like selling to Russia.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). It's extremely cold, and they need them.

K.F.: Right, right.

R.A.: But if you have a fur coat now, you know, and you live on the East Coast, I mean you would only get to wear it maybe once or twice the entire winter.

K.F.: Right, that's true. And so how did you learn to cook muskrats?

R.A.: Well we used to, we used to eat all the game when I was little. I mean we had, you know, seafood because, you know, dad caught it, and the muskrat, and ducks, and geese, you know, rabbit, tried raccoon. My grandmother used to fix turtle pie all the time, and he son, my uncle, still fixes it. He fixed it one year for the outdoor show for people to try.

K.F.: Yeah?

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R. A.: We had caught a big snapping turtle one year, and he, you know, it's a lot of preparation in preparing a snapping turtle, and he got it all ready and put it in bags in the freezer, and when it was time for the outdoor show, he fixed a huge, huge, turtle pie for everybody to try. But it's really good. It's got a good taste to it.

K.F.: I think I tried some turtle pie last year at the show.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Okay.

K.F.: Somebody had made it. And it was pretty good.

R.A.: Yeah. Maybe it was Thomas. Maybe that's when he did it was last year.

K.F.: I tried everything. I didn't like the -

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: It was a little bitter or something.

R.A.: Did they barbecue it or something?

K.F.: I don't know.

R.A.: When you barbecue it, it really disguises the taste of it. It really, you can't tell - I mean I fixed, we had a little dinner at church in January. It was called everybody's birthday party. And I fixed two deer roasts, and I used beef bouillon cubes, and I used probably teriyaki, I'm trying to think what I used, some soy sauce, some teriyaki, and I may have used some fruit punch in there. Whatever I've got in the refrigerator, I kind of clean it out (Laughter) to give it a fruity taste.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And you can't tell that from roast beef, you know, unless you see the bones and you know that it's wild game, you know, you can't tell.

K.F.: Right, right. Well I grew up on venison so, you know -

R.A.: Most of the deer, most of the deer that my husband and brother and son and nephew all kill, we make jerky out of it, so we make, I make a lot of jerky.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: Yeah. It's different, and they like it, and they can grab a handful and go. And you can make it, and it doesn't spoil, and you can take it out on the boat or, you know, take it out in the marsh with you or whatever.

K.F.: Okay. Now I know the traditional way to prepare muskrat is with a lot of sage.

R.A.: Right. And I think most people use some onion, maybe.

K.F.: Okay. And how did that come about? Do you know?

R.A.: I don't have an idea because I've never cooked it that way before.

K.F.: Oh, you haven't. So you -

R.A.: No, I don't cook it the old fashioned way; I don't cook it that way. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Why not?

R. A.: I just have never done it that way. I like the taste of it, but I like to be creative with recipes. I like to change them and experiment, and that's what I do.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: So the first year I competed in the outdoor show for this contest, I did this recipe with pineapple and mandarin oranges and with rice, and I did the muskrat. And when it got there and I won, and they said what is it called, you've got to have a name for it. So I had to call this teacher who's, this school teacher from the high school whose husband is from Hawaii, and I told her what the ingredients were in it, so she came up with Maui Muskrat. (Laughter.) So that's what -

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we, after I won, we had to stick a title on it. I didn't have a title for it, so - I like to be different. I like to just experiment.

K.F.: And I'm trying to understand like everybody has creative urges.

R. A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And, you know, where they seem to get those inspirations from. Is it something you saw other people in your family doing or is it -

R.A.: No.

K.F.: --something you just -

R.A.: No, I just decided I was going to do it. I like looking at the Cajun cookbooks and stuff like that from down in Louisiana. And sometimes I'll combine a couple of recipes and add other things to it. It's really hard for me when I'm cooking to actually write something down, because I don't measure stuff.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: So when I did it one time, and they said well we want your recipe for the Louisiana cookbook, I had to do it again, and take that extra time and write down how much stuff I used, because I didn't have a clue.

K.F.: Right. But once you do it once, do you kind of have an idea then of how much?

R.A.: Yeah, after once. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Because especially with the Cajun spices and stuff, you have to - if it's kind of bland, you have to kind of keep adding some spice but maybe not too much. And you have to be really careful with that white pepper because the longer you cook with it, the hotter it gets. The longer you simmer it, it gets really spicy hot.

K.F.: Oh, and I mean Muskrat simmers --

R.A.: It could be too spice -

K.F.: -- for a while, right?

R.A.: I usually do. And I have cooked muskrat and ducks and the deer and stuff on top of our woodstove. We have a woodstove insert, so I'll just stick it in a pan and stick it on the woodstove and, you know, not on a day like today, but when it's really really cold or whatever.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And the food, the muskrat or the deer just falls right off the bone it's so tender.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And I'm trying to understand the importance of muskrat within the community here, and I know it's probably a very strong Dorchester County -

R.A.: I think it's in their blood.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: I believe if they were only paying a nickel apiece for muskrat hides, my son would do it anyway because he loves it. You know, it's just like working on the water. When you're used to doing it, I mean you don't make a lot of money, but it's something about it. It gets in your veins, and you're just not happy doing anything else. And Justin would, Justin would go in the marsh, I know he would, for a nickel for the hide. He just loves it. And most of those old time trappers, you know, when you interview them and stuff, you know, you can tell they've got it in their blood. And see, my Uncle Shriver is 77, and he still goes in the marsh every day.

K.F.: Wow. That is like the watermen who go out.

R.A.: Right.

K.F.: I mean there's no return.

R.A.: That's right, that's right. And there's some crab pickers at my mother's crab house that are 80 years old, over 80, and they still get up at 2:00 every morning and go to work at 3 a.m.

K.F.: And pick.

R.A.: Until 12, 1:00. Sometime later. They just do it.

K.F.: Yeah. Now are there any changes that you've seen -

R.A.: Oh, yes.

K.F.: -- related to the muskrats?

R.A.: They're not catching as many muskrats as they used to, you know, years back. It's quite a decline in them, but there's quite an increase in the nutria.

K.F.: You think that's related?

R.A.: I'm not for sure.

K.F.: Yeah. I'm wondering, some people have said that they see a big difference in the personality between a muskrat and the nutria, and I'm wondering if you've seen that too. I mean do you go out in the marsh with the guys?

R.A.: I - a couple of years ago, I went out in the marsh when we had some snow storms and we were kind of stuck, and we had some deep leads set, so I would go out with them. But it's so hard to walk when you're in waist high snow with hip boots on, and then you're falling down in the marsh. They didn't take me very far. I went quite a few years ago with my husband and my brother. And I got so tired of walking with those boots and stuff on, they had to put me in a duck blind and come back and retrieve me later. (Laughter.) I think I actually laid down and went to sleep. It's so tiring doing all that walking. And then I'm usually here five days a week, so -

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: So unless I'm, you know, home or take the day off, you know, then I could go with them. But my husband, if the tide's real low in the morning, he'll go in the morning and fish the traps, and then when Justin gets home from school at 3:00, he has his clothes laying, and boots laying right out, and he's gone. He knows exactly where to go. So if the tide's lower in the afternoon or high, Larry will usually take care of them in the morning if the tide's going to be high in the afternoon.

K.F.: Right. Okay. So you guys are trapping in the tidal -

R.A.: Yeah, it's definitely tidal. Most of the people in the south part of the county do trap, it's tidal.

K.F.: Tidal. Okay.

R. A.: So they have to kind of watch the tides.

K.F.: Yeah. Now I asked - how did it change -

R.A.: I don't know. But mom's brothers, my uncles, will be able to tell you that. Because I want you to talk to them.

K.F.: Yeah, I'd like to.

R. A.: Thomas was at the dinner Saturday night for a while.

K.F.: Okay. Did he have the big glasses on?

R.A.: Yes, I think so. I think that was Thomas, yeah.

K.F.: Okay. I recognized him as someone who -

R.A.: Right, from the outdoor show.

K.F.: -- from the outdoor show, yeah.

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R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. But he can tell you, you know, more about why it's declined. I think they've kind of- I think they're declining too. They have some government marsh, I think, or state marsh. I don't know if it was federal or state, but they, I think they bid it on some and got some marsh this year, so they can, they're there every day.

K.F.: Okay. Okay.

R.A.: But you need to talk to Shriver about -- he retired one muskrat trap because he had caught so many muskrats out of it. So he's retired it to his hall of fame. It's hanging on the wall where he skins his muskrats. Any time anybody new comes in there, he tells them, you know, this story about this.

K.F.: The hall of fame trap.

R.A.: Yeah, yeah.

K.F.: Now what are some of your favorite utensils to cook muskrat? I know lots of cooks have - they will only use one spoon.

R.A.: No, no. I'm not like that, no.

K.F.: Oh, really?

R.A.: I just usually have, the kitchen's usually an entire mess when I'm, you know, dealing with this recipe with 20-some ingredients. My kitchen is a mess. And I'll usually do two recipes for the outdoor show. One I've already picked out. I kind of have an idea what line I'm going in. The other one I'm still not sure about.

K.F.: Can you tell me about the one you've picked out, or -

R.A.: No, I'd rather be - I don't tell anybody. I don't even tell my mother. My mother cooks against me. (Laughter.) She cooks, she cooks the old fashioned way, so hers is more traditional. But I don't even tell her. I don't tell anybody.

K.F.: Okay. We all have to wait till the morning.

R.A.: Nobody knows, nobody knows what I'm doing.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: But I like, I think tomato, a tomato base complements the muskrat.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: I think it kind of really goes with it. It gives it a really good taste. It's excellent barbecue.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And with rice and stuff, it's really, really good.

K.F.: Yeah. Why do you think this is such a strong tradition in Dorchester and not so much in the rest of the -

R.A.: Because, you know, a lot of the farmers did trap, I do believe. I mean they farmed in the summer months, but they trapped in the winter. I mean that's basically, that was their income during the winter. And a lot of the watermen, you know, used to rely, they would crab in the summer and do a little bit of oystering, but then they would go right into trapping, like mom's brothers did. They would tong until the end of December, and December 31", they would set their traps. And, you know, they would, when the trapping season ended the end of March, then they would do a little bit more tonging until the end of April.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: So, you know, they do - I guess it's good to not do the same thing all the time. It breaks the monotony of it, you know, and you don't get as tired of it.

K.F.: Right, right. Well, and probably, it gives nature a break too.

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R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Right.

K.F.: A rest, replenish itself

R. A.: Yeah. But I think Thomas and Shriver have some statistics for you. I think they've written down how many off of a piece of- the government marsh is label like A, B and C, and I think, you know, they bid on them and they get different marshes each year or so. I think he's got some stuff written down over there.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: You know, that tells, tells, you know, how good they've actually done sometimes.

K.F.: Right, right.

R. A.: But it has, you know, we're not seeing as, you know, many, as many rats. But Justin doesn't do it 12 hours a day like some of them do.

K.F.: Right. Right. Well, got to go to school.

R.A.: Got to go to school. He's a senior this year, but you got to go to school. But he just loves it.

K.F.: Well, and it seems like the family loves it too.

R.A.: Yeah.

K.F.: Which helps.

R.A.: Yeah. We all get involved, you know, when he catches them, if he's got a lot, you know. Before if he had a lot, I'd go out and help him skin. But now, if he's got, if he's even got a few, I usually go out and skin every night, we do. My husband comes out and takes the feet, removes the feet and the heads, whatever the orders are. You know some people say don't bring me any of those rats with the heads on them. (Laughter.) And I usually take the musk out of them after we skin, and I usually take the musk out, so the musk is removed.

K.F.: Okay. Well can you describe how you do that?

R.A.: Well it's in the hind legs. You cut, you make a slit up both hind legs, and then you open it up and you'll see a little bit of, it looks like a white like mucousy type stuff. I'll show you that. Have you seen it before?

K.F.: Well I know on deer, a lot of people do it on the hind legs with deer, and I was wondering if it's kind of the same.

R.A.: I don't know.

K.F.: Because there's a little -

R.A.: It's like a little musk gland?

K.F.: Yeah, on the back of it.

