TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEWEE: **Diane Wilson** (DW)
INTERVIEWERS: David Todd (DT) and David J. Weisman (DJW)
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Please note that the recording includes roughly 60 seconds of color bars and sound tone for technical settings at the outset of the recordings. Numbers mark the time codes for the VHS tape copy of the interview. "Misc." refers to various off-camera conversation or background noise, unrelated to the interview.

(misc.)
DT: My name is David Todd. It's October 24, 2003 and we're in Seadrift, Texas and I'm speaking for the Conservation History Association of Texas and have the good fortune to be interviewing Diane Wilson, who comes from a long line, four generations, of shrimpers. And has also been an activist, working for the public health of the community here and for the health of the bay and the surrounding area. And I wanted to take this chance to thank her for talking to us.
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DW: Thank you very much for coming and I—I'm glad of the opportunity.
DT: Thank you. Diane, I was hoping we might start by how your interest and apparent love for the outdoors might have gotten started? If there was a parent or a friend or some kind of early experience that introduced you?
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DW: Okay. Well, I guess my—all of my work on the—in the environmental field, all of it basically comes from my identity with the water. And I have—like I said, I'm a fourth generation fisherwoman and I have spent my entire life on the bay. And when I was very young, I would—I would go shrimping with my—with my dad and I can remember—I—I was probably five years old and I can remember coming to the bay and the bay—it was—it was a woman and it was—I could see her, I could feel her personality. And she was—she was like a grandmother and she had this long gray hair. She had this long dress that kind of flowed out into the water. And when I was a kid, she was real. And she had this personality of this old wise woman. And so I—and she really loved me and when you're one of seven kids and women aren't considered too valuable
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in this part of the country, so to come to the bay was like coming home. And—and I mean, she was always, always welcoming. She would say like, well, hello Diane. You know, it's like it's so good you're down here at the bay. And so I—so the bay was a person and I—and it was—and—and I—and I guess, you know, you—you could get a psychiatrist and he would say it was a little bit of a mystical thing and it was. Being on the water was—you were—you were a part of it. You—matter of fact, I used to feel like my skin would—my—my molecules would separate and the water would move into them. And so th—there was—there was no division and so, I know my environmental lawyer used to call it a sense of place. And I—I—I—I never knew what that word was until—or that phrase was until he said. He said

Wilson, you got a sense of place. And I guess I do, it's—and—and it's also, I'm sure, what the Native Americans—what they—
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when—wh—wh—when they talk about a mountain or when they talk about a stream or the trees. When they say they have spirits, it's like, they're not fooling. I mean, it's real and when I was little, I saw it and I—and I never forgot it. And so, my environmental battles has—when I fought, I fought for that—for that woman. She wasn't—she wasn't a thing to me. She was a person. She was a—she was kin to me. And—and so, actually, probably my passion started there when I was five years old.
(misc.)
DT: Diane, when we speaking earlier, you said that Lavaca Bay has a special connection and love for you and I was wondering if you could also tell us if the bay has personality and different moods that might be expressed with the hurricanes and the tides and the northers that change it in so many ways?
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DW: Well, I know when—when I was young, we always went shrimping on the day before a norther would blow in because when—when—when you're a fisherman, you know when the shrimp will come out of the mud. You know when they will start coming together and they will bunch up in parts of the bay and if you are—and if you're real versed on—on shrimping, you know where you can catch them. So the weather plays a big part to how it affects the water and whether the tide, because when you—when you go out in the morning, you notice the level of the tide, especially notice the moon. What phase is the moon? And—because you—you got an idea about shrimp are going to be moving out and when it's real cold weather, it's when the shrimp start moving totally out of the bay and into the passes or down the—the—the intercoastal waterway. And—but I—when I was young, I always went out—when—when we would spend the night out on
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right before a norther would come. And so you'd be out there on the bay, on—on that old creaking boat and you'd be—and I always slept on top of the cabin of the boat—and you would have this norther, just this fresh norther, just come blowing in and—and the whole boat would rock and—and sometimes I would have a quilt and the wind would be blowing so hard it would take my quilt. It'd just pitch it out in the middle of the bay. But—but I—I think my favorite time was when the water was rough. I remember one time my—my—I was shrimping and my—my neck got caught in the block of one of my—the ropes got caught. So I had to scale the mast pole with a knife in my teeth and get right to the top and that mast was just—I mean, the whole boat was rocking and you could just see all of that water. And it was this gray water. And it was just wild in the
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rain and I have never felt that free in my life. And it was such—it was just—it—it—it's—it's—it—it just conveys its power and its feeling of freedom and—and so—and so, I guess, I've—I've seen it where it was slick calm and it was like a mirror and I guess my favorite has always been just seeing its power. Because it's—it's very—it's very—it talks very loud. No, you definitely know the—the—the personality of the water when it's—when it's blowing like that. And I know, a couple of times—I usually go out shrimping by myself, but a couple of times, I've had a couple of women around town that would say, you know, they—they want to be my deck hand. And it was like, (?), oh, all right. You know, and I—

and—and I really—I like going out by myself because it's—it's the quietness and—and you—and you—you get this almost meditative thing between the water and the boat and the marshes and especially when you leave in the morning and it's pitch la—black and all you do is you know you're headed south. And you're headed into
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the wind and it's—it's—it's—it's wonderful heading out like that. So when you got a deck hand, they talk a lot. So you know—you have to put up with it, so that's why I generally didn't have deckhands. But I would have these women that would—a couple of women that would go out with me and they'd see a little black cloud forming in the—in—in the west. You know, you could—you could tell when a little squall was coming up and they'd say well, Diane, don't you think we need—we need to head in now. We—I think we need to head in now. And I was like oh, no. Oh, no. This is going to get—and it's—and it's wonderful. I love it when a squall breaks in or I love it when I—I've been out there when tornadoes were forming, they were just—they were just popping all over. You know, and—and—and the sky gets totally green and you start—you start
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seeing these waterspouts and—and it's exhilarating. It's—and—and it's—and it's got to be energy. It's just this energy in the water, in the wind, in that boat and I mean, it's just—it's just this commingling of all this energy and you—you—you've—you've never felt so much alive as when you're there. And—and so—and—and—and I've been through—matter of fact, this house has been through, I think, about four hurricanes. This town has probably been through that many. Matter of fact, Hotel Lefitte down there. Two story. The—when the tidal wave came through, it went through the upstory—second story window and out the other side. Boats went down the middle of Main Street and some people lose their boats totally to (?) down there. And the last hurricane, I was right here and there's a little 100 mile an hour wind. I think it—eventually, it was—they said it was 100 and—they clocked it at about 112. And that was exhilarating, watching that storm come through. And it was just—and the thing is, I didn't realize it comes in—it comes in from every direction. It comes from the north and it comes from the west and
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then—because I was watching the whole thing through these windows. And then, you get in the eye of the storm and I mean, it's dead calm. Sun comes out, it's gorgeous. Even people got in their trucks and drove around town. And then, suddenly it starts coming from the south and it's like, oh, no. There was nothing on these windows. And so I—I tried to hurry up and get something up and then I was sitting there holding them and then the wind started, 100 miles an hour, right to there and so I just let it go. And it just—matter of fact, it was blowing the mud—it was picking up the water and just whipping it through the house. And the only way I could keep the mud out of that other room was I got a carpet off the floor and I nailed it to the doors, so—but it was—it exhilarating. And I—yeah.
DT: The energy of the bay, it sounds like, gives you a sense of exhilaration and enthusiasm.
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DW: Oh, yeah.
DT: It doesn't frighten you.
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DW: It doesn't—it doesn't frighten me at all. I—I think I've been—I—I've been—I've—I've—I've nearly drowned out there on the bay a couple of times. And—and—and I don't

