

Interview Log

Interviewee: Palmer, Faith Church, Coleman Tape #:

Interviewer: Shelly Drummond # of Tapes: 1

Date: November 4, 2002 # of Sides: 1

Location:

Topic: Varied. Crab Picking, Church, Muskrats, Nutria.

Comments: Faith Church in particular. Very poor sound quality. Difficult to hear speakers. Have indicated missing segments with (inaudible). Also uncertain as to exactly who is speaking, so have used SPEAKER to indicate.

BEGIN SIDE A

S.D.: Go ahead and give a description too.

SPEAKER: Can I talk while I'm doing it?

S.D.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

SPEAKER: Okay. First I would take the claw off, and the next step is to pull the back off. Then I will clean the crab, and that means you take everything that is not eatable off of the crab. And after that, I trim the legs off. Now we come to the part where you take the top part off. If you cut that just right, you will be able to get all the meat out. And if you squeeze that, then the meat will pop right out. It comes right out. And I'm doing the -- I like to get all the bones away from the meat. The big meat, which is called the lump meat. Now this is like the special. And the way that I cut, I am able to go down in each little groove and bring out the meat without bones. If you trim you crab the right way, you can go in and get your meat, and you don't have all that bone. You would have all meat. And that is -- the crab. It's all in knowing how to cut the crab. You only have two big pieces of jumbo lump. The rest of it is the special. And you have two claws. I take my knife, hit it the right way, and that comes, meat will come right off that bone, and sometimes it don't. This is one of the times that it's just not going to do it. But we have that. Okay. I like to pick crabs. I don't think that a crab picker ever gets tired. Just always have friends she might pick a bushel of crabs for, someone's coming and they would like to have some nice crabcakes. And I just say yes, and pick the crabs for them. When you know how to do something and someone doesn't know how to do it, I think it's good to help them. I like to teach people how to pick crabs so that when they sit down to eat crabs, the person that they're eating crabs with won't eat all the crabs up from them. Because I know my son, he can eat a many crab, and some of our friends don't eat them as fast as him. They are really lost if I don't help them out. Sometimes I do because he can eat them so fast. He loves crab meat. Sometimes I show people how to pick them, and they tell me slow down, you're going so fast, and I think I'm doing it slow, so I try to slow down so that they can see every step that I do, every step. These are not very large, but they are fat, and that's what I like. I don't care if they are small, as long as they are fat. I can pick them. I started cracking claws when I was nine years old, and I think it just stayed with me. I still like to do it. And I like to talk about my childhood days. Cracking claws with my friends, it makes me happy. It is an art to picking crabs and cracking claws. It is. You just go down in those little grooves and bring all that meat up. And when you have a nice knife with a point to it, you can really do it, you can get all that meat out and keep the bone out the crab. That point goes right down in and squeeze that meat out, and I just go down to get all this nice crab meat. And when you -- if you pick it right, you'll have nothing but an empty casing when you finish. All your meat is out of the crab. Nice claws, not too big, but they are a nice size. And the crabs are fat.

S.D.: Okay, pause.
(Off Record.)

SPEAKER: First, I take my claws off the crab, then I take the back off and I clean all that -- I take all of that out, clean it up real good. I cut the legs off. Some people say fins. Cut them all off. Now we're ready to pick the body of the crab. Go down and if you cut it right, if you go far enough down, you will not have any bones in your crab meat. And you pick all of this. If the crab is cooked well, you can squeeze that top part of the crab, all that meat will come out as you squeeze it. You have two pieces of jumbo lump. If you cut that right, it will come out in a whole lump. That's a nice size. And then you go down and you get all of the special. Go in each little groove. Having a knife with a point on it, it helps to make it easy for you to go down between each groove and bring out the crab meat so that you don't have a lot of bone in your crab meat, and you just go to the steps of squeezing and getting all that fine meat that makes good crab cakes. I like crab cakes with the claw meat mixed in, and it's sweet, and I use the jumbo lump like this for nice fancy dishes with crabs. When you've finished up, after you go through all of your steps, when you finish, you should be, your crabs should be empty of all the meat, and just have the shells. You take these, you crack your claws. I'm just using the knife to crack my claws. If you cut it right across, you can -- all that meat will be on the bone and you can pull it right off. Sometimes they're hard, but you can do it. I started cracking claws very young, and I still like to do it. Now I pick crabs and crab claws. It takes quite a few crabs to fill a pan. I've never taken time to pay attention to how much, but I always just looked at the pounds, but today I'm looking at this, and it really takes quite a few crabs.

S.D.: Tell us about your knife.