R.A.: There's little musk glands in the back, in the hind legs of these muskrat.

K.F.: Okay.

R. A.: It's probably similar.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah. Because I know some older deer hunters that I've talked to say you've got to take that out.

R.A.: It makes it really strong if not. But when I make the jerky, see, I marinate it, I use Liquid Smoke, and garlic powder, and onion powder, and soy sauce, Worcestershire. I use a little bit of brown sugar to make it a little bit sweeter, and I use a little bit of the Cajun spices sometimes, a little bit of white pepper. And then I marinate it over night, and then I just put it on my - I have two food dehydrators, so I stick it on there.

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K.F.: Okay. Now I mean I've only seen muskrat meat cooked the way it was at the church, and it falls off the bones.

R.A.: Yes, it does. It's real tender.

K.F.: So how do you make a piece of jerky?

R.A.: I usually - well, what I usually - well, it was really difficult, it wasn't a big piece of jerky. It was really, really little. And then I experimented with some nutria, because the nutria's bigger. So then I had some bigger piece of jerky for that. So when you had the samples out there at the outdoor show, I probably took meat off of, I don't know how many muskrat, in order to get enough, just a little handful of jerky for that contest.

K.F.: Right, right. Okay.

R.A.: Because it's difficult. You don't have any big pieces.

K.F.: Right, right. Because I'm thinking, you know, venison jerky, you can make big strips.

R.A.: You can make big strips of that, but you cannot do it with the muskrat, no way. I didn't choose any of the real small ones. I just - anything that was real big, you know, I would use the meat off of those, I would save the meat. But it was not easy to do.

K.F.: Right. You mentioned that you have orders.

R.A.: Yes.

K.F.: Do you have regular customers who like muskrat meat?

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). They call our house and leave a message, or call at night when we're home, and I deliver the next morning.

K.F.: Wow. Okay. And who is usually your customers?

R.A.: Usually most, a lot of people here in Cambridge.

K.F.: Oh, here in town.

R.A.: In town, yeah. So but we did, we supplied 90 of the muskrat for the dinner.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: We used 140, so we supplied 90.

K.F.: Most of them.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. 'Cause there's only been a couple of other trappers I've talked to. One guy, he was just below Vienna.

R.A.: Elliott's Island?

K.F.: Yeah, he's up -

R.A.: Was it Wiley Evett?

K.F.: No. It's - this was an African American guy.

R.A.: Okay. Okay. I've seen him at the fur house before when we've gone over. He would bring furs in.

K.F.: He's a very nice man.

R.A.: He's really nice.

K.F.: Really nice man.

R.A.: Yeah.

K.F.: And he has a few customers too that he deals with, and sells, and they come back every year.

R.A.: Yes. I have everybody's name and a phone number, you know. And if nobody's called and we have some extra rats and I haven't delivered to them in a few weeks, I'll call and I'll say

are you ready for some more, and they'll say yes or no, and then I'll go to the next one. But we usually don't have any problem.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah. It's an interesting economy, you know, that most people don't see.

R.A.: I think either you like muskrat or you don't. I don't think there's an in-between thing with that. One of the guys that was down at the dinner on Saturday, he was in here yesterday, and he told me, he said my friend that came in with me got all chicken because he doesn't like muskrat, he said, and he kept telling me boy that chicken's really good, you better go get some of that chicken. He said no, I don't want to - I don't want to mess up the taste of that muskrat (Laughter.) He was so funny. He said because he, you know, you don't have a lot of places that serve muskrat.

K.F.: Did there used to be a lot of places, though, that would serve it in restaurants?

R.A.: I think a lot of the restaurants did. But, see, I don't think you have as many trappers as you used to have. You really don't. But, yeah, a lot of the restaurants used to serve muskrat.

K.F.: Because I know somebody told me Dayton's still does, but they might be the only one.

R.A.: I think Dayton's, and I think -it's a little restaurant out near as you come into Cambridge. It used to be called Town and Country. And if you look at their board outside, it may say muskrat. I think I've seen it in the newspaper that they do have the muskrat.

K.F.: Yeah, 'cause this is the only area that I've seen the restaurants will serve it.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And then up in Delaware, there's a couple that will too.

R.A.: Okay. Well I know down at Elliott's Island Firehouse, they do a muskrat dinner.

K.F.: Oh, they do?

R.A.: Because Pam and Wiley, I know, Avits (phonetic), and they're from down there, and they usually have third dinner in February because it's usually right before our outdoor show, the week before.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And Pam and Wiley both skin.

K.F.: Right, right.

R.A.: So, you know, I talk to them. And she was telling me how many hundreds of biscuits that they had to make and stuff like that. I was like I can sympathize with you, I know. I know. But it's a really good fundraiser, you know. It brings people out that are curious about the taste that have never actually tried it. Or either they like it and, you know, they want, they want, they just like it as a meal.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: But we did the muskrat and chicken combo just in case, you know, if you don't like muskrat, you don't like it.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: You know. If you go with somebody that does like muskrat, you can have chicken.

You've got a choice. Down that far in the county, you got to give them a choice. (Laughter.) You really do.

K.F.: Tell me a little bit about the church dinner. I know we talked about this the night of the dinner.

R.A.: Right. And we were busy and I could hardly get to talk to you.

K.F.: Exactly, and I didn't have this running either. And a lot of people mentioned that it really was the building of that new structure that has allowed these things to happen more than -

R.A.: Yes. Because before, we just had that one little building where the kitchen stove is at. You know, we just had that one little building. And, see, that was a schoolhouse that was moved from Kerwin's Neck.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: That was a schoolhouse that they moved up.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And they used that for their community hall. And then the church decided to build this building. And it's kind of hard when you've got such a small congregation, and you're wondering, can we afford to do this, you know, not knowing where the funds were going to come from and, you know, go to the bank and get a loan, and you know, but it's brought us, it's brought everybody, you know, the men too. We work so hard. Everybody does. We work so hard in everything we do. And it's brought everybody much closer. And we just work so hard. We have a soup day. We've got a soup day the first of February, and we're doing another muskrat dinner in March. And we just are constantly doing things, and having a good time.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah. Well it looked like it.

R.A.: We do. I think Bonnie told me last night on the phone there was 34 people there from our church that was serving. And that's a lot.

K.F.: That's most of the congregation.

R.A.: That's exactly. On a good day, we have maybe 30 people there, you know, in attendance. So, and my mother is - goes to the church at Hooper's Island. And she'll - whenever we're doing something, because she lived right in a farmhouse right near us, and that's where she grew up, and that's where she went to church. So she always comes over and gives us a hand. She comes and - she'll, you know, if we say we need a cake, or we need this or we need that, and she just pitches right in and does it. And she helps, she helps us serve.

K.F.: Right. Well it seemed like a lot of people were coming back who had been, who had gone in the church, or had gone to it when it was a schoolhouse.

R.A.: Right, yes.

K.F.: And had come back.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: So they were strong ties.

R.A.: yes.

K.F.: And you had mentioned that you guys are now having like one night the guys goes in and play cards or something?

R.A.: Our men get together and play cards. And in February, we're going to have like a family fun night, Bonnie told me last night. We have a newsletter. You've got to see our newsletter. We have a nice church newsletter.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And we do it every month, Bonnie does. And in February, I don't know what night she's picked, it's a Friday night. And they're going to play Karom and Checkers and Dominoes, and the men'll play cards.

K.F.: What is Karom?

R.A.: Karom is with a board, and there's these little round pegs, and you have red and green, and you shoot your color in.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: It's a board game.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: It's an old board game.

K.F.: An old board game.

R.A.: It's an old board game.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: But my son, when he was little, he always played it at my parents' house when he stayed with them. And so he has a Karom board, he has his own Karom board at our house. (Laughter.) But a lot of kids, even, you know, they don't take the time, everything is in this computer age that everything is so electronic and computer minded, that they don't know how to play Dominoes, and they don't know how to play Checkers.

K.F.: Right. And a lot of those games are very strategy oriented, and make you think differently.

R.A.: Yes.

K.F.: So I know I grew up on board games.

R.A.: Yes. It doesn't hurt.

K.F.: It doesn't hurt. And it helps you count too when you're really little.

R.A.: We played Dominoes the last three nights with Justin. We sit down after dinner at night and play a few hands of Dominoes. So it's fun.

K.F.: Yeah. And what is it, is it 58?

R.A.: Yeah, they play 58. And -

K.F.: I've heard so many people tell me there's this like neat card game for this area.

R.A.: Yeah. You're going to have to get our guys to explain to you how they play. They bid against each other, you know. Jimmy came to our house not this past Sunday night, but the Sunday night before, and we had some friends over, Johnny and Joanie, and Joey and Josh, their kids. And it was Justin and Larry and I, and Jimmy and Sharon came in. And so we called Nelson, and the four men all sat down and started playing 58. So it was like after 9:00, they had been playing since like 5:00, and it was like after 9:00 when they got done playing. But they just have a good time and they play.

K.F.: Yeah. I've had a couple people tell me that everybody plays.

R.A.: Yeah. The men play, you know. I don't know exactly. We used to play when I was younger, but I haven't played in so long that I've, you know, there's certain cards that are, you know, score cards, and you have to make your bid or you go in the whole, stuff like that. You've got to get Jimmy, Jimmy or Larry to explain it to you.

K.F.: Okay, okay. So the women don't play 58?

R.A.: Usually, usually not.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: I told Mildred we should have a taffy pull. I told her I had a recipe out of this new cookbook, and I was going to experiment at home and see how it, see how it worked and, you know, do something different.

K.F.: Now how many cookbooks do you have?

R.A.: Oh, gosh, I have too many. Too many. My shelves -

K.F.: Do you have 100?

R.A.: Probably, yeah. I've just got them piled up now.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And is that something you've always collected or -

R.A.: Yeah, I like cookbooks. I like the old cookbooks.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: The real, real old ones. I like looking at those recipes. And some of the ingredients, I've never heard of (Laughter.) I've never heard of some of the ingredients, but it's fun to look at them. But I do

like those Cajun ones, the Justin Wilson and stuff like that. And I, like I said, I like to experiment. The hardest part was trying to make a roux. This pasty stuff, you know, to start when you - usually most of

R.A.: the recipes for those Cajun dishes call to make a roux. So that was a challenge in itself

K.F.: Yeah, it is. Not to burn it, not to make it come out like glue.

R.A.: I know. But now I see - one of the - when I've looked on the Internet, you can find it in one of the Louisiana cooking schools, one of those, they have it in ajar now.

K.F.: Oh.

R.A.: You can buy a jar of it. You can do it the easy way. (Laughter.) But it's fun. I like to cook. I do.

K.F.: You don't have a daughter you can pass this on to?

R.A.: No. But Justin likes, Justin -

K.F.: Does he?

R.A.: Yeah, he's always liked to cook.

K.F.: Oh, good. Okay.

R.A.: So he'll pitch in and help. Doesn't like to clean up, of course. It seems like the worst part, the worst mess that I make is when I'm cooking for this outdoor show, because I mess up so much stuff, you know, and then I'm trying to get it all cleaned up. Trying to do two recipes. What I usually do though, I usually cook my muskrat in a pan. I don't - I usually stick them in the oven and let them bake like, in like a fruit-type sauce so they don't taste like the sage or the muskrat. And then I usually pick all the meat off the bone that I can get. And then, you know, if you're supposed to add shrimp to the recipe or whatever, or sausage or whatever you're supposed to add to the gumbo or jambalaya, sometimes I'll add the sausage or whatever for the flavor, but then I remove it.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

R.A.: And then I add all the muskrat meat to it.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

R.A.: So I usually cook a big pot of muskrat, let it bake, and then I'm preparing the rest of the recipes, the two recipes, getting those ready, and then I'll add, after I take the meat off, I'll just add everything. What I have done before is when - on Friday nights I work at the outdoor show, I usually leave work here early and go home to be there by five when the doors open. And sometimes, it's been 12:00 when I've gotten home. And my son works, and my mother works. We all - my husband would stay - he had a cold one year or something and he stayed home. On the Friday night, it's the pageant and stuff So he's not as interested in that, so a lot of times, he'll stay home. But he goes with us on Saturday for the duck and goose call and all those, you know,

things that they like. And I would put the muskrat, have it all potted down and stick it on the woodstove that night, and he would stay home and he would watch it. So my muskrat would be all nice and tender. You know, it would all already be done for the next morning. So we have done that before.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: But if it's too hot, which it has been the last few years, to use the woodstove to cook on, I'll just stick it in the oven. Or I do put it in the crockpot. Makes it real tender.