swim at all. But I don't swim at all and I don't—I don't do fun, playful things. You know, I don't go out and—I don't think I've ever been in a swimming pool. And—but I—I liked being on the water and I'm always usually in a boat or I'm in a—a—in a skiff. And so I've—I've never learned how to swim and—and what was I talking about.
DT: You say you almost drowned.
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DW: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Well—well—well, when I—when I got my first boat, it was a crab boat. And so, I go out by myself and—and because I had a couple of little kids and my mother was always afraid I was going to drown, fall off and drown, and that she was going to be left to raise the kids. I mean, she can't stand—you know, Bill was my dad's name. She's like Bill, you better put some rails on that boat. And so—so they did. They went and put these little kindergarten rails around my boat so I wouldn't fall off and drown. And—and one day, I guess the boat came out of the rails and so the rail fell off. And you get so used to that rail, twice that day, I went—I was throwing the deck bucket over to wipe—wipe the deck off, I leaned against the rail, there wasn't no rail and I just went (?). And I did that twice in one day. And then—and then, when I've been out on
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a—a—trout lining, I got a skiff and go trout lining, half the time, you're boat is nearly sinking because it gets so rough, you know, and it blows over. And so you got swift—you know, you got fish that are swimming in the boat and—and you got a hook that you're grabbing and so you got to stop what you're doing and just head out as fast as you can and start pulling all the plugs. And then, you get all the water out and you plug them back in again. (inaudible) so you're—you're always in a state of near drowning. And it's a—and—and you—and you get used to living on the edge like that. And it's—it's—it's not frightening. It's a—it's a little bit exhilarating. They always say—I know I've read and they said there is nothing like bullets going over your head to make you feel really alive. And there's something like nearly drowning that just—just suddenly wakes you up. So, yeah.
DT: Can you tell us about what the routine, the pattern is for shrimping and crabbing and, I think, currently, you fish for black (?)
DW: Yeah, that's right.
DT: How do you do that?
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DW: Well, I started—like I said, I started working on a shrimp boat when I was five years old. And I was—and shrimping is, first of all, it's seasonal. You would have a spring run and then you would have a fall run. And when I was young, it was a time when—it—it was—it was almost a ceremonial thing. You would have the beginning of a whole new season and there was a celebration and everybody was going around and fixing their boats and stringing out cable and hauling out nets and—and changing this part on their motor and—and even on the day before the season opened, it was like one day, it all opens up. And so people would go out and they would tie up together—they would anchor out and they would have cooked meals together and pass coffee around and—and you would hear more wild shrimp stories on those boats late at night. And then the next morning, you would put out that first day of shrimping of the whole season. And that's the way it used to be. And—and used to, you could have those two seasons and it
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could get you from one—because it was like—like the first was in the spring, so—so you've

got a couple of months where—where you're not making anything. You're just fixing your net or hauling out your boat and—and then, you do the fall season and that will tie you through until the next spring. And rarely, they—they—they didn't used to combine, like they didn't do the shrimping and the oystering and the crabbing. You—you just had specialty that you did and you used to—could make it. And I—and I'm not talking big money. I'm just talking you—you get by. And that's mainly what shrimpers do because this is not, you know, this is kind of a low class town. You know, we—we don't have a lot of middle class people here. It's, you know, and I can remember five, six
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thousand dollars was—was a good year. That's what you made. And—and so, but—but now, it's—the shrimping has gotten s—the—the catches have gotten so poor. Like, when I was younger, you could get a thousand pounds in one drag. Easy. I mean, nothing but you pull up a net, it is pure shrimp. And you could—and you could make a decent living. And now, you can go—and even when I was running the fish house, I would have shrimpers that would go out all week long, go in the hole, and still owe for ice. You know, I—and I mean, make nothing at all. You know, like they—you know, they still—still owed 25 dollars for the ice. And—but it's like, the thing—the reason why they keep doing it is is that is who they are. It's not a—it's not a job. It is a—it's a way of being. It's their identity, you know, and even all these years of being an activist and environmentalist and working in the peace movement, people ask me what I am and I still say I'm a fisherwoman. And that is my identity because that is—these men, this is who they are and—and—and it's—and it's—and it is dying. You know, when—when my
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grandfather was still fishing, the nets were the—the gill nets were still legal and, you know, and now, you know, I—I used to have a gill net hanging, matter of fact, in honor of my grandfather because that's what he was. He was a red fisherman. He was one of the—one of the first ones in this whole town and he—he raised all his kids and—and that was who he was. And—and I used to have a gill net hanging up on that wall right there and it was illegal. It was illegal. If Parks and Wildlife—they could've come and hauled my ass in. You know, because, you know, nets—gill nets are illegal. And—and—and just like the—the crabbing. When I first started crabbing, it was probably about 15 people that were crabbing and matter of fact, it was before the Vietnamese came into Seadrift and I probably crabbed for like five years. And you, you know, you bring in—you might make 25 dollars, you might make 50 dollars, you know. And—and—and that's the way the fishing and the shrimping and the oystering is. It's very, very seasonal.
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Sometimes you make a little, sometimes you don't. It's just kind of like gambling and you keep thinking you're going to make it big. You know, this is—this is the day. This is the day. You're going to make a killing and—and—and so that's—that's probably what keeps them going out, you know. They keep thinking that they're going to—they're going to find that place where they can finally get ahead. And—and, like I said, now—now that they—they don't. It's just a subsistence. It's what they call scratching. You just scratch and try to pull in, you know, hundred pounds is—is a big deal. And then you got a price that they haven't got. You know, they're getting the price for shrimp what they got four decades ago. I mean, nothing. They get nothing for those shrimp and they can't—you know, and when you're paying 50 to 75 dollars a day for fuel, you're paying for the ice. You can't afford a deck hand.