SPEAKER:: Well I use a cracking knife because I like the point. The crab, now I didn't put this point on this knife, but by working in the crabs, it shaped itself. I never sharpened it. Sharpens it on the shells, I imagine. The shells. But I've had it some time. This is what I use all the time. I have two of them, and I like them better than I do the steel knives because they have round, most of them have the round points. This one, it just has a nice tip, and it works itself to that. And I can really get in and get the crab meat and not have a lot of bones. That's what, you know, my main thing is not to have bones in my crab meat when I pick them. And I am known for not having any. People tell me they like to -- my crab meat because I don't have a whole lot of bones. I would not want to eat a crab cake and eat a whole lot of bones. So I don't want anyone else to have to go through that eating crabs. And I love to come down on crab day, and we demonstrate picking crabs, and so many people have never picked crabs before, and I teach them how. And by the time they leave me, they can pick crabs. I don't know if they keep it up when they go home, but I teach them how to, and I like doing that. I like teaching people how to pick the crabs, but they will know how to do it, and they can enjoy them better if they really know how to go in and clean them. I can imagine that it would be troublesome to someone that don't know how to pick them, and to eat crabs and it's hard not to be able to pick them when that's what you have for your dinner or your lunch. These are fat. They're not all big. I don't like a big picking crab. I like a medium, small picking crab.

But these are just nice, and they are fat, they are nice and fat. So I can remember when we would go around the shore and catch all the crabs you wanted to.

S.D.: Okay. Let's take a break.
(Off Record.)

SPEAKER: We are truly blessed. It's a wonderful thing, as you already know from the church, but this is not the only church that has (inaudible). Not the only people who enjoy the faith. The one thing I appreciate about the (inaudible), and I've seen it, is they always enjoy other people singing. That's why I'm especially thankful to have those who are in service this morning who are singers. We will have to wait until this afternoon. And all the neighbors come and enjoy the singing -- especially a (inaudible) -- and a host of others will be singing in the 2:30 service. I just want to tell you that it just means a lot. It's a special ministry to know that you're lifted by singing, and love is lifting others. I just want to acknowledge that. 2:30 this afternoon Reverend Adams is going to be, going to be about 45 minutes of singing. Sometimes I get so caught up in knowing that I'm (inaudible), I don't want to do that. It's an awesome responsibility to try to keep (inaudible) like a drill sergeant. You all would have to be because we are always mindful of (inaudible). And what we're going to ask this afternoon is all the singers sing. Don't (inaudible). Don't get offended because I say that. Just sing. Praise the Lord. And (inaudible) that should take care of (inaudible). Just before we do, a special thank you to (inaudible) -- so many people have done so many things. Some people have done more than others, but a lot of people have come together to make the day possible, whether washing down the outside of the church or cleaning the sanctuary, the bathroom, the insulation, the scrubbing, the polishing the floor, the -- I won't mention anybody's name, but I'm going to tell you, it's a host of people who earned it, and I just want (inaudible), the cleaning of the kitchen area, cleaning (inaudible) school rooms, the (inaudible). But now I will say this. Somebody said what in the world are you going to do with all these oysters that's been fried up? I'll show you in just about 30 minutes from now. We're going to eat them, aren't we? I want to say to Alan (inaudible), who was an inspiration for putting oysters on the menu today because there was a question whether it would be possible, and it was possible to (inaudible) every day, and come in here every evening and get all their Smith Island friends, our friends and yours, to shuck oysters. He brought two ice chests filled with oysters in the (inaudible). Thanks to Alan. I'm sure he didn't want me to say anything, but I needed to. I need to say also (inaudible), Daniel, my son, to (inaudible) and Clifton and Perry, Senior for shucking oysters. And for Andrew and for Steven. For all the (inaudible) administration work. (inaudible prayer).
(Music Playing) (Inaudible).

SPEAKER: I'm glad to be a part of it. I'm glad to be a part of this family, while they won't let me sing, but we're going to ask -- if they'll come and sing. And right after they sing, our speaker doesn't need a formal introduction. (inaudible) spend a lot of time building him up. I'm going to tell you -- Reverend Arcane to be the principal speaker this morning. (inaudible) Any time he's ever asked, he fills in. He always does a wonderful job (inaudible). Today (inaudible) speak for us. And Reverend -- when you finish, the

only thing I ask you to do is when you've done everything you've done that you need to do including the (inaudible) if you'll (inaudible) return thanks for the meal. And then right after you've finished, we're going to (inaudible) sit down and enjoy.

(End of Segment)

S.D.: -- about using the boat?

SPEAKER: Yeah. We used to keep the boat right here at the corner of this turn right here by the woods so we could use it to get out around there, but it's --

S.D.: What was the boat for?

SPEAKER: To keep from, when this was all frozen, we used to use the boat actually to put our traps in and we would slide it across the ice here to go trapping. But it's more for a safety factor in case we got stuck because this motor down here will suck you down and if you got stuck, it will actually pull you boots completely off, which I've done. I've actually pulled my boots completely off and end up in the boat. My boat would be laying out there. This marsh is real hard when you get down into it, and then all the sudden, bam, you'll hit a soft spot. If you ain't prepared for it, your boots are gone, and you're wet, and you're out here in the wintertime when it's freezing, it's not a very good feeling to have no dry clothes. So but this always -- it's called a "B" (phonetic). And looks like to me it's down to one-third what the size it was 10 years ago as far as the grass. And see the flag minings (phonetic) are still here, and these flag minings were here at the time. And I can tell you this because I walked it every day. And you could go down in these flag minings, and we used to walk down these flag minings here in front of us, and then we would hit the three square marsh, which is still some here. And this area, if you look out there, how far do you think that is, Shelly? 2000, 4000, all the way out to that water's edge?