K.F.: Oh.

R.A.: You can't cook it too long in the crockpot because it will fall off the bone pretty easy.

K.F.: Right, right. And then I guess you have to strain the bones out or something.

R.A.: Yeah. It's a lot of little bones. You can tell.

K.F.: Yeah, it is.

R.A.: A lot of little bones.

K.F.: And they - somebody last year at the outdoor show pulled out one of the little bones that he called the badminton -

R.A.: And it's shaped just like badminton?

K.F.: Yeah. And he said if the meat falls off that, then it's done.

R.A.: They know.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: They know. It's interesting, the people that come to the outdoor show just to try muskrat. It's fun to watch their first reaction.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I noticed a few people in line last year who were sort of getting it. Don't give me too much.

R.A.: Yeah.

K.F.: But -

R.A.: I used to work the Saturday show too in the kitchen area. I would work the Saturday show, but then when I started competing in the cooking, you know, I had to be home. And then when I started skinning, I had to be home, because they would have rats in the morning. And just getting that last little preparation, skinning that last rat, you know, and just going over it in your mind, it's a big difference when you're home in the garage skinning, and when you're up on the stage with the audience staring at you.

K.F.: Right. I was going to ask you what that feels like because I was very surprised that -

R.A.: The first year, I couldn't block it out.

K.F.: -- everybody up on the stage.

R.A.: The first year, I couldn't block it out. It was a big distraction. But the second year, I was much, much better. I kind of didn't see anything, blocked it all out. So I've gotten better. It's much easier to cook, because you can cook at home and nobody's watching you. (Laughter.) Right?

K.F.: Yes.

R.A.: And the last few years, we have skinned so late that it's, I mean it's almost midnight. You're mentally and physically worn out by then.

K.F.: Right, right. Well, yeah, because I guess last year I was -

R.A.: Okay, can you hold on just a second? Let me grab this.

(OFF RECORD.)

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R.A.: -- whenever we can. So but he just wanted to know what he was supposed to do. I said go fish the traps that you set yesterday, and daddy'll be home soon. And he says bring me a sub. I'm starving. Bring me a sub. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well I thought of a few things regarding the outdoor show. We were talking about what it was like to be on stage.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: I mean they really do set it up like everybody's watching you.

R.A.: They are.

K.F.: And you're up high.

R.A.: They're watching one or the one of us because they're staring right at us.

K.F.: And I'm wondering, can you describe what it's like to kind of be up there? You're not only sort of got all these people watching you, but you're really trying to beat the clock.

R.A.: Yes. It's - one thing that I learned from the very first time that I was up there, you can't even focus on the audience, and you can't, you have to kind of block out the person beside you that's skinning because, you know, you just can't, you have to pretend that they're not even there, even if they get finished a lot faster than you do.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: 'Cause I usually finish last, but it's competing, you know, it's being in the competition. I mean any of us could get a bad rat, and you could get penalties. And if you get penalties, you can't win.

K.F.: Right. And what makes a bad rat?

R.A.: Well, I mean if it's a rat that, you know, sometimes the meat will stick to the hide and won't separate. It's a lot more difficult. And when you've got one that you're fooling with trying to get the meat separated from the hide, then it's more time. It's going to take more time. You can have a pelt that a rat has been fighting, and you've got a tear in the hide. It's not visible at the time, but when you actually skin it, then it's visible, and you can get penalties and you can get disqualified.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: It could happen to the best of us.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: You know, it can always happen.

K.F.: Right, right. Okay. And then what is the process for - I know there was some rule about the rats have to be caught that day, or within a certain many hours -

RA: Well you can't - we had some people that came from the Louisiana Fur Festival years ago, and I think it was Jay Miller, I remember it well, and he would bring the muskrats alive, and he would bring them, put them in a basket, and right before the show, before he was going to skin them, he would just like tap them on the head and then he would skin them. And he would like kill them right then. And, see, if anything's warm, it's going to - the hide's going to come off much faster.

K.F.: Faster, right.

R. A.: Because you've got that warm blood circulating. But, you know, our rats are usually caught either Friday or Saturday. We try to save, I like skinning the little smaller rats because the bigger rats have more fat, and they're tougher, you know. And I like a certain size rat to skin. And the first year that I skinned, my uncle, he saved three small females for me. They told me the

females are a little bit easier to skin. I don't know if that's true or not. I don't have a clue. But they usually save, they'll usually save the smaller females for us to skin.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And they are, I think, much easier to skin. But if a rat has just, you know, if you just caught a rat in the trap and you get ready to skin it, it just peels right off like nothing. You know, the skin comes right off of it. But you know, most of the time, they've been in the marsh for hours, and they put the muskrat in their little pouches on their back or whatever. And, you know, usually it's a lot colder than this, and it's cold. And then you take them into a cold garage and you're trying to skin them, you know. We have the stove in there, but it's, you know, a cement floor and everything, but it's, it's just cold, you know.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: And if it's snow and ice that they've been into down in the water, it's all cold.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: So it's a lot easier to skin a rat that's warm, you know, fresh.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: But sometimes, my uncles will - and my Cousin Phil who will save rats on Friday and Saturday, and then he'll bring all of them, and then we'll look through them and examine them. And my brother or my husband or my uncle will say, you know, these are the best of the lot, or exchange this one for this one, you know, or I've got one that's better than that. We kind of, you know, change them around and decide who's going to skin what.

K.F.: Okay, okay. And -

R.A.: See, my son skins too in the outdoor show.

K.F.: Yes, I remember.

R.A.: He did the nutria, and he does the muskrat setting, he traps, he sets the traps. He competes with the juniors in the trap setting.

K.F.: That, to me, was actually the most dangerous thing.

R.A.: He did it so well last year, and he competed against kids much older than he was, and he did it with such ease last year, and none of his traps went off. And the year before, he had some difficulty with them, but last year he came in first.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, I remember that. I remember watching that whole competition and thinking this seems impossible, because a lot of them were snapping up -

R.A.: I know, they will too.

K.F.: And I just kept thinking you could lose a finger in there or something.

R.A.: You can. You really can. Now my nephew, Dusty, he competes with the beginners.

Now this year, he'll compete against our son, Justin. So Justin and Dusty -

(END SIDE A, tape 235)

(BEGIN SIDE A, tape 236)

R.A.: -- on Hooper's Island, you could borrow any truck that you needed to borrow. No problem at all. And, you know, they do it once in a while if they need to move, but they don't move it far. They just move it around a little bit. I don't know. The main thing I'm going to do is get this muskrat off- so I can get rid of that. Then I'm going to actually start the cooking here. Larry does carpentry work on a couple of houses over there for one of our friends. That's where he's probably going to go for a few hours, but not for long. He's going to want to, like you said, want to get home and take a nap 'cause we know it's going to be -

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K.F.: I thought about that today. Like I wonder if I could sneak a nap in -

R.A.: -- an extra bed. (Laughter.) Just fall right out, I tell you. I get so wound up though, you know, this close that like this morning, I stayed there from five, when they left at five, till seven, a few minutes after seven. But I didn't go to sleep. I was wide awake. I was just kind of there.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Just trying to get these little tiny bones. You know how little these bones are.

K.F.: Oh, I know.

R.A.: Little tiny, tiny, look.

K.F.: Oh, God.

R.A.: Just as tiny as they can be. And I'll have to go through this again. Last year I went through it a couple times to make sure. You really don't want anybody to lose any teeth.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Or choke. I've done that on fish bones before.

R.A.: Yes. We all have. (Laughter.) If you eat fish -

K.F.: Yup.

R.A.: -- it goes with it.

K.F.: Goes with the territory.

R.A.: The same way with muskrat. That's why we - that's why a lot of people don't care for muskrat because of all the small bones. Because usually if you're real, real hungry, you want, you know, you just don't want to have to fool with all that.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: I was talking to Wiley Abbott last night and asking him, he's from Elliott's Island, and they usually - their church usually has a muskrat, the firehouse usually has a muskrat and chicken dinner, and I've been looking for it in the newspaper, but I didn't see it, and I asked him last night. He said the firehouse wasn't going to do one this year, but their church was going to do one. So it's the day after ours next week.

K.F.: Oh, so theirs is the 7^{1st}, and yours is the 6th.

R.A.: I'm glad we got ours in the day before.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: We didn't have a clue that they were having it, that they were having one. I wanted to do this last night, but I just kind of ran out of time. I got the dog and the goat straight this morning, I said well let me get them all back in their kennels, all fed and back in their kennels, and I'll go ahead and do this. But I put, I actually put these in the crockpot yesterday afternoon, before I let to go up to school to work. And Larry kept an eye on it. I just left him a note to just push them down a little bit into the liquid. And I marinated this in a teriyaki sauce, and then I used beef bouillon and duck sauce and just some water. And I don't think I put anything else in it. And I just let them cook in the slow cooker. And then this morning when I got up with Larry and Justin at five, I just turned them back on for a few extra minutes and pushed the other ones back down in there to make sure they were cooked. Some people actually like to pick these little ribs and eat those ribs. That would - they have a lot of patience.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Not I. That little -

R.A.: Now how many muskrats does it take to fill that pot?

K.F.: This is six.

R.A.: Oh, my goodness.

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K.F.: This is six rats. And see when I got home yesterday, see we were going to skin. But they didn't get into the marsh because the tide was late pushing down, and it was after 5:00 when they got home, and I promised them I'd be up at the outdoor show to work at quarter of So I had to run down church and take six of the ones that we had down to church. And so we'll just replace them. And that's why I told Larry to put six back in there because I had swiped them. I didn't know what to do. Time was getting short. (Laughter.) It was 3:00, and no husband, no son, and I said oh, and no rats. I had rats, I had a few rats out there, but they were in the fem. And I said oh, my. Got to get them. It's better to get the rats, you know, it's enough to do - not having to fool with cooking the rats the same day. Because it usually takes me the entire day. I mean I fool with them, spice them up a little bit, and whatever I decide to do. And sometimes, I do change the recipes. You know, I think I - I don't know if it was you that I told, but it was somebody I told that I thought I did Jambalaya and jerky last year, but it wasn't jerky I did last year, it was jerky the year before. It was muskrat barbecue. And I took the meat off the bone and actually made a barbecue sauce, a homemade barbecue sauce, and that's what I did last year, that was one of them. But I did do Jambalaya last year.

(OFF RECORD - TELEPHONE)

K.F.: So Justin's coming over to help Shriver cook today?

R.A.: Look out that front window and see if you see - Shriver's not cooking. He always tells me that every year to get feathers ruffled. See if you see a black truck over there.

K.F.: Chevrolet?

R.A.: Yeah.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: Well Justin's over there.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: Larry must have, Larry's got the car phone in the truck. Let me, let me just call him back real quick and see what he needs.

K.F.: It looks like they're skinning. The shed door's open.

R.A.: They probably are there. Well I forgot Justin's car phone number. I've had a senior moment here and forgot. (Laughter.) I was thinking of somebody else's. It's hard enough remembering one number. Now I know you've got it on, Larry, now if you remember how to answer it.

(OFF RECORD - TELEPHONE)

R.A.: So Justin's over there. See, Thomas actually cooks all the muskrats for the outdoor show. He actually does that.

K.F.: Yeah. He was telling me he usually did that on a Friday night.

R. A.: At midnight when we went to bed last night, the garage was still on -the light was still on.

K.F.: Really?

R.A.: And then he got up at 6:30, got ready to go in the marsh at 6:30 this morning. He's 60 years old himself

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). (Laughter.)