You can't afford insurance of any kind, insurance on the boat, health insurance. Nobody's got health insurance. I've never had
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health insurance day in my life. None of my kids never had health insurance. So it's—it's—it's actually a—a—a real tragedy. You know, I've—I've—I've—I've seen—felt like I've seen the whole spectrum of it. I've seen it where it was an honorable thing to do, where—where men were honorable, where they were well-respected, where they could feed their children and I've seen it now where—matter of fact, sportsmen consider this town an outlaw. They say we're outlaws. And—and—and I remember, even when I was shrimping, there was a time when it started changing. And I remember even when—this is probably—maybe when I was like 20 and I was shrimping with my dad, it was like
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every—everything you did was—was possible—possibility of being illegal. Like—like, say, the shrimp count were 36-40's, which is legal size shrimp. And you can take shrimp and that you could—you can count them one way and they'll be 40-50's, you can count them one way, they'll be 36-40's. So it—they're—they—they can be anything you really want them to be.
DT: This is the count per pound?
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DW: Yeah, this is the count per pound for shrimp and that's the way you tell what size your shrimp are. You take like two pounds of shrimp, you put them in a two pound little weighing thing and you count them out. And if they're 36-40's, which was legal or they're 40-50's, which was borderline and—but it—anybody could take those shrimp and anybody could count them different. It's how you count them. You know, like if—if their heads are broke off or if part of them broke off, you know, you don't count this one. And so—and so, you could go out, spend all day shrimping, thinking you're catching legal shrimp and the game wardens could come through and it was like, they could confiscate your shrimp, confiscate your net and give you a 200 dollar fine. And so—and so you—you—a lot of shrimpers got where—well, a matter of fact, the majority of them
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that got were—you—you never knew what the game wardens were going to do. And sometimes game wardens, which was not uncommon for a game warden to say, you know, I could use a basket of shrimp. And so you'd meet the game warden down there on their coastal, little obscure place and he—they back up with their truck and you put over a load of shrimp for them. So they—so, you know, shrimpers were very wary of the game wardens. And so it became a little game like cops and robbers. And it was—it was like a game. And I—I remember 20 boats from Seadrift, all hiding up in—up around Mesquite Bay, just hiding up, waiting out the game wardens. You know, and you—you had secret signals for when the game wardens were coming and, you know, if you're coming in the dock and there's game wardens around, it's like you put three tires up so you don't have to sign the game warden. So you just—so there was always—there was
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always a game going on about who was out and what they're doing and a lot of them had aliases. You know, my—my brother, you know, he had an alias. He would never give his real name on the radio because it—you know, shrimpers always talk, well, you know, I'm on Mesquite Bay and maybe I got a little—a little basket on that drag and, you know, and

that it—it would never give it's name because you figured the game wardens were listening so, you know, his thing was Sanchez. That was his alias. So.
DT: Well, can you tell me why the yields were declining and the regulations were getting so tight and difficult for you all to make it?
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DW: Well, I've got my opinion about how—how some of this—some of these issues started. And I kind of like got a little bit of the inside scoop on some of it and some of it is legitimately environmental and some of it—it's like a class war. And like a long time ago, Seadrift used to have a Parks and Wildlife—they had a ramp, they had a office, they had some—a biologist there. And one of them was Ray Childress. And one day, the Parks and Wildlife officials, they called all Parks and Wildlife biologists to go to Rockport and they were going to have a little workshop. And so, the—the management told the biologists, they said, oh, we want you all to—if—if there was this theoretical—if there was this theoretical depletion of red fish, we want you to divise and see what you would do as a management plan. So it—and it was just theory. It was like this is just a
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theory; you know, a hypo—a hypothesis. And so, the biologists, they sit down and figured well, if—if there was a depletion of red fish, you know, we would say this or we would say that. And the next day, in the Corpus Christi Caller Times, a story was leaked to the sportsman writer and the headlines were depletion of red fish. And so, suddenly, it became from a theory of a depletion to an outright loss of a, you know, of a species. And—and then, even when it started going to the legislation, you had Parks and Wildlife with their set of data and you had—you had Fish and Wildlife with their whole set of data. And I—I—they were totally opposite. I mean, Parks and Wildlife said 60 percent of the red fish were taken by the outlaw fisherman and 16 percent were taken by the sportsmen and Park—I mean, U.S. Fish and Wildlife said just the opposite. Is that it was about 16 or 17 percent is taken by the commercial pers—person and the rest by the sportsmen because there's such large number of sportsmen. So there was this c—
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absolute conflict of data. Then you take into who sits on Parks and Wildlife Commissioner and all the very rich sportsmen groups, you know, like GCCA, Walter Fondren, Perry Bass. They were commissioners. And, matter of fact, even when the—The Catch A Thief program, where they get helicopters in—tracking and looking for outlaw fishermen, you know, that's sportsmen money coming in to tracking down outlaw fisherman. So there's this agenda and if—and the—one of their largest sportsmen group is the Gulf Coast Conservation. It used to be Gulf Coast Conservation, now it's changed to Coastal Conservation. And you sit down and talk with them, I've talked with their executive director and they'll be real frank with you. It's like they're objective is to get all the fishermen, every net, out of the bay. And it's—and it's—so it is not so much the environmental issues, it's it gets to be a class issue. And—and, I guess, that is—that is some of the tragedy of it because—because the fishermen, they don't have spokesperson.
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They are not viewed—they're not viewed well. They're—they're outlaws. They're rapers of the bay. They're plowing up the bays and, you know, and—and like—like, when they were doing the red fish bill, it was like there was nothing but a pack of—of outlaws out here. And, matter of fact, they even did a sting operation in this town and they hauled off 18 fishermen