S.D.: I would guess a mile.

SPEAKER: Well all that was all grass. Gone. And that grass actually extended from there clear up to that blackwater bridge. And that's all gone, it's all gone. There's no grass. All this is mud flat. It's all due, because of nature and the tide flow -- six inches, it come up six inches in the last 10 years. Was it 10 years or 15? Something like that, but it's gone. You can see little remnants of it out there where the flat minings are, and the flag minings will stay, but the three square is gone and that's because of the nature of it. They get into that three square, and they eat it and they turn it into mud. And you can see out here -- they turn it right into mud. Once you get on the other side of this bridge here, that's all back into private. They actually bought this farm. It's a (inaudible) that you look at that are now bearing, that was all three square marsh, and that was just 10 years ago. And you look at it now, it looks like nothing. And it's gone. Looks like a mud flat. That's what it -- and it's actually all the way to -- see that eagle -- it's all the way to the wood line. You can see it. It's not only there, it goes right on around the point and all the way back up in this -- all the way back up this ditch. This is the drainage ditch that they use on the refuge. The only thing that, the grasses are not gone on the drive, they're still here, all that's still here. But the grasses out on the actual marsh where I trapped have gone. It's just straight mud flat. And that's been, I'd say 10 years. So if that's happened in 10 years, if it keeps going at that rate, I'll probably be none of it. It'll all be mud. Looks like to me it's going like that, if that happens -- this is the biggest construction I've

seen on the refuge as far as this area. And being, you know, that I had been on the area, it just boggles me. I just can't believe it. But it's funny how the ground is still there but then all the grass is gone. It's like somebody went down and plucked every bit of it out. It's there. It's just, it's hard to believe. It really is. If you'd have came here 10 years ago, walked this area with us and trapped, you'd have seen what I was talking about today, and it's gone. It looks like it's about, maybe about close to 1,000 geese setting here. I don't know whether the geese had anything to do with it, but I know that nature had a lot to do with it. This area was heavy pollution right in this one area for some reason or another between this woods, and the road and the field. And, of course, they had the drive and the flooded area over here.

S.D.: Did you respect the Nutria as an animal when you were tracking it?

SPEAKER: No. It's a pest. It's still a pest. Good eating, but it's a pest. I mean what it was put here for intendedly didn't work out, I mean obviously. But it's all -- I mean it can be gone tomorrow, and nobody would miss it really. I mean even though it's good to eat, it's good eating, but I'd still rather have the Muskrat.

S.D.: Do you respect the Muskrat?

SPEAKER: Oh, yeah. Muskrat is probably the cleanest animal, fur-bearing animal, in this area because it's constantly grooming and cleaning itself. And if we're lucky enough to get one today, a live one -- I mean maybe one that's been trapped, you can smell how clean it is. And, of course, it has the natural glands into it to keep it -- and it rubs on itself all the time for protection. That's another thing I don't know. I have not seen a Muskrat hut. Of course, you're not going to see none when they're ain't no marsh. And this area was real heavy with Muskrat huts that one particular year, just in this area alone that is probably close to 50, 50 Muskrat huts. You can look at it now, there's none. It almost makes me sad to think that I trapped it, and it makes me think maybe trapping it had something to do with it. I don't know. It's definitely gone. The woods are still there, but I don't know how long that'll be there. I imagine when this all sinks, they'll all be gone, like that erosion I was showing you, that'll start happening. These waterways actually get deeper probably, they should in time. There's (inaudible) over there.

S.D.: Do the Nutria and the Muskrat compete for areas?

SPEAKER: Yeah. The Nutria doesn't build a hut. He just kind of destroys, makes muddy areas and lives into it, where the Muskrat actually builds huts, tries to build like communities and all. Kind of like build little communities and be with their selves and bear their young, have their young and all. Nutria will have its babies out on top the Muskrat huts, which happens a lot of times. The Nutria will take and destroy the Muskrat huts, lay around the Muskrat huts and actually destroy the Muskrat hut itself and run -- of course, the Muskrats don't want to be around the Nutria. And, obviously, you can see why. You can see the destructive pile just in this one area what the Nutria has done. Makes me wonder if we ever will get rid of them really. If a little animal like you seen

today can do that kind of damage, you can just imagine why it's such a big priority down here to try and reverse the trend that's happening. It's going to take billions of dollars in technology to put this marsh back the way it was, and I don't think we can.

(End of Tape.)