R.A.: I mean he's not a spring chicken here. Not a spring chicken. Let me see. I'm just going to get part of it off. What I'll do is I'll just split up the meat between the two, you know. I like the chili that I made. I've got a homemade recipe for chili, and it was so good. But that year, I

didn't know how many women judges there were going to be and how many men, and I kind of geared it to more men.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And it was two of the judges were women and only one man.

K.F.: Oh.

R.A.: And I never scored with it. And I may eventually go back and do that one again because it's so good. It's with sausage, and just really, really good. Just the regular chili recipe for it was just excellent, all the ingredients. But never scored. And so I try to find out ahead of time how many men judges. If I'm going to go through the trouble of doing something like that again, to see how many men and how many women judges. But sometimes they really don't know. Sometimes if there's somebody that's kind of neutral, they'll kind of pick them. Because you don't want anybody that's got somebody in the contest or anything.

K.F.: Right, right.

R.A.: You really don't want - that's cooking in the contest. You really want to be fair. So usually, sometimes they'll pick somebody that doesn't have any relatives down in this area or not. You know. I know Dan from Spicer's Mill, he has no family down here at all. And his wife doesn't even know what a muskrat looks like, not alone cooking one. So he certainly, I would say he is definitely a neutral person there. Well as you can see, I've got more bones than I've got meat, right?

K.F.: Yes. That's a pretty big pile of bones.

R.A.: Yes. I'll put that in here so the dog can't get hold of it. He would be at the vet next week having bones removed.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: He wouldn't stop until he could eat everyone of them. He loves the livers. We always save the muskrat livers when we're skinning for him. They say it makes their coat real shiny.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: I don't know if it does or not. We let him have a few. He just sits there and patiently waits for the next liver. Mom already cooked her muskrat this morning. I don't know when. She got up at five and went to the firehouse. I don't have a clue when she actually cooked. And she's back at the school this morning.

K.F.: Yeah, she was telling us he schedule for this weekend.

R.A.: The firehouse dinner. She's been at the firehouse since Wednesday, I believe.

K.F.: Yup. Actually, I'm going to go to the firehouse dinner tomorrow.

R.A.: Are you really?

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: Well she asked me to come and work, and I've got a friend that's coming, maybe coming down from Altoona, Pennsylvania. And I told mom, I said mom, if Ellen comes down, I said, she'll get down today because she's in, she works in the health care. She like orders supplies. I don't know if she's a social worker or what she is, but she has - wears multi hats in Altoona, this health care facility that she helps take care of. And I told mom, I said she would not get down today until about 1:00. She drives for five hours to get here. I said I've got to spend some time with Ellen if she comes. So I told her, I said mom, I will try. I said do you remember I have to go back to work Monday morning? (Laughter.) Yes, she said, but we're really short this time. And I said well, mom, we'll see. I may just leave it at that. We'll just see. So she took that,

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she's always down here helping us at St. John's, so I would really like to - if I have any energy left, I'll try to get over there and give her a hand. Have you ever been to one of the firehouse dinners?

K.F.: No, I haven't. But she was telling us about it, and she said that I should come. And then I was talking to W.T. Ruark and his wife trying to get up with them for the crab picking project.

R.A.: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

K.F.: And they were like just come to the firehouse dinner on Sunday, and you can see us then.

R.A.: Yeah. They'll let you, when they start picking and everything, they'll let you come and do that. They're really good. They're - they kind of spearhead the fire department. They do the fishing tournament. The fishing tournament that we have in June is the W.T. Ruark Fishing Tournament.

K.F.: You've got a visitor.

R.A.: He supplies all the - C.J., hey buddy. Yeah, look at that. It's our next door neighbor, C.J. He told me, he just set the ditch going up to Gootee's, and he told me, he said there's a rat using that ditch. He said do you think Justin would mind if I set a trap in there? So he set six traps. Six traps and one rat's not bad. (Laughter.) His mother was at work yesterday, and I was off in the afternoon, so he kind of stayed over here for a little while. I said C.J., honey, I would love to talk to you, but there are some things I've just got to do. (Laughter.) So he caught one rat. That will make him happy. Put sugar in this tea because I believe we'll need some more tea later. But, yeah, the firehouse dinners are really nice, and a lot of the - all the firehouses down here are all volunteer, so you got to support them. They come when they're called.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: And it seems to have been a lot this week. They've been out a lot this week, all over, on both ends.

K.F.: Oh, really?

R.A.: Yeah. Couple fires, and quite a few ambulance calls. Several - two or three in some days. So they've been busy. Okay, now we're going to start cooking. Let me see if there's any dry places left around here. I don't know which one I'm going to start first. I think I'm going to start that, I think I'm going to do this one first. Let me see which one calls for the shrimp.

K.F.: Now are you allowed to have other meats in with the muskrat?

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: Yeah, we're allowed to do anything. There's no rules.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: We're allowed - just so we have muskrat in there, we're okay. Let me get my big flying pan because I believe I'm going to need it here. I don't have a clue what I'm going to put the other one in. I'll have the kitchen, the entire kitchen to clean up when I get done here. (Laughter.) Let me see. I may do this other one because I've got to do my roux and stuff. But you know what I have to do, where's my shrimp, I've got to get my shrimp peeled. I didn't even get a chance to get those done. Let me see. Let me see which one is going to be the easiest to do first and which one's not. I just decided last couple days what I'm going to do. I didn't have a clue. I'll do this one first. Butter and flour.

K.F.: That looks like me on Thanksgiving morning, trying to cook for, you know, your parents and everything.

R. A.: It's unreal. When we had Thanksgiving dinner here the last time, which wasn't last year, but the year before, there was 38 of us.

K.F.: Oh, you're kidding.

R.A.: Not all at one time, but gradual. Finally ended up with 38 at the end of the day.

K.F.: Now how many turkeys do you have to cook for that Rhonda?

R.A.: We just, we did two smaller ones. Not them real big -

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: I guess I better get these shrimp peeled here. I'm just going to put these in here. I'm just going to leave these in here a little bit to give them a little bit of flavor, and then I'll remove them and add the muskrat. And last year when I started cooking, I just kept adding more stuff. It was really hard, it's really hard to keep a recipe when you keep adding stuff, you know. The right amounts here, it's a little difficult to do. We can actually, you know, it's kind of our whatever we, you know, choose to do. Have you ever made a roux before?

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: A roux's with the flour and the oil.

K.F.: Sometimes mine work and sometimes they don't.

R.A.: That's right. And then you think - well the first time I made one, I said I don't know if I'm doing this right or not, but I'm going to do it my way. Nobody's here to tell me whether I'm doing it right or wrong. And I don't, I don't watch a lot of TV, so I don't get to watch them actually doing a lot of the stuff on TV, so -

K.F.: Sometimes that's the only TV I ever watch are the cooking shows.

R.A.: Larry likes TV. We have the satellite, and he likes the western channels and the military channels, stuff like that. But Justin likes the game show network and things like that. But I tell you, I just, I do crafts too. A lot of my crafts are down - I just, by the time I, well all winter, by the time I get home from work at 5:30, and then I do dinner, and then it's skinning time. I have the goat and the dog out for a little while playing with them, have to spend time with them. And a lot of nights it's 10:00, and I think my eyes are just not going to be, I'm not going to be able to sit there and paint. (Laughter.) I've done a little, but not as much as I would like to do. I just have not had time.

K.F.: Do you want me to give you a hand?

R.A.: Sure.

K.F.: If you want to, I'll peel.

R.A.: I'm going to - I wanted to do this last night too, but by the time I got home, I said - I'm just going to put some in there, I don't think I'm going to put all of them.

K.F.: These are nice big shrimp.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We get them, we get them in bulk, 50 pound boxes.

K.F.: You're kidding?

R.A.: No.

K.F.: From where?

R.A.: North Carolina.

K.F.: Oh, my gosh.

R.A.: W.T. Ruark.

K.F.: Oh, that's right. Your mom said that he does that.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We get 50 pounds at a crack. So we get them, and we split them. We usually get about 40 pounds for us, because we usually - I think mom bagged them up in two pounds in a bag. So at least all winter, we can have something different. Not too bad. See I've got my peppers. The only thing I don't have chopped up is my onions. I came home early yesterday to get some of the vegetables done because it does take a long time to -

K.F.: Chop all that up.

R.A.: It does. It's like making homemade sauce. It takes longer. The cooking time is really short, 'cause we make homemade sauce in the summer.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R. A.: But it takes forever to get everything diced. That's what takes a long time. I've got to get the onion cut up before I can start this one 'cause I've got to - I like muskrat with tomatoey base because it really does make it taste good. But the - I don't think cheese complements it, but I think tomato stuff does. Have you ever had muskrat with cheese?

K.F.: No.

R.A.: I just don't think it goes well together. The flavor is just not there. I think this is probably going to be enough, Kelly. I'll just throw the rest back in the refrigerator and fix them for them at some point. I said we're going to have everything messed up in this kitchen today. I have to get some of it put back together or I'll die when I get home tonight. (Laughter.) If I have to look at this kitchen all messed up, I would just about scream.

K.F.: Now the cooking competitions, do they let other people taste the food besides the judges?

R.A.: Oh, yeah. When you're done, it's open season.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

R.A.: It's usually nothing left.

K.F.: I bet.

R.A.: You usually - let's see, am I going to use this one? No, I'm not going to use this one. I'm going to make my roux. Yeah, it's open season once they - once the judges are finished. They open the doors, people stand in line just waiting, and away they go. They get to enjoy it all. It's, you know, usually it's like maybe 10 or 12 dishes. Sometimes it's less. I don't think it's been more than that. Not usually. Celery, onion.

K.F.: And how often do you all eat muskrat -

R.A.: Well we have it -

K.F.: -- on a weekly basis or whatever.

R.A.: -- at church, but I don't fix it an awful lot here because we have market for it -

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And ours usually gets sold. I don't usually - maybe once or twice a year just to get your fill of it. It's like crabs the first part of the season. You know, you really want that steamed crab and everything. And then it just, after you've had it once, then you just - you can do without it. But no, we don't eat it a whole lot. We really don't. Onion, pepper, celery, garlic and bay leaves. Bay leaves. There. It's not my new can of bay leaves. I hate these when they get all broke up. Larry said he thinks I put them in there to choke people. (Laughter.) Apparently, he gets hold of them every now and then.

K.F.: Well my husband always says he gets them every time.

R.A.: Yeah. When I do crab soup and all, that's what I usually, it's usually in there. I'm trying to think what I use to stir this with constantly.

K.F.: Now what do other people usually make for the specialty category?

R.A.: I use -sometimes there's nobody that cooks against me, but there was one man that did last year, but I don't know what he made, because see, when we take our dishes down there, we're not allowed to stay in the area.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: As a courtesy, we leave. I just take it down and just leave. And one year, I never even got to take it down because I was busy doing something else. I got somebody else to take it down. That was one of the years that I was actually, I actually worked the Saturday morning show, and I said this is too much. Then I got home, and I was trying to get the dish done, you know, or I did it in the morning before I actually went up there to work. And you can't really, can't really work the show and try to do this all at the same time.

K.F.: Now, see, you make a beautiful roux.

R.A.: Where's Justin Wilson? (Laughter.) I don't know. Really a roux, what it actually does is help to thicken it.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Sometimes if I can't get it thick enough, the way that I really, because this is how it should be, I use a little bit of cornstarch and water, just a little bit to thicken it up. I've done that before. I thought to myself this can't be right the first time, it was just as black as it could be. I said I must be doing something wrong. I think actually, the first time I actually made one, I actually started over, because I said I must've read this wrong. That's what it is. I like to experiment when I'm cooking. I do it with just general food, not just the duck or goose or deer or whatever. Ask Larry and Justin, they never know what's going to be put on the table. And guess what? They eat it. (Laughter.) Let that simmer till it starts to turn, then I'll put these bay leaves over here so I don't lose them, and start on some onion. Let's see. Got to get that onion. See, mom has her dish all done, and what she'll do, she'll take it to school with her, and then she'll take a break and heat it up and send it down to the kitchen, send it down for the contest, but like I said, I don't have a clue when she did hers. I don't have a clue. She must've done it in her sleep, 'cause I don't know, what little bit she got. (Laughter.) Couldn't have been much.