and threw them in jail. Huge bail money they had to come up and matter of fact, one of them was my like a 75 year old uncle and his deck hand that was in World War I, he was so old. You know, and a couple of them was like, well, like young boys. That fellow who was doing the sting operation, he had went undercover, they'd given him money and say, you know, get someone to buy his—you can their boat motor or buy their boat. Tell them to get us a red fish. Because they wanted the legislation of—to outlaw net—netting and the arrests to coincide. And it did, it was like a day apart. And—and so they arrested all these people. They banned nets and the end
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result was—I re—I remember one of them. It was this young boy that had never fished a day in his life, but—but the man bought him a boat and motor and said go get me a red fish. So—so he did and it was such a financial hardship for the family that he—he took—took a shotgun and—and blew his head off. And so, you know, and—and—and not a whole lot of people, you know, nobody didn't to know those—know those stories. And, you know, they just thought, well, good riddance. They're just—they're just outlaws and so. So it's—so I—when—when I—when I look at the fisheries, it's a—it's a tragedy. I—it's just a tragedy because they're—it's misunderstood and—and—and then, when the regulations start tightening down—and a lot of it's politics because you can see where, you know, lobbyists and money for financial campaign funds. You know, we tracked all that. I think even Texas Monthly did a huge article and, you know, it's real easy to track the funding and—but they just don't have spokesperson and the thing that makes a fisherman a fisherman is that he's so independent. But it's the thing that's killing him now because he can't get two fishermen to organize. He can't—two of them
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won't agree. I mean, it can be—they can be literally dying and they won't agree on the same type of action. So it's very—it's very hard for the fishermen to fight for their livelihood. And—and it's also—and it's in—it's—came to the point where they see the sportsmen and the environmentalists as—as out to get them. And so, you know, and that's where I've ran into a lot of problems because here I am a fisherman—I've fished a lot longer than some of those fellows and—you know, and they're calling me an environmentalist and I'm out to get their jobs and I guarantee you, I've had a couple of them tell me they was going to pitch me off the boat or meet—there's going—I was going to open the door one day and have a shotgun in my face. Because they get—they get pretty aggravated with it. So.
(misc.)
DT: Diane, we were just talking about the competition between sports fishermen and commercial fishermen. And I understand one of the other threats that are affecting the shrimp and the commercial shrimpers and these shrimp farms that are on the mainland. And I was wondering if you could talk about the effect they've had on your life and those in the community around here?
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DW: Okay. I—the—the shrimp farms have become a major obstacle for the—the fisheries regaining their foothold. And, matter of fact, they're almost like dealing a deathblow to it. I know, right now, about 90 percent of the shrimp eaten in the United States is provided by shrimp farms and the general public doesn't realize that, you know, they go to Red Lobsters, or they go to one of these seafood places and they—and they think they're eating good old, homegrown, wild Texas shrimp and actually it's from Ecuador or Vietnam or

South America. And so, one, you have the Texas fishermen are the American fishermen that are having to fight these imports that come from these
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shrimp farms and—and—and they've already shown that these shrimp farms are very destructive. Like, you get these huge—they're almost like ponds—and because you need this huge amount of water, they get them very close to the coast, so they have absolutely destroyed whole mangroves. I know, when I was—I went to Taiwan and they had shrimp farms and because it uses so much water, you start running scarce on water. So what they ended up doing instead of pulling in freshwater, they were using contaminated water and they were flooding the same type of contaminated water over and over again. And you not only have antibiotics that are added to these—to these shrimp that you're going into these bases to make them grow, to make them uniform, but you also—of what—what these really have a problem with, they've got all these viruses. And some of them will absolutely species jump, so it's—I mean, it's—they did not—they not only destroy and kill the shrimp crop, but they can species jump. Like if you have a shrimp farm that's on the edge of the water and they escape and they are usually—they're exotic shrimp. And they get out and they have this type of virus that species jump, is they can jump from shrimp, they can jump to the crab, they can jump to the fish. And you know—and—and you know, it's just like chemicals that you put out into the
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environment. It's like, they don't know what these viruses do. It's like they don't know what these chemicals do. And so you have got no idea what you are setting loose, but it's like the bottom line is profit. And—and I know it's—it's a huge profit and, you know, I know like a lot of the shrimp importers into the United States, there's not tariffs on it, there's no taxes on it. And so, shrimpers—what is boil down to, shrimpers are paying—are getting paid like what they were getting four decades ago. You know, like, you could—they're getting 80 cents for some big shrimp. And, you know, and—and—I don't believe there is any other occupation that you can be getting the same thing for your—for your product that you were getting 20 years ago. You know. I don't—I don't think there's another single occupation. It's—it goes up with inflation. You know, you're—you can at least feed your kids and—and pay your boat payments and—and—and the
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shrimpers can't do it. They cannot afford to do that. You know, and I know just right across the San Antonio Bay right here is—there is a shrimp farm there and they put in this huge ponds and—and there was—we were trying to fight the permitting because we were afraid about these exotic shrimp getting out and putting—and—and they already had viruses. They had them—they had viruses in Brownsville and they had some viruses in the Palacios once and we were afraid of these having viruses, too. And, you know, and Parks and Wildlife and all these agencies were gung ho on getting them there. You know, they—they saw this as economic—economic development. And—and the thing of it was is, the man was over there putting in shrimp crops and he wasn't even permitted. And you can always tell they're doing it because you can see the birds because the birds on the bay, when they start hitting—hitting the water, they see shrimp. And they're
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going after the shrimp. And, you know, all you had to do is look across the bay or get pretty close to it and you could see all these birds working. But—but the man was so isolated is