K.F.: Yeah, she told us she was making dozens and dozens of pies.

R.A.: Oh, she's not - they make like 115 pies on Saturday morning for tomorrow. And guess what? They sell them all. They're all gone.

K.F.: I bet. I bet.

R.A.: They do the free pies, they do every bit of it.

K.F.: Now what are they serving tomorrow at the -

R.A.: Oh, they do, they do - not muskrat. They do oysters, they do oyster puffs.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: Not fritters like they had last night at the thing. Old Salty's does puffs.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And I think Old Salty's does fritters. But they do puffs and chicken. Fried chicken. And I think they have string beans. String beans and what else, potato salad, coleslaw, and all the homemade desserts, and we have bread. They have good bread. She said because a lot of people are sick, they don't have as much help.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: So they're a little short tomorrow. Somebody told me that if you put your onions in the refrigerator, that your eyes won't water. These have been in the refrigerator. We'll soon find out.

K.F.: I've heard a couple different ways to prevent that. So far, nothing's worked on me.

R.A.: I know. I used to work at - right up here by Gootee's Marina, there was a little restaurant called Musement Restaurant (phonetic), and I used to work there when I was 14. And I went to work there, and that's where I learned to do some cooking, from Mildred who is at our church. Mildred, and I worked with all of her sisters, Collie and Irene. We all worked together. It was like a lot of the Gootees were there. And I learned, that's where I learned to cook soft crabs was there from Mildred.

K.F.: Okay.

R. A.: I still cook them like it today.

K.F.: Well how do you cook them then?

R.A.: Well I - I use this House of Autry. We used to just use flour and season it, but it's much easier to use the House of Autry, the seafood breader. Have you ever heard of it?

K.F.: No. Huh-uh (negative).

R.A.: Oh, it's great. And Food Lion in Cambridge does carry it now. I'll show you the bag, it's great. It's already got everything mixed in there. And then what I do is I just lift the little- I've got it here, I just lift the little back shells, and then I put, I put the - I lift the back shells and I put a little bit of wet mustard and Old Bay underneath of it.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: You know, the little back shells when you lift them up?

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: That's what I use. I use this House of Autry.

K.F.: And then bread them and fry them?

R.A.: Yeah, that's it.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And it's already seasoned, you know. It's got a really good - I use it for shrimp if I'm deep frying shrimp. Use it for everything. It's great.

K.F.: And Mildred and he sisters were the cooks at the restaurants?

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yup. And I used to do onions a lot when we, you know, certain things you do if you work at a restaurant, certain things you do when you first get in there in the morning and, you know, getting the coleslaw and stuff grated and stuff. And those were the kind of things that I did. But I teamed how to cook soft crabs from Mildred. And never had any complaints. I know Justin's not out there cooking muskrat. Each year, Shriver tells him that he's going to, tells him he's going to cook against me. I say go ahead. It's open season. He just does it to ruffle my feathers. I know that's what he does. But we'll let him do it. He's older than I am, so we just let him do it.

K.F.: Right. (Laughter.)

R. A.: He can get away with it. A whole cup of onion, I thought it was. But I'm not crying, that's unusual.

K.F.: That's good. Maybe I'll have to try that one. Do they last longer in the refrigerator?

R.A.: Yeah, I think so.

K.F.: Mine always turn to sprout little green -

R.A.: Mine too. I've got them in the utility room, but I just got these, and I stuck them right in the refridge 'cause I knew I'd be dicing them up. Sometimes when I'm cooking from a recipe, I just - you know how it is when you open something in the box, and you really need to read the directions first, and you don't do it and you just start to put stuff together?

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: And nothing goes right. Sometimes I can get like that with recipes. I just want to jump ahead, you know, want to hurry up and get it done. I think we're all like that in a sense.

K.F.: I always joke about my dad because he'll, you know, he'll buy something like a, you know, VCR or microwave, you know, whatever.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Something that comes with instructions.

R.A.: Right.

K.F.: And he'll toss them in the trash, and never look at them, and then wonder why this thing doesn't work. (Laughter.)

R.A.: Larry finally got to the point he would say if you buy anything and it needs to be put together, I'm telling you the truth. If you take it out of the box, I'm not touching it. (Laughter.) Because what I would do is I'd try to get a few things done, you know, ahead of time, and it would always be backwards or whatever. It took him more time to go back and do what I had - undo what I had done. He says I swear, if you take it out of the box, I'm not touching it. So I finally learned, after 25 years, just leave it in the box, no matter how bad I want to take it out, just leave it.

K.F.: I've got to save some film for -

R.A.: For tonight.

K.F.: The skinning competition tonight.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: You know, last year when I came to the show, I took three or four rolls of film, and I turned them in to have them developed.

R.A.: Do you have somebody that does that for you, or is it -

K.F.: Yeah. We have a - well last year during the outdoor show, we had a place in Salisbury that was doing it, and they called me like the next day and said we're very sorry, but we ruined one of your film rolls, and I knew -

R.A.: Which one it was.

K.F.: Yup. I just knew it. So I decided we'd start working with a new film company. So we got a new one.

R.A.: Excellent choice.

K.F.: Yes. And they haven't ruined anything yet, and I'm just hoping like tonight won't be -

R.A.: Tonight won't be the one, huh? I'm going to dump all this stuff in right in there. Half a cup -

K.F.: Shrimp -

R.A.: Let me see - I wish I had enough for that next recipe. I was hoping I would. I'm just kind of getting close here, as you can see, I'm not being real accurate. I can change it around in a minute. Well here's mamma, as we speak, coming through the door with her recipe. She's examining the rats. Hello, mamma.

K.F.: Hi, Mrs. Flowers.

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R.A.: You got yours done? Okay, all right.

N.F.: This is something extra Bonnie gave -

R.A.: Couldn't get her this morning. I tried to. I tried to call her.

N.F.: -- I thought about - she told me how these are, it's cabbage (inaudible discussion.)

R.A.: Kelly, dip your finger in it. Try it. I think it tastes really good. She's got a good taste. Cabbage and onions.

K.F.: Sweet. It's good.

N.F.: Got your heads on -

R.A.: Oh, my. Try a little bit of the meat. Look, she's got a layer of meat.

N.F.: It's just a layer of meat down. It's just the parts that I pulled off.

K.F.: Good, isn't it. That makes it real sweet.

R.A.: Ma, you're okay, ma. You're cooking now, aren't you? I told Kelly, I don't know when you had time. It must've been in your sleep.

K.F.: Well something -

R.A.: Does she look refreshed?

K.F.: Beautiful as a daisy.

N.F.: I had -

R.A.: I told her, I told her where you had been.

K.F.: How many pies have you made this morning?

N.F.: It will be close to 100 when we get finished. They're not finished.

R.A.: Aren't you glad we gave you this for your birthday? These are so nice. Have you ever used them?

K.F.: No, Huh-uh (negative).

R.A.: Kelly, they have a hot thing, and a cold thing, and you just heat the little pad in the microwave or freeze, and I'm not kidding, for four hours, this -

K.F.: Wow.

R. A.: And it doesn't spill either.

N.F.: So I thought I better bring this down here, let you take it. I won't be out of the kitchen, even, even when they get ready to judge this, I still won't be out of the kitchen.

R.A.: No, you won't.

N.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Ma, where's Dusty?

N.F.: -- in the marshes.

RA.: Okay, just checking on him.

N.F.: He's in the marsh. So -

R.A.: All right.

N.F.: See you all later.

K.F.: Okay.

N.F.: I've left Eva (phonetic) there doing hers.

R.A.: Oh, she's still home?

N.F.: I guess she's still home. I don't know.

R.A.: She didn't come up with you?

N.F.: She's had hers down to -

R.A.: Carly.

N.F.: Carly.

R.A.: Mom, Justin had, they had 10 rats this morning - (phone ringing), answer that, 10 yesterday and 10 today.

(Mrs. Flowers on phone:)

N.F.: Hello. Okay. Yeah. Oh. Yeah, we have crab cakes, plenty of them. Got crab cakes, oysters, vegetable beef soup, vegetable crab, oyster stew, and I think they got a pot of chicken soup.

R.A.: They do?

N.F.: Yeah. Now we have hamburgers and cheeseburgers.

R.A.: And hot dogs.

N.F.: Hot dogs. Yeah. Oh. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Uh-huh (Affirmative). Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. Yes, have crab cakes too. All right then. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Bye. Rhonda, she was looking for me.

R.A.: Oh, good. She found you.

N.F.: Yeah. See if it was, if they had crab cakes.

R.A.: Rebecca Shockley? (phonetic)

N.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Crystal said she needed to have ours, she didn't know about the crab cakes.

R.A.: Oh, okay. (Laughter.)

N.F.: All right, then, I'll see you in the morning.

R. A.: I'll see you whenever we get there.

N.F.: All right.

R.A.: Don't look for me early

N.F.: Well, I won't. Well you still have to be up there in time to take this.

R.A.: I'm not coming till about quarter of four.

N.F.: Okay. But I will be back in the kitchen.

R.A.: You'll still - what time do you leave the kitchen, five?

N.F.: I won't leave the kitchen till about, I don't know, 5:30, 6:00.

R.A.: Have you seen any of the displays yet?

N.F.: No.

R.A.: See, I haven't either.

N.F.: No, I didn't see them either.

R.A.: I couldn't tell you what's there. Okay.

N.F.: See you all later.

K.F.: Bye-bye.

R.A.: Okey-doke. That tasted good.

K.F.: That was delicious. That was the cabbage and the onions sweeten it right up.

R.A.: No kidding. It really did, didn't it.

K.F.: I think that's a winner.

R.A.: It's liable to be a first place winner. I just don't know when she had time to do it. She's truly amazing to live by herself I tell you. She really does well.

K.F.: Did she tell you we went to the wrong house when we went to see her?

R. A.: No. Where did you go, to Joyce's next door?

K.F.: You know the little road that turns left just before you get to your mom's house?

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: We went - and then there was a house that matched her description exactly.

R.A.: Was it my brother's house?

K.F.: It said Flowers on the mailbox.

R. A.: Oh, it was my brother's, it's my brother.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: That's where he lives.

K.F.: And we knocked on the door, and a woman came out -

R.A.: Theresa.

K.F.: And we said we're looking for Nellie, and she's like no, wrong house, got to go over there.

R.A.: The ridge back where mom lives, all back there, every house was Flowers. They call it Flowers' ridge.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: So you can't, can't go wrong.

K.F.: Can't go wrong. (Laughter.)

R.A.: If they know who she is, they'll find her. They know who she is, you won't have any problem, but yeah, that's Flowers' ridge. Now my brother's trapped three otters this year. But see, we didn't set any otter traps because they didn't, we really - the fur market's really tight. I don't know what we're going to do with these hides. Justin's got them all stretched in the garage.

K.F.: Yeah, I saw them.

R.A.: He's real faithful, I tell you, about doing all that stuff, but I just don't know where we're ever going to, we have to go to Delaware to sell them, and they said 46 cents.

K.F.: Oh, gosh, that's worse than last year.

RA.: Justin would do it for a nickel, though, `cause he loves it. See, he's got it in his blood. He loves it. Kind of hard once they get anything in their blood like that.

K.F.: Wonder if there's some place in like New York or somewhere that would -

R.A.: I have to do a little bit of research on the Internet -

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: You know, I don't know. Not getting much for them. We only averaged a dollar, about a dollar and a quarter last *year* is all we averaged. We didn't average much at all.

K.F.: That's really unusual because, you know, fur's come back in fashion on rims of coats and sleeves and stuff

R.A.: Yes. I don't know. Let me see. My bay leaves. That's for you, Larry. (Laughter.) This is about 10 minutes here. I may add a little bit of beef stock or something and let it simmer. I think that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to let it simmer a little bit more. I'm going to add one more ingredient. Do you ever use this for cooking, chicken stock and beef stock.

K.F.: I have the little cubes, but I've never seen it -

R.A.: Oh, yeah.

K.F.: That's great.

R.A.: I've got chicken stock like it too.

K.F.: Oh, really?

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R.A.: When I do a cream of crab soup, I use the chicken stock. I'm just going to let that simmer. Actually, get the rest of these ingredients done.

K.F.: Now besides muskrat, what is the local dish that this area would be famous for?

R. A.: Probably chicken. Cabbage, kale, that kind of stuff, collards, collard greens, stewed tomatoes.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R. A.: Not a lot of the -when I was little, we never had potatoes a la gratin and scalloped potatoes. We always either had -we basically had mashed potatoes or French fries. I'm trying to think. Not much potato salad. But basically- and dumplings. Dumplings.

K.F.: Slick dumplings?

R.A.: Yeah. The slippery ones. (Laughter.) Those slippery ones, you're not kidding. Mom makes dumplings, and duck and stuff like that. Duck is a real, duck is real easy to fix. It's like chicken, almost, but a lot of duck and dumplings.

K.F.: Oh, duck and dumplings.

R.A.: Well, see, we do them in different - we do the, cook the ducks and then use the essence to make the slippery dumplings.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: See, we usually make our - do our own homemade dumplings and roll them out with a rolling pin and cut them. That's what we call slippery dumplings.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

R. A.: And that kind of stuff Mashed potatoes and French fries and stuff we always had, but not scalloped potatoes, not a lot of macaroni and cheese. I was trying to think some of the stuff that we grew up on. One time, my mother, my mother left my cousin to watch us, and she was like, she's two years older than we are. Today's her birthday - and they had to come in town for something, and she was supposed to be watching us. She went in the freezer and got these pi77ards and livers out. And she thought they were chicken livers and gizzards, and they were duck livers and gi77ards. And they were so strong, you know, but she made us eat them.

(Laughter.) She wouldn't let us get up until we ate them, so we had to eat them. And when we got home, we told mom, we said she fixed these chicken livers and gizzards, and she made us, we ate them, and they were real strong tasting. Mom said well they weren't chicken, they were duck livers and gizzards. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Now do you ever -

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

R. A.: -- you know. Let me put that in the trash can.

K.F.: That does smell really good.

R.A.: It's cooking now. Get those vegetables a little bit done, and I'm going to add some more stuff Italian. It's getting a good smell to it, doesn't it?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: I'm going to put these down here `cause I'm going to be needing them a lot. I'm just going to take it out. Now this I don't measure. I'm just going to, whenever the mood strikes me, you know.

K.F.: All right, Rhonda, which of those products is the best one?

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R.A.: I don't have a clue. I like the white pepper, and my cayenne. Where's my cayenne? Here we go, cayenne. It's over here. I just kind of experiment, you know. I just buy the stuff and just kind of do whatever. I just add, don't measure, that's bad. (Laughter.) Let me see. Tomatoes, salt, and cayenne. I'm not going to add as much salt as it's saying. I don't want it to be real salty. But you can buy those little tiny things of that chicken broth and the other so you don't have so much waste.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Because sometimes you don't need a whole can or whatever.

K.F.: Right. Now this is interesting. You're not using any kind of measuring.

R.A.: No.

K.F.: Just your own little -

R.A.: It says a teaspoon, but I'm not going to use a teaspoon, because this other stuff has got a lot of-

K.F.: Salt in it.

R.A.: Salt in it.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: I just want to be careful here. I don't want to over-salt it because I'd have to use more tomatoes probably to - I'm just going to put that right in there. I'm going to be smart here, 'cause this is the next thing I'm going to add. I'm just going to put this right in here and dump the whole thing in. How much cayenne? Yeah, that looks like about a fourth of a teaspoon.

Whoops, I'm going to make it really, maybe that came off of there for that reason. Maybe it was too much. It just said a fourth of a teaspoon. I think, though, with that - with that little bit of that other seasoning, that would be probably enough.

K.F.: Now have you ever had any of the Louisiana people bring you cookbooks -

R.A.: My brother bought one in the auction at night, when they had the auction, he bought a hat, and a tee shirt, and a cookbook. And I did give Helen Peele some of my recipes, and she was supposed to give them to them, they wanted them for the cookbook, but I don't know if they ever actually got in or not. Don't have a clue 'cause I didn't get to see those cookbooks. They may have used it, and they may not have used it. So unless you have a real Cajun judge, you know, they don't really know. Because a lot of people cook plain here, they don't cook this, you know, the Cajun type stuff. So they won't never know if I'm right or wrong. (Laughter.) That's what I kept thinking about. They'll never know if I'm right or wrong. So I can add anything I actually want to add. Well I've just about got all of that ingredients taken care of Flour, margarine - pepper, celery, garlic, and then bay leaves, tomatoes, salt, cayenne, shrimp and some parsley. And then see what I'm going to do is I'm going to remove the shrimp when I get done, and then I'm going to add the muskrat, just let it simmer.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Then I'm going to hold up on that one. Just actually stop right in the middle, and before I get ready to take up, I'm just going to add the parsley and reheat it because I don't want that - I want that parsley, it says add parsley and serve immediately over cooked rice.

K.F.: Right, right.

R.A.: So I'm going to add the parsley right at the very end before we go. And that one's going to be done.

K.F.: And do you have to cook some rice to take with you?

R.A.: Yeah. I'm just going to - I just use the Success Rice, the boiling bags for 10 minutes.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: It's much easier. Easier to clean up. (Laughter.) And nobody knows. I certainly hope this other recipe calls for chopped green onions 'cause I certainly did chop them up. And then where we at? There. This other one will take a little bit longer. For this other one, I'm going to start with bacon, and I'll put a little bit of bacon in the pan, and a little bit of that sausage. That's what I'm going to start with. Here's green onions here. Yeah, smoked sausage. Got to make another roux in just a minute. Well, see, here's this other one that I was going to use. See, it's jambalaya rat.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: But then, then I just worried about it being therefor half an hour -

K.F.: They'll get soggy.

R.A.: I know they will. I just feared it. Look, I even bought them. They're in the refrigerator. I'll have to eat them next week with ham and cheese. But I just knew that they - I wanted to do it, but you could do it right there as a demonstration and serve it right then, but you cannot do it, I think, and let it sit around, nothing like that. So I'll file it and keep it, come back to it at a later date. I usually start cooking early because I never know how long it's going to take me. Sometimes I just add more because I don't like the taste of it, and I'll add a little bit of this, and a little bit of that. It's like actually re-cooking it all over. And then here I am trying to write this stuff down. I said if anybody ever asks me for this recipe, I'll never be able to - I had to cook one actually all over again in order to write it down in order to know what I put in it. Didn't have a clue. Didn't have a clue what I had done.

K.F.: My mother-in-law makes me do that. (Laughter.) 'Cause she'll come over for dinner, and she'll say oh, can I have the recipe for this? And I'll say I don't have one. I just, this is what was in the refrigerator.

R.A.: That's it. (Laughter.) And when I fix deer, I actually clean the refrigerator out. I'll take fruit juices, like cherry juice, if there's pineapple in there. Whatever's in there.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

R.A.: I just dump it all in and give it a fruity taste. So they say well how did you cook this? I say don't ask. I fixed deer the last little dinner we had down at church. It was just - it was just a social event, it wasn't a meal you were serving. But I fixed deer in the crockpot. And some of the men kind of knew what it was, but the women didn't know what it was. And my sister-in-law ate it here one time and thought it was - swore it was roast beef. She didn't know. She didn't have a clue, until after I told her, 'cause she don't like deer. (Laughter.) That's what dad said, when they were in India in the service, he said he ate rattlesnake. He said you know, this isn't bad, what is it, and they told him rattlesnake, and he said that was it. He said I got sick instantly. I wish muskrat didn't have rat, you know, 'cause it does look like a rat.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: But maybe if it was a muskcat or something, maybe people, they say that word rat just turns them off.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: So I do think it's - we could get his name changed a little, it wouldn't be so hard to digest.

K.F.: You could call them marsh rabbit.

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R.A.: Yes, they do that. Not too much though. I think I'm ready to add these tomatoes. These are homemade, these are canned tomatoes from the summer. We do our own canning.

Applesauce, beets, tomatoes, pickles, and whatever else comes.

K.F.: Now where do you all plant your -

R.A.: Justin has a garden back here. And then I take - he has a little bit of kale still in there.

It's not much, but then I take Molly's snicker doodles and put them in the garden, and then we just - 'cause she eats sweet feed. She eats goat chow and sweet feed, and the hay. She eats the real good stuff. And we just, and then he puts, we put some crab trash and stuff in there in the summertime, we hold that in there for the calcium. He usually has a beautiful garden. Getting some color to it now. Just think, Kelly, you'll get to try it before you get there. So if there's nothing left at the end -- (Laughter.)

K.F.: I'll know.

R.A.: Either they'll like it or they won't like it. There will be plenty left, or there won't be anything left, right?

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: I don't know. There's usually not much left 'cause if it's just one dish left down there and the rest of them are kind of gone, it doesn't matter to them. They'll try it whether they like it or not because they just wanted to say I tried it. It goes really, really quick. I don't know if Senator Malkus will be there tonight or not. I didn't hear any rumors of that. Did you get to see - he was here last year.

K.F.: No, I didn't see him.

R.A.: He's one of the original founders.

K.F.: Of the outdoor show?

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: Oh.

R.A.: Decided to - do you know how it all got started?

K.F.: No. Huh-uh (negative).

R.A.: The wintertime, it was a lot of farmers and trappers and stuff. And what he wanted to do, they wanted to have something to do in the wintertime for a fun event.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And this is what they started doing. They started skinning muskrat. They decided to have this outdoor show, and that's how it all got started. They would skin the rats. I think - I can't remember how much mom says she got for skinning, the first outdoor show.

K.F.: Now how did the beauty pageant get attached to the outdoor show?

R.A.: I don't know if that was always there or not.

K.F.: I think - Tom Flowers showed me some pictures of ladies in fur bathing suits.

R.A.: Yeah, yeah, it's a muskrat bathing suit. Yeah.

K.F.: So that was always part of the -

R.A.: I don't know if it was at the very beginning, but later, it got into there and they were out in the snow. It was three of them, and they had the muskrat - they were like a two-piece bathing suit. Not a bikini, but a two-piece bathing suit.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And a few years back, my cousin modeled it.

K.F.: Oh, really?

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R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). They still have the bathing suit. Somebody actually still owns it.

K.F.: Somebody still has it.

R.A.: And it was modeled a few years back. I want to say, it's been since it's been back down in South Dorchester, because it used - the show did go to Cambridge.

K.F.: So did it start down here, and then move to Cambridge and then move back?

R.A.: No. It was at the old armory, I think, is where it was at.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: Those newspaper articles there say a little bit about where it was at.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: It's in buildings that I don't remember 'cause they were since torn down.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: I think it was the old - I don't know if it was the arcade or the armory, or the theater or something.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: There was a lot more there then than what it is now. The buildings have kind of left us. If somebody from Louisiana comes and looks at this and they say that's not Creole -- (Laughter.) So hopefully, they won't get down to that area when this is all going on.

K.F.: They probably will. (Laughter.)

R.A.: I don't know. I don't know if they do or not 'cause like I said, I'm never down there. So I don't have a clue. Don't have a clue. My husband thinks he's going to get home this afternoon and get to take a nap. He's dreaming. Did you talk to your husband and see how - what's wrong with your cat?

K.F.: Well they don't know. They think it's a lung problem, but she couldn't breathe. She spent a night in an oxygen tent, I mean if you can imagine a cat doing that. She's not that old. She's maybe 10.

R.A.: Gosh.

K.F.: We got her out of an alley.

R.A.: She doesn't have asthma or anything.

K.F.: No, that was -

R.A.: It's not an asthma type stuff, allergy?

K.F.: No, that was the first thing they thought. We said nope. So they don't, they don't know what the problem was, but they've given her a bunch of antibiotics.

R.A.: Scary.

K.F.: She had fluid, like a sac had formed on the outside of her lung and filled with fluid, and it was of course, like compressing her lungs. And they were Eke -

R.A.: -- what was that? They don't know.