that nobody knew what he was doing. There was nobody checking on what he was doing. So he could pretty much do exactly what he wanted and, you know, and all these—there have huge discharges. I think the discharge of the shrimp farm in Palacios, it amounted to the flow of a river. And you've got all of this sediment and this possible viruses and you got shrimp escaping and you got bacteria and you got all these type of chemicals that they have to use to try to kill and contain some of this stuff. And it's just going right out there into the Gulf of Mexico. And—and I know this one over here, you call Parks and Wildlife or you try to tell them that, you know, you just think they're already putting in their crop in there because they're already running and they're already discharging and it's like, you know, you get—you get nowhere. If you wait on one of
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your agency people to come down and—and investigate. If—if an activist waits on that, then they're waiting on nothing because they got their own timeline, they got their own agenda. You know, and—and even if you talk to them, they say, you know, we don't have enough time in the day to take care of this. They've got thousands of things they're supposed to be taking care of, they're naking—not making that much amount of money and besides, the politics of it, they're not that concerned about it. They're more pro shrimp farms. You know, they see it as a bonanza. And so you don't—so you end up doing your own investigation. You know, I became a pretty good private detective, you
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know, and I would take my boat over there, get out of the boat, get a camera. I walked down their discharges. You just take pictures of it flowing out. You know, and I—I remember one time I was halfway up there on his property, sure, I was trespassing. But here he came in his Jeep and he loosed these dogs and I was running as fast as I could to hit my boat again. But, you know, he was illegally discharging—had a—didn't even have a permit on it.
(misc.)
DT: Diane, we've been talking about the changes in the shrimping and fishing industry and I was wondering if you could tell me if the shrimping industry's been changing by itself or if the shrimp populations have also been changing? If they've been going down or up or what direction those trends have been (?)
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DW: Well, I believe the shrimp population as a whole has almost vanished. Matter of fact, like you'll have shrimpers in—in like the last five or six years, you know, there—there might be one season be a little bit different. But, I mean, they'll go out shrimping and there's absolutely not a shrimp. They are none to be had. And I know that—and—and there's sometimes there's very strange things that happen. Like shrimp, when—when they come into the estuaries, and that's kind of like a nursery area, and they're protected and they grow. And shrimpers, when—when—when they're getting in preparation for season, they want to see what size, what—what it's looking like, what the shrimp crop's looking at. So they'll get a try net, you know, you know, that these are try net doors and you have a—a very small try net, you know, maybe like six foot. And you just go and you just try and you—you tie—it's got a—a string attached to the—to the net.
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And so, you put over these small doors, you got this little, small try net and you can hold it and you can feel the shrimp that go in, you can feel when a crab goes in and the—they're testing to see what—what the shrimp are doing. And you can—and—and you know—and

sometimes they'll get real excited. They saw there's shrimp up there and they're just fixin' to move. And then, they're gone. They're—they didn't come through. They just vanished. And people—and especially a shrimper starts talking that and they'll say oh, yeah. We know, you shrimpers went to the head of the bay, caught all the shrimp and da da da da da. But I ca—I'll tell you this little story is there was, about five years ago, the shrimp in Galveston Bay vanished. I mean, they—they were there and they were gone. There was even an article in the Houston Chronicle about the shrimp dieoff. I mean, they died. And about three months after that, I had a—a—at that time, it
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was TNRCC, Texas Natural Resource Commission—Conservation Commission, and he was—talked to me and he started laughing. He said yeah, I know where those shrimp went. He says we tracked it all the way down to Union Carbide. It's Union Carbide had a release and it was highly toxic to shrimp larva and it wiped out the whole thing. But it's like, you know, you—you know, they don't go out of their way and say hey, reporter, this is what happened or have a meeting with the fish (?). Hey, fishermen, this is what had—what happened to the shrimp there. But that was an absolute instance of a chemical that was fatal to shrimp larva and it wiped them out. They had a spill and wiped out every shrimp in Galveston Bay. And, I know Union Carbide, right—right across, that they dump. We've Union Carbide, well, we have got DuPont, we have got BP Chemical, we got Seadrift Coke. We got Formosa Plastics, we got Alcoa, and all of them—all of them, at least, have a five million dol—five million gallon a day—a day discharge. All
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these chemicals, (whoosh sound) and they dump them right into the bay. (Whoosh sound.) And I know for a fact that Union Carbide, similar to a sister plan in Texas City that had the leak, they had a big leak there of the very same chemical. You know, and it was due to they had this huge pipe that went all the way from the plant—all the way out to the barge dock and the pipe was so old, it was crumbling. And it was like, you know, and—and all of their waste pits. I mean, it's tidally influenced. I mean, the water goes in and it goes up and down with the contamination in there. And then—and the thing of it is like, it is so expensive to make any type of testing of chemicals, so it's just—so it's—so—so you have—you have a lot of items. You got all of these chemical plants with their discharges. And then you start seeing this—this drastic—I mean a drastic reduction and—and—and the—and—and—and the thad—sad thing about shrimpers is—like I said,
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they don't know how not to be shrimpers. That's who they are, that's their identity. So they go out shrimping, there's no shrimp there and they think, well maybe if I—if I—if I had a bigger engine. If I had a bigger engine that could—it could go faster. You know, if I had a bigger net. So the shrimpers—what they end up doing is intensifying the effort to try to make a living. And it's just—and it complicates, it stresses out a condition that's already stressed out. And so, here—here you—and—and then—and then, it gets so bad. And it's a whole different type of shrimpers that are here now than—that used to be there. At one time, when—when my dad was shrimping, I mean, it was unheard of for a shrimper to go after small shrimp. It was unheard of. You did not do it, even if it was the beginning of season. If they were small like that, you didn't touch those. It was only some sorry SOS that would—or the SOB's that would go after small shrimp. And when you get where shrimpers cannot even get it—a net. They can't put food on the table, they