K.F.: Yeah, that was the thing. We sent her to this special vet, and -

R.A.: My uncle takes his dog to a special vet up near Washington. It's a real big animal hospital there, and he spent megabucks.

K.F.: Well, yeah.

R.A.: Megabucks for her, she was losing her eyesight. She's an old sheltie sheepdog. And we spent megabucks. And guess what, she still lost her - she has to follow you from room to room. You have to keep talking so she can keep following.

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K.F.: Yup. She spent a couple days in the ICU, and my husband and I just sort of said well I guess that's a trip to Hawaii to see our little niece out the window. (Laughter.)

R.A.: I know. I know. You have a new little niece?

K.F.: We have a two-year old niece, and my sister and her husband are in the Navy, and they got stationed in Hawaii last year. So, of course, we were dreaming of going -

R.A.: That's good for you but bad for you. I know. That's an ideal place, right?

K.F.: Trip of a lifetime. So, you know, we had said we'd go this October, this coming October. And now we're like we're going to have to save up more money now.

R.A.: It's not cheap, though. At least you have a place to stay when you get there. That's a consolation.

K.F.: Right. And the military gets all these discounts in Hawaii because, you know, things are so expensive there.

R.A.: Right, right. They're very expensive.

K.F.: So we were looking forward to, you know, all it would really cost would be the -

R.A.: Your airfare.

K.F.: Airfare. Which isn't cheap. But -

R.A.: Maybe they'll come up with some good deals. Hopefully.

K.F.: I know. That's what we're hoping.

R.A.: Wendy Graham's mother, Mrs. Lee, lives in Hawaii. And her sister, Joanne, lives there, and when she's here for Christmas, she says if you ever come to Hawaii - wishful thinking, wishful thinking. I don't know if I could get Larry strapped down on a plane that long or not. He did go to Alaska though.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Great.

R.A.: He did Alaska with no cigarettes. He's almost stopped smoking now, so it's - yeah, he did Alaska. That was a long 17 hours, I think, from one airport to the other and change. When he, they went, they left Washington and they went to Atlanta, and Larry said where can you smoke a cigarette. They said the next state. Larry hasn't traveled a lot, and he thought they were serious. But they sent him all the way down to these other terminals, and he was afraid he wouldn't get back in time. So he said, I just felt like I could just chew it or something. (Laughter.) He wouldn't dare leave Alan 'cause he was afraid he'd get separated from him, and he never would find him. Alan would be in Alaska before he got there. That's the only place Larry's been that before he left there, he said - he told me, he said put a for-sale sign on the house, we're moving. It's so pretty there, all the glaciers and stuff The pictures are pretty.

K.F.: And you didn't go with him?

R.A.: No. Huh-uh (negative). I stayed home with Justin.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: He went with a friend of ours, one of the houses he takes care of. Alan had to go to do some speeches, so used some of his - Alan used some of his free flyer miles or something, and Larry got to go. It was when they finished building his house down there. It was kind of like a little bonus for Larry. So he got to go, and I stayed home. And it was, you know, he - he deserved it, believe me. We don't usually take separate vacations, but you know, it was the chance of a lifetime for Larry, so I said you go. And Justin had school, and they get in school, and they get a little bit older, it's so hard getting them, taking them out of school because they have all that stuff to make up. 'Cause Justin had the flu a couple weeks ago, and he had to - oh,

he had his wisdom teeth cut out a couple weeks ago is what it was, and he had four days of class work and homework to do. So it gets to be a lot when you take them out of school.

J.A.: -- had five of them.

R.A.: Five rats today? Did he get finished cooking?

J.A.: Huh?

R.A.: Is he done cooking?

J.A.: Yeah, he is.

R.A.: Is he taking the muskrat up?

J.A.: I think - now, he didn't get home last night till 3:00.

R.A.: He cooked muskrat at 3:00. And he's been in the marsh already?

J.A.: Yeah.

R.A.: C.J. came by, he caught one in this ditch.

J.A.: He - out front.

R.A.: Did you see it? I'll just kind of go ahead and put these shrimp in. Let these shrimp cook. Don't want to let those stay in there too long. Going to give it a little flavor. You and daddy can have these shrimp when I take them out, you and daddy and Kelly. I don't think you'll turn them down, will you? And that - I believe that's our last ingredients. I can actually start the next one. Let's get this cleaned up. What did you get when you went to Old Salty's, Kelly?

K.F.: Well they were having a special.

R.A.: What was yesterday, Friday?

K.F.: Yeah, it was shrimp.

R.A.: You got scampi and fried shrimp?

K.F.: Fried shrimp. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Yesterday was Friday -

K.F.: And mashed potatoes.

R.A.: You know what you should've gotten?

K.F.: The prime rib?

R.A.: The prime rib.

K.F.: I didn't think I could eat that whole thing.

R.A.: Did you see it?

K.F.: Yes. Somebody next to me ordered it.

R.A.: Yeah, oh yeah.

K.F.: And I thought there's no way I'll eat all that.

R.A.: I want you to have a piece of this cake. Want a piece of cake?

K.F.: Sure.

R.A.: I've got plain pound cake, and I've got this cake. A friend of ours - we went on one cruise, we went when I was turning 40, and Justin was - with another couple, and she does cakes. And she got mad at me because I didn't tell her it was my birthday. But I told her, I said when you get as old as we are, we try to forget it.

K.F.: She made this?

R.A.: Yeah. She brought it to me yesterday at work.

K.F.: Oh, my gosh.

R.A.: Isn't that pretty?

K.F.: That's beautiful.

R.A.: And she's -Jehovah's Witness, so they don't put happy birthday and stuff like that, they don't do any of that stuff. So she does put names. And like when Justin was 15, she did him a cake. She said one more year, and you'll be shifting gears. You know, stuff like that. But they don't - so I actually had four cakes. (Laughter.)

K.F.: My goodness.

R.A.: So we-

K.F.: It's beautiful. It's very Eastery.

R.A.: I know. You didn't want to, you don't want to cut it, you know.

K.F.: I know.

R.A.: Justin came in from the outdoor show. He said I've got to have a piece of that cake.

K.F.: Wow.

R.A.: Isn't that pretty?

K.F.: That's beautiful.

R.A.: She does a cake that's tall, and it's shaped like a basket. And she does a basket weave, and then she does 12 little red crabs and puts on the top of it.

K.F.: Oh, you're kidding.

R.A.: It's called a crab cake.

K.F.: A crab cake.

R.A.: She brought me one to the library one time. She said here's my newest crab cake recipe.

K.F.: Oh, gosh. I might have to see that one.

R.A.: It's so pretty, I'm not kidding. You don't want to eat it. I mean we just looked at it. We didn't want to cut it. But I save her cardboard and all, so I - I save the cardboard that we get in the boxes at work. Jus, want a piece of cake?

J.A.: Huh?

R.A.: Piece of cake?

J.A.: No, I got to get ready to go to school.

R.A.: You're going to go to school? Mom-mom's gone. She's been here and gone. And it's so pretty, and she puts a little napkin on there with - she puts a little craballet.

K.F.: Oh, wow.

R.A.: When I go to the used clothing stores and stuff, I go to some of those places -what she does is she'll put the little craballet on there with the little napkin and with all the little - it's so pretty. Shrimp are cooking good. Do you like to cook?

(OFF THE RECORD.)

R.A.: We -they got warning ahead of time -

K.F.: That they were coming?

R.A.: -- that the animal rights people probably would make a showing. I don't know who, actually. I think it was the organizer actually got the tip-off on them. And sure enough, but you know, when you're at this down - part of the south part of the county, there's not many ways in and ways out, so they were a little skeptical, but they did make a showing one year, but it was - and the people came into the show, and they ate and stuff, and we kind of knew who they were. Or we had been tipped or something who they were and stuff like that, but they didn't really cause too much of a stink because you know, this is the big outdoor show, and it's just a handful of people against hundreds of people.

K.F.: Right.

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R. A.: And there's only one road in and one road out.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: So they didn't, they didn't come back anymore. They really didn't. But, you know, once in a while, you'll get a little - you know, you'll hear rumors, you know, that it's going to be trouble, or they're going to make a show or whatever.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: And, you know, it's like anything else, you just deal with it. You know, when it happens, you deal with it then. And I think, you know, since this animal rights thing has been so big, I think there's always been a concern, I mean about the trapping. But you've got to trap. I mean it's just like killing deer. You've got to have deer season. You've got to have duck and goose season or whatever. But you've got, you can't, it's so overpopulated that you've got to do something with it.

K.F.: Right, right.

R.A.: So-

K.F.: Well, too, when people are really living off of the meat, eating it -

R.A.: And they used to years ago. They didn't have a choice. They didn't go to a store and buy stuff. You had your - if you had a cow, you had milk. You know, that's just how it was. You know, when they slaughtered the hogs, or the cows or whatever, you had fresh meat.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Over at this farm here, I mean I remember them killing the hogs. I mean they had stalls with hogs in them. We fed the hogs every day, you know, or two times a day or whatever. And that's when you - you had bacon then. You didn't have bacon any other time, and you had sausage and scrapple, we made the scrapple, some of them did. And that's when you had the fresh meat. You didn't have it any other time.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: Things have changed so much.

K.F.: Yeah, now you can get any food any time. And that's been interesting talking with the crab companies too is, you know, the demand for crab is year-round, but the supply is only in the summer. And, you know, people have gotten so used to having food whenever they want. They've forgotten there's a season for things.

R.A.: Exactly. Did you talk to Jay Newcomb? He's - that's where Larry lands his crabs. Did you talk to Jay?

K.F.: We haven't been able to get up with him yet. He's been very busy.

R.A.: He was at the outdoor show last night.

K.F.: I figured he'd be there tomorrow. I figured he'd be at the fire hall tomorrow.

R.A.: He'll be there tomorrow. He will be there tonight, though, because he's one of the, he times the skinning and stuff like that.

K.F.: Oh, okay, okay. Yeah.

R.A.: And he would've - if Church Creek Fire Department wasn't down here, down with the fire company last night on patrol, he would've been here playing cards. (Laughter.) Jay is one of the guys that they play cards with. It's Jay and Jimmy, Larry and Nelson and Robert.

K.F.: Well I thought tonight I might try to get backstage and get a few photos of the skinning.

R.A.: You should be able to. That's probably the best.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah. Will they just let me go in there -

R.A.: And Helen Peele remembers you.

K.F.: She might remember me from last year, yeah.

R.A.: It's best before everything really starts to tell her that that's what you would really like to do, and they'll try to arrange it for you.

K.F.: -- when I come in.

R.A.: They'll make a place for you.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: There's no reason there should not be.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: Tell them Rhonda said so.

K.F.: All righty. Okay, cook.

R.A.: Cook, cook, cook. Let me look over this recipe make sure I got it all in there.

K.F.: Well this is great. I'm getting a nice picture of like how the day's work for people, for this outdoor show and how much time and effort and energy behind the scenes.

R.A.: You can see, this is not just a little bag that I open, frozen bag that I open and just dump it in the pan and two seconds it's done. Right? Right, Kelly?

K.F.: Yes.

R.A.: Takes just a little longer.

K.F.: Rhonda spent hours making her roux.

R.A.: You're not kidding.

K.F.: I wish I could describe the smell, because that's the best part of it, you know, it's really -

R.A.: This has got a different smell to it, that bacon and the ham, I think.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Uh-huh (Affirmative). It's one of those smells that makes you hungry.

R.A.: It's completely different from this, though. Actually, I got it too hot now. I don't think I'm going to use any white pepper in that until the very end unless I have to. I think I'm going to be easy on this one. That's why it's Cajun, 'cause Cajuns cook hot, I guess.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: That's so hot, it don't want to go back in there. It's coming out, don't want to go back. I think I better be easy on that. Just a little bit of Cayenne. No white pepper in this one. I think I'm going to keep enough stock in there that I'm just going to add some rice. Turn this down and let this simmer. I really want them to -

(OFF THE RECORD.)

R.A.: --getting stories and, you know, I love them, and I forward them to all these other people, but, and I read them and stuff, but as far as unless you need something or whatever, I don't really, you know, just chit-chat back and forth.

K.F.: Right, right.

R.A.: I didn't realize that she checks her e-mail so early. She says only once a day. Gosh, I check mine a lot. Technology is really scary. I don't know where we're going to be in a few years.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: It's frightening in a way how far we've come. I guess we're about to find out when that clock ticks next year, huh?

K.F.: Yes, that's true.

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R.A.: It's going to be interesting. We'll survive because we'll still be able to eat. (Laughter.) Justin says just make sure I have plenty of gun shells. (Laughter.) He's so funny. He's talking about taking his money out of the bank.

K.F.: That's what I'm afraid of, actually, is that people are going to get very nervous.

R.A.: Exactly. They're going to take it all out.

K.F.: Take it all out, and it'll be like 1933, and -

R.A.: Geez. I'm not kidding.

K.F.: A big crash.

R.A.: It can happen. It's just, it's frightening.

K.F.: My husband has some relatives who are getting very paranoid about it, and they've already started taking their money out, and stocking up on things like toilet paper and what have you, you know, and they live in New York, they live outside of Buffalo. I mean, and then we said well, you know, there's going to be this kind of shortage, don't you think there's going to be looting and riots?

R.A.: It's going to be awful.

K.F.: You know, and all this stuff.

R.A.: And I think that's why those people are digging those tunnels, putting those homes underground and stuff, you know. And who's to say that they're right or they're wrong? We don't know till it gets here.

K.F.: Yeah, we don't know. Right.

R.A.: It's just a 50/50 chance, you know. We don't know.

K.F.: I have a feeling that people are just not, you know, there's too much inertia. They won't ever do that. They'll get mad, but they're not going to get that way. But we were joking because they're extremely - they're Wesleyan, and extremely born again kind of Christians, and we were like well how are you going to protect yourself from all these so-called looters that you think - and so they got these iron bars, and they put them on the inside of their windows. And we were like you're going to live with these bars on your windows? I mean -- (Laughter.)

R.A.: Oh, my. But who's to say if they're right or wrong? We don't know.

K.F.: Whatever.

R.A.: They're liable to be on the inside laughing at us. (Laughter.) But, hey, if it happens, and if it does happen, it's too late then, right?

K.F.: Yeah, right.

R.A.: To say I wish I had done this or I wish I had done that. It's a little late at that point.

K.F.: You know, it's not like I have anything worth looting.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

R.A.: -- have as much strength as men do.

K.F.: In their hands?

R.A.: No, I don't. Uh-huh (Affirmative). I really don't. And that's the hardest part.

K.F.: So do you get more leverage on the ground?

R.A.: I do better on the ground. I'm going to get my tennis shoes on because I can't get much leverage on the tails. And, of course, these are my old bum-around - you're not going to skin muskrat and do this kind of stuff in good clothes. These are my old crabbing bummy shoes. And I would never, I never wear red, but for crabbing and stuff it does - 'cause them came from the -- store, that's why. They were just red, and they were a dollar, and I got them.

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K.F.: Why don't you wear red?

R.A.: I just don't - 'cause I have red hair, and I don't, I don't wear red.

K.F.: I'm the same way.

R.A.: I've had red all my life. (Laughter.) Which has been good.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: There's not many redheads. But when you look in a crowd of people, you don't see too many redheads.

K.F.: No.

R.A.: Let me grab another piece of something to put on the - Some of Justin's contraptions here. This is the one he says he's going to skin with tonight, one of these. See, they did - the Abbotts developed this one cut. See, you go all the way across to the tail, you just go straight on across, just try to do a one cut.

K.F.: Oh, okay. From one hind leg across the tail.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Now see, this is where you need the strength is from, you need the strength to get this hide back. My brother's been working with me. Apparently, I didn't cut in there when I did that. See, he wants me to do like this, like peel the meat back. He wants me to do one, two, three, and get it back as much as I can, and then turn it through, see? As far as I can get it. And then we do this. My brother, he wants me to hold this knife in my hand, just do a cut like there, and then just do this thumb thing, just go like through here, just pull through to get through the belly, 'cause sometimes the belly sticks, the stuff sticks. And then when you can - you got, I've got to rip this leg first. I'm going to cut it today, but usually you rip it. In the show, you can rip it, and then when you get through here, you make this cut. And Justin likes me to leave a little bit of stuff there so when he's stretching, he can - he wants, this is what he wants me to do. That belly's going to stick 'cause it's probably warm. And then just get this one off, and then just take it from there. This is where he tells me to put my foot on the tail, and use all the strength in my hand. You do a one cut, ear to ear, and then you do this. You cut eyes, pop the eyes.

K.F.: Okay.

R.A.: And then you do - he wants me to work it from side to side, this eye socket like this.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: And then make a cut down into the mouth, into the mouth, and then rip it up. Up with it in the nose like that.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: I wouldn't get a penalty for that. That's just part of the mouth. But it used to be, when the men skin I think it might still be, you have to leave one eye in the socket.

K.F.: Wow. And it doesn't matter about the innards, right?

R.A.: Huh-uh (negative). Sometimes they'll bust them regardless, no matter what you do to them.

K.F.: Now what are you doing to the fur now?

R.A.: I'm just lumbering them up so it'll be easier to get off. See when a rat's real cold, it's so much harder to get it off. Some of the ones we skinned the other night were awful to get off. My brother, my brother kept saying, my God, where have you had these rats, in the freezer? (Laughter.) They were just so hard. That's why he went ahead and got them all nice and dry for us. Ever skin one?

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K.F.: No, I've never skinned one.

R.A.: See my Grandfather when they lived in the boarding house, see, they were - I'm going to go get my good knife for tonight.

K.F.: Practice with it?

R. A.: I want to see how well -yeah.

K.F.: Yeah.

R. A.: My brother will have to sharpen it again. See, that's what they did all winter. They trapped all winter.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: `Cause they farmed in the summer.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

RA.: -- skinning Sunday right there.

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: -- but then yesterday morning before I went to work, when I put the knife through, see, look what it did. I got another cut.

K.F.: Oh. Oh, gosh.

R.A.: See what Larry meant by them fighting? See that?

K.F.: Yeah, I -

R.A.: See the tail?

K.F.: Yeah, the little tail, nick in the tail.

R. A.: So they were starting to mate.

K.F.: So they start fighting when they start mating.

R.A.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And is it the mates fighting the males or -

R.A.: I don't know if they all fight. I don't know how it is. See the foot here?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: This is how my brothers taught me to skin. You pinch this up here. This is for the one cut. And, see, when I put my knife all the way through the other day, see I put my knife back here to make sure that I got it all the way through -

K.F.: Right.

R.A.: That's when I cut my finger. That's when I really got my finger. See this one's got a little damage to it. But the Abbots developed that one cut. What is this - I try to remember all the stuff, see all the fat on them?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

R.A.: I try to remember all the stuff that my brother has been working with me on. And he says sometimes if you do like that, make that little cut, and then try to - I can, I can't - let me see, how did I do this the other night? I just kept taking my thumb and pushing like here.

K.F.: Pushing through?

R.A.: Yeah, pushing through till I got through.

K.F.: The leg.

R.A.: Yeah. And then do this cut. But then when I'm skinning here, I try to save a little bit of the tail for Justin. But I'm not going to do it this time. And then by the time, by the time you get there, see you've already got this other leg, this one would come off really easy.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

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R. A.: Then you just rip up. But see, most of these, it depends on, a lot of times, the meat will stick to the fur. I'm just going to take my time with this right now to get that fur back. See that?

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: So the stomach doesn't tear too much. Right now, I'm going to -now I'm going to grab it and see, but most of the time, they will bust. You flip - my brother does it, makes it look so easy, and I flip through - I mean you just have to have a lot of strength to do this, you know?

K.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

R.A.: And then he says to keep twisting on this head. See how sharp that is? Look how deep that cut.

K.F.: Yeah. Now are there special knives you guys prefer to use?

R.A.: We just got these the other day. They just came in the mail from a furrier in Ohio. Found it in one of four trapping magazines.

K.F.: Oh. So you guys get one of the trapping magazines?

R.A.: We get all of them.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

R.A.: We get - Justin belongs to the Fur Trapping Association in Maryland.

K.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

R.A.: I'm going to see how well this is going to work, yeah. And then you just pull up, and you got it.

K.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

R.A.: My brother really, when my brother worked with me, I have gotten a lot faster. See, that's how I poked my finger the other day when I cut back through there.

K.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

R.A.: See how cautious I was this time? If I'm going to get a cut, I'll get it tonight. But you know what my brother said? My brother said if you've got fear of cutting yourself, he said you might as well not even be up there skinning. That's his theory. He tells me to do one, two, three, try to get it back as much as I can because it helps with the -

K.F.: I'd never seen anybody skin one until last year at the show.

R.A.: Really? Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

K.F.: And when they pushed them through backwards like that, I was like whoa.

R.A.: Unreal. It is. It's so hard to believe, isn't it? Let me get that through there. It's better to take a little time on that there and get that through a little bit. Get this one right off. See, that's why I like to be home, because when they get done trapping, at least I can get that last skinning in. You know, it's like performing anything, you know, you just like to get that last one through. This is where he says put your foot on the tail. This is how I cut my hand the other day, he was screaming at me. That's what brothers are supposed to do. He says just cut right across the eyes, and then just twist. It's kind of hard with blood all over your hands.

K.F.: Yeah.

R.A.: Twist, and he just does it so easy. But it's, you know, if I could put something on my hands to keep my hands dry, but what are you going to put on there? Do this, this back and forth. See, and they do pop. Then you have to do the mouth. That's the mouth. You don't have to cut into the teeth, but I am right now since I've got time, and then just go up. You usually have the nose intact, see?

K.F.: Oh, right.

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R.A.: See what we do for fun? (Laughter.)
K.F.: And the whiskers are even still on him.
R.A.: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.
K.F.: I like these black rats. They're pretty.
R.A.: They are pretty. We used to catch a lot more black than we ever did brown. See, they used to get a lot more money for the black, they didn't get as much for the brown as they did the black.
K.F.: And Thomas was telling me about Mr. Gibbs that, I guess, caught them and kept them penned up and sent them to Russia?
R. A.: Oh, I don't know. I don't know. I thought you were talking about the guy from Louisiana that came here and kept them live, kept the muskrat live in the basket until a few minutes before he skinned, and then he tapped him on the nose. Put the animal rights people on him. (Laughter.) He's the one that really needs the animal rights people on him. But that's what Jay Miller used to do from Louisiana, from Cameron Parish. It's kind of hard doing all this with a sharp knife in your hand, you know?
K.F.: Yeah.
R.A.: When you know how sharp that knife is, it's not easy sometimes. But he said if you have fear of cutting yourself, you might as well not even be up there. This is my brother, not my husband. My husband hates sharp knives. (Laughter.) See, sometimes that meat just sticks, makes it a lot longer getting him out. Just flip those, flip those fingers out there. Well, and like I said, you know, I'm skinning, and either one of us could get a bad rat. We don't know.
K.F.: Right.
R. A.: It's all in the draw. Listen, the guy who finished fifth place last year at the outdoor show won the title a couple years back. Took it away from the Abbots. You can either cut that nose or you can, they don't fool with it in competition cutting it because it takes you a few extra seconds. But you can, Margina (phonetic) wants me to pull it straight up. Straight off
K.F.: Oh, look at that.
R.A.: Last year, I didn't get any penalties. I felt blessed. The other year, I did. I got a penalty, oh, what did I do? It had to be with one of the eyes. So picky. (Laughter.) Picky, picky, picky. I'm going to have mine all limber tonight.
K.F.: Yeah. Massage them.
R.A.: That's it. Don't get them too hot. This one is a tough one. It's tough. You see how cautious I am with this point of this knife? I'm just petrified of cutting my finger again like I did. The lady that I took 12 rats to yesterday, she called last night when I was at the outdoor show, and I thought, I thought I had miscounted not giving her 12 rats. That was my main concern when I got home last night. Larry said Miss Jones called, and the first thing he said.
(END OF TAPE.)
(END OF INTERVIEW.)

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