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can't get health insurance, they can't pay for their truck, they get desperate. And so they have—went after times when there were some small shrimp. I've seen shrimpers go after small shrimp. And I remember, you know, my—my dad, I never heard him cuss a day in his life and I can remember being out and watching him, it was—it was kind of (?), kind of like it is now, and there was a shrimp and it was going the head of the bay, going after small shrimp. It was because he said I have to. I have to. I can't do nothing else. That's the only way I can make some money. And my dad was standing out there and he said that SOB. That's the first time I ever heard him say a cuss word. And, you know, and then you have other shrimpers and they—they sit there and watch that for two or three days. You see this man going out, getting small shrimp, coming in. I mean, they're—they're tiny shrimp and he's probably getting 20 cents for them. And it's like, they'll say, well, hell. I'm going to do it, too. You know, and they just get aggravated, so it's—so you just—you—you have this—this—this slow death to their own psyche. You know,
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and it's—you know, and it kills them. It kills them when they do that. You know, because—you know, I'm not the only one that feels a part of the bay. They've been out there so long themselves that they have to feel it. And it—and it does something to you. It—it's—it's like a sacred trust and when you violate it, you're—you're doing damage to yourself. Not only to the bay, but to yourself.
(misc.)
DT: Diane, you talked a moment ago about how chemical releases to the bay have affected the shrimp populations, but I understand they've also affected the people in this community. Can you tell about how you first learned of that?
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DW: Well, shrimping, I started—I guess I first started my activism when shrimping was so bad, I wasn't even shrimping. I had tied up the boat and I was running a fish house. I was running Froggy's Shrimp Company for my brother. And I had all these shrimpers and they'd bring their shrimp—shrimp boats in and I'd get their catch and I'd deal with the Cajun truck drivers and—and I had this one shrimper and he had three different types of cancers. They—they were like tennis balls. They were the huge lumps all over his arm. And he was a real young fellow. And he brought me a article. And it was Associated Press story and it mentioned Calhoun County, which is the county I'm from. It mentioned us about four or five times and—and it was the toxic release inventory. It was the first time the toxic release inventory, which is where industry has to report their emissions to the air or to the water or to the land, to injection wells. It was the first time they ever reported them and was the first time it was ever made public. And
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it was the first time it was ever in print. And this county—it's—I bet you it is one of the smallest counties in the whole state of Texas. I bet you at that time we had about 15,000 people in the whole county. And to find out you're number one? It was like—I mean, we're not known for nothing. You know, people come buzzing through this county and they just keep heading on because they don't see anything interesting here. And we were number one in the nation. And it was—I—I—I couldn't believe it. I absolutely could not believe it and—because, up to that point, there was all these huge industries around. You would always see them, you'd always see the pipes and the—but you never knew what was going

on because they wouldn't tell you anything. They didn't give you information. And matter of fact, the plants were never in the paper. They just kept this very low profile. And so, when I read that, I—I—I was com—I was compelled. It's—it's like, you witness something and it is so outrageous, it compels you to do something. And I am not—believe it or not, I am not vocal person. Probably—I took speech
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probably the first six years of school. To avoid people, I would crawl underneath the bed to get away from people. You know, and I have a son who's autistic and—and when I was younger, I thought I was autistic because I did not like talking. I didn't say a word to nobody. I didn't—I liked silence. Silence was the finest thing I had going for me. And when I heard that we were number one in the county, I just spontaneously, because I'm not a—I'm not a linear person. I'm not a planner; I'm not a note taker or devise a plan. That is nothing that I do. But I move spontaneously and I was so, just absolutely horrified with that data. So I just called the meeting. I went down to City Hall and said, you know, we had this little room outside City Hall and sometimes they had little games there and sometimes they had a little dance there for the kids there. So I called the meeting. And there was such a backlash from that one simple meeting. To be honest, it—it—it caught my curiosity because I could not—I could not figure out what was going on because suddenly I had City Hall, I had the county commissioners, I had the mayors, I
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had the plant—plant managers coming down and telling me to be a good citizen and not do this. And it was like, do what? What am—what am I doing? It was like, I was calling the meeting. And they would say, well, we're having economic development down here and this is just red flags, red flags. It's—it looks like trouble. And—and I even had the bank president come down to the fish house. I had never spoken to that man a day in my life and he was down there and he said I was getting a vigilante group. And I was like, I'm not doing nothing but calling the meeting. And it was—and suddenly, all of the—the—at that time, it was like Phil Graham and Lofton, he was the representative at the time, and all of these Senators and representatives, suddenly they were on T.V. and saying, you know, it was just—we just can't have this questioning of industry. And I—I—I still—I had no idea what they were talking about. And I got attacked. I would have economic development, Chamber of Commerce, the mayors, businesses show up and literally disrupt. I mean, they would say I was hysterical. You know, they would say I
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was hysterical. And they said I was a spy for Louisiana because they never could actually believe I could think of this on my own because, you know, I'm from—I'm from the little southern, rural Texas and down here, they don't think women are smart enough, and especially, if you're a fisherman. They think you're kind of stupid. And I've been told that my whole life. It's like, you stupid woman. And so—and so, you know, you're—here you have these people that—that just can't believe this is coming from me. It's like, where's she coming from? Somebody's paying her. You know, Louisiana's hiring her to do this. And—and they never could believe—and maybe that talks about criticism out there, it's like they cannot believe that someone legitimately cares. It's like, has things gone so bad that there is no legitimate care? That there's always—there's always a motive? There's like, what is it you want? What is it you want? And like, they was always asking me, it's like, what is it you want? And it's like, it's the bay. It's like,

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where are you coming from? It's the bay. That's where I come from. And so, that is where it started and it was like a rolling stone and it just kept mushrooming and it just took over my entire life. It was like I—I truly believe people have—they have—they have—I think they have a destiny. I think there is—there's a time you come at a crossroads and you can take one path or you can choose another. And I chose the path that I went on. You know, and it's just like Robert Frost said, it's made all the difference. And I always—and I know for a fact, you can tell which is the bas—best pathway. It's because you can smell the fear because it is genuine fear. And you're like you are scared to death and I did not the first thing about it. I didn't know where the EPA was. I didn't know where, at that time, it was Texas Water Commission. I didn't know the first thing about them and I remember I made these little naïve calls to the Union Carbide and they
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said we don't give information to every Tom, Dick and Harry on the telephone. And they said like, you don't know what a water permit is. You don't know nothing. And so, you know, they—they wasn't even going to be bothered with me. And—but I—and I learned, if there is—if there is probably a way to not do it, I covered every angle of that, to not do it. Because I tried everything and I just—you know, and—and—and I—and I think I was lucky because I'm not—I'm not highly educated. I was high school. And I didn't even like chemistry, but when you don't know what you're not supposed to do, you just do it all. You just walk in like, oh, this is possible. This is possible here and—and so you—you places that other people that are smarter and have a larger diploma say oh, well you—well, you can't do this. You know, they're—sometimes your education can limit you on the possibilities and, to me, the possibilities are limitless. You know, I
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remember when I went to Formosa and said zero discharge and look at me like I was hysterical. And it was like there's no such thing as zero discharge. They're like yeah, there's zero discharge. You know, and—you know, and—and I have—you know, that—that was one thing I did. I—I researched. I found out information. So I just kept being persistent. It was like, yeah, there—there's zero discharge. And, you know, and—and I would go to a wastewater hearing and I would be the only one. And Formosa, one time they brought bus…
DT: Let's talk about Formosa. Maybe you can.
(misc.)
DT: Diane, you mentioned Formosa Chemical in passing and I'm wondering if you can describe what Formosa Chemicals proposal was and how it got you started on a different way of activism.
DJW: And for those of us in California, just a little background of who Formosa Chemical is and where they (inaudible). It's just not a name that's as familiar as DuPont or anything.
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DW: Okay. Probably the first plant I started working with was Formosa Plastics. I had never heard of Formosa Plastics. It was a tiny, little PVC—that's polyvinyl chloride dioxin—you know, now there's a whole of issues about PVC. But in 1989, it was a tiny, little company. It was a multicorporation, meaning it was from—it was based in Taiwan and it was company owned. It was owned by Chairman Wong, Y.C. Wong, who is one of the richest men in the world. He's probably the 11th richest man in the world and the richest industrialist in the

island of Taiwan. And at the point that I had read that we were number one in the nation, I didn't even know who Formosa Plastics was. It wasn't even in the picture. And when I called my first meeting, someone sent me a letter in the mail. And it was—just had my name on the front. It didn't give their name. All it did was give me a copy that they'd cut out of the newspaper of the public notice for Formosa Plastics
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to have seven new air permits. And, like I said, I—I—I had never saw a—a public notice before, which is where industry—if you're going to build, you have to let the public know and they usually put it in the newspaper and it's usually far in the back—back with the advertisements and the divorce ads and all this type of stuff. And so someone had sent me that and so, I decided as a first order of business, we would say we were going to ask for a permit hearing on Formosa Plastics. And apparently, that was the reason why I was having such problems because Formosa Plastics, they were putting in a 2.7 billion dollar chemical expansion in Texas. It was the biggest Texas had ever had. It was the largest in the United States in ten years. Phil Graham, who at that time, was a Congressman and was developing a war chest to be President, he was taking the lead role in bringing this huge, multinational corporation into Texas and making sure their permits were okay, their visas were okay, their tax abatements were okayed. And the public knew nothing about it. It had been a little business deal that the Texas Department of Commerce was all involved in. The governor was all involved in. But the public knew
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nothing about. But to get them down here, they had guaranteed their permit. They had said—matter of fact, Phil Graham's campaign manager was the EPA administrator of—up in Dallas and it covered like six states, you know. Texas and Oklahoma and Louisiana and Arkansas. And so, here you got an EPA administrator who's a campaign manager for Phil Graham. Phil Graham is going to all of the—the—the benefits of bringing in all of these thousands of jobs for this huge, chemical expansion on the Texas Gulf Coast. And it was guaranteed. It was like a deal. It was like, you know, you come down here. You bring it down here, we'll get you the permits, we'll get you the visas, we'll get you the tax abatements.
[End of Reel 2287]
(misc.)
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DW: Okay. So the situation was, at the time I first started my little environmental group and I had my first meeting was—was, this was a huge 2.7 billion dollar chemical expansion. The—Phil Graham, who was the Congressman at that time, and had a war chest for the—the—the time when he can be run for President. He was getting all of the—he was getting all of the praise for bringing this huge multinational down. His campaign—his former campaign manager at that time, Bill Leyton, was at—was at that time, was the head of the EPA Regional Six in Dallas. And the permits had been guaranteed. They had been also, not only guaranteed, but they were to be moved in record time, in like three to six months. They were going to have the water permits, their air permits out. And this was a plant that was already ready to bring in the workers, to start expansion. They had the contracts in line and they were ready to go. And—and little beknownst to anybody else was that, not only did I just unexpectedly say well, I
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want a permit hearing on this, not only that, but I found out later is that this was an outlaw polluter in Taiwan. In Taiwan, it's—it's one of the fastest, economically rising places in the world, but the only thing keeping abreast with it's economic raising was it's environmental destruction. And I mean, the island is devastated by its environmental destruction. And they were so bad in Taiwan that when Chairman Wong wanted to build this plant over in Taiwan, they had the farmers, the villagers throw stones at him and refuse to allow him to build it. And so, what did we do? We brought him to Texas. I mean, totally kicked out—and so he brings his whole—his whole reputation, his way of doing business, and he brings it down here to the state of Texas. And not only does the Department of Commerce—the Chamber of Commerce, do they not even ask him one thing about their—his environmental record. You know, it's like—you know, what's your—how did you—how did you do business? How did—wh—what's your—what's your philosophy on environmental protection? They gave this company 250 million dollars in tax abatements. I mean, we got a little small school district. I mean—and it
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was so poor that they were fixing to eliminate 17 teachers and our school district was given 100 million dollars in tax abatements. And so, here was this set deal, this en—environmental polluter, this known environmental polluter, no questions were being asked. They were giving him the whole store. They were giving him the whole county. They were—matter of fact, we got a mercury underwater superfund site. They were going to be trenching the mercury underwater so they could get these bigger fleets of ships through to load up the PVC and just go all over the world with it. And I asked for a hearing on them. And it's like the whole world caved in on me. And it was like—like I said, I not only had the plant managers, I had Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, I had Senators, I had county commissioners and they were all telling me that I wasn't being a good citizen, that I was hysterical, that I didn't know what I was doing because I was just a woman, I was just a fisherman. And, matter of fact, at one point, I had—I had tried—I have tried, in the beginning, to do things the right way. I—like—I—in my environmental group, I got a vice-president and I got some directors and I got a—a secretary and a treasurer and then the company threatened to sue me and every
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single one of my directors quit. My—my secretary and treasurers, everybody quit. So I found out that, one, I was going to be doing it alone. I only had the ladies who worked with me in the fish house who would get behind me and say okay, Diane. You're doing good. Just—and she would, you know, I—I couldn't get anybody to stand up with me, so I would go to permit hearings all by myself. If I would do a demonstration, I was all by myself. And the only people I could get was out of state. I mean, out of—either out of state, on the activists out of Louisiana or I could get an environmental group in Houston to come down and, if—if I was going to have a press release. Because that's the only way I could have anybody. Otherwise, I would be by myself. And so, here you are. You're fighting a permit application. And I was fighting—in the beginning, I was just fighting that here was the biggest thing Texas had ever had. I mean, the biggest thing we'd ever had. It was PVC, polyvinyl chloride. We're talking vinyl chloride, we're talking ethylene dichloride and like, there is known links with vinyl chloride to cancer of
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the liver. I mean, there are known—and this is a polluter. He's notorious and there was not

going to be the first study on what this plant was going to impact us. I mean, he's there on Lavaca Bay, they're going to discharge 15 million gallons a day of vinyl chloride, EDC, chlorine, all these heavy metals, copper, you name it. And right across the causeway is a little—is—is a superfund site. A mercury contaminated superfund site. And—and they have—they have chemicals—Formosa had chemicals in its discharge that would react with the mercury and make an even more deadly toxin to the seafood around there. But there was no questions. There wasn't going to be any kind of study. And so, I went through all the processes. I did a petition. I gathered names. I filed permit applications. I filed lawsuits because—because, for not doing an environmental impact statement, they were absolutely violating federal law. I mean, there was no—there are no two ways about it. They were violating it. And so, I had lawsuits. I had petitions. I had permit hearings. And—and I remember the first time with—even with all that information and what a polluter they were. The information was out on what a polluter
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they were, is that the information had been leaked out of the EPA and it was headlines in the Houston Chronicle that Formosa was not going to have to do a study. It was like, this is a done deal. It was like—and so, I remember the—the activists in Houston that was—would come to press releases with me and he said, well, it's over with, Diane. He said there's nothing else you can do. You said—you fought a good fight and let it go. He said it's—it's a done deal. They're going to do it. And I'm like no, they're not going to get it. And it's like—and he kept saying well—well, there's nothing else you can do. You know, it's like the parade is over with. You've done—you've done a good job. Nobody is going to say anything about you quitting. And I was like—it's like the bay—the bay was personal with me, it was a part of who I was. And I knew, there were—th—there was no doubt that this company was going to come in and they were going to create another death to that bay. They were going to create another blow and they—they were going to—they were going to kill it. And I—I had—I had no doubt that—they had every
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indication of it. Their whole history was of it. And—and with the—the—the—the fact that the EPA and the state wasn't even going to question it? It was like they weren't going to stop them on anything. And I said nope. They're not—they're not going to do it. And I—and off the top of my head, I said I'll do a hunger strike. And—and I re—I still remember the—it was Rick Abraham and he looked at me and he said Diane, you can't do a hunger strike. And I said oh, yeah. I can do a hunger strike. And he said women don't do hunger strikes. And he said especially women in Texas don't do hunger strikes. He said in California, they do hunger strikes. They don't do them in Texas. And I said, yeah, I'm a—I'm going to do a hunger strike. And I didn't know the first thing about a hunger strike. Didn't know the first thing. Didn't know how to do them. I just know you just didn't eat food. And—but once I said it, I knew. I knew enough about human nature that if I didn't act on that impulse, if I slept on it, I'd wake up the next
00:09:42 – 2288
morning and say oh, thank God I didn't do the hunger strike. Because, you know, I mean, you was going to look real stupid, a woman going out there and saying she's doing a hunger strike. And so, I immediately got a phone, called the Victoria Advocate reporter and said I'm starting a hunger strike for an EIS on Formosa. And she said when? And I said right now. I'm starting it right now. And so, I found me a shrimp boat in Lavaca Bay and I started my

hunger strike right there on that boat. And—and like I said, I had never—I'd—I'd—I had never did it before. I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know how to organize it. And—and, matter of fact, I did everything wrong that I could've possibly done wrong. I didn't even have a phone, so I was on the boat with no phone. It was like nobody even—even for the first week, people didn't even know, outside of the county, they didn't even know I was on a hunger strike. And the only ones who knew it was Formosa and they would regularly—they would send their men in their business suits and it was like, they would show me off. They would bring down their corporate,
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their little engineers and then they'd come on the boat and they'd say well, this is Diane. Don't she look stupid. They would say you look real stupid, Diane. They would just tell me, you don't know—they said well, you're shooting yourself in the foot on this one. You just look real—people in town think you look real stupid. And—and I just kept up, you know, I'm doing a hunger strike. And, eventually, within the—a week had passed and, matter of fact, the shrimper that owned the boat, he—he didn't now know I was on his shrimp boat. That shows you how unorganized I had been. He saw, when a camera crew came from Houston and he looked on the—the news that night and he saw a woman on his shrimp boat on the news. So he came down to Port Lavaca, where I was stationed at, and he said if you don't get off this boat by tomorrow, he said, I'm going to pitch you off. And I'm like, I'm a shrimper like you are. I—you know, you know, I'm just trying to help the bays. And he said you ain't a shrimper, you're an environmentalist. And he
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was going to pitch me off that boat. So I—so I just decided, well. So I got up off the boat and I had the—the lady that was kind of—she would bring me water down to the boat and so I said, just take me down to the park and there was a park right beside Formosa. And—and I said I just need a little airing out. And I—and I didn't tell her I was being kicked off the boat and I had to—I had to move it. And so, she took me down to the park and after she left—I made sure she left, and I just walked around and went right around the park and sit down on Formosa's front lawn and just sit there. And you want to talk about people getting the haywire. And suddenly, everybody was coming out. Always—because I was sitting there, right in broad daylight, right in front of the sign, just leaning up against a tree. And, pretty soon, here come security and here would come some regulatory affairs and they're like, Diane, won't—won't you come inside. Let's sit inside where it's cooler. I was like, no. I just feel real good right here. And—and by
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doing that, and then calling the EPA and telling them I was going to take the hunger strike to their doorstep, they changed—in two weeks of a hunger strike, I got exactly what I wanted. And I got—we got the EIS. And because they had to do the EIS in Texas, Formosa was trying to buy—to build a rayon plant in Louisiana. Because they had to do one in Texas with their Formosa plant, they had to do the one in Louisiana and it killed the one in Louisiana. So they never did get to build the rayon plant. But it stalled the—the plant operation about two years. And so, that's where it started moving. And—and, like I said, when you have—when you have the mayors, when you have the commissioners, when you have Senators, when you have justice of peace. When every elected official that is supposed to represent you has tie ins with the chemistry—I mean, the chemical industries. Where they have contracts, they have security contracts, they

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have construction contracts. That's—I mean, it's an all—it's a total tie in. And nobody wants to stop them. If there's kickbacks, nobody wants to prosecute them. If they have spills, nobody wants to prosecute them because they want a computer system. And I know—I went down to Corpus Christi and two inspectors went to their files when they found out I was dealing with Formosa. They went to their files, pulled files out and gave them to me and said we can't get anything done. It goes up into this bottleneck and it just stops. And he said, you do something with this. And so that shows you where the—the environmental agencies are. For the state, for the EPA, there is too much political pressure. There is too much of an—of a total networking and bonding. You know, and like the—the—one of the directors at the Water Commission—at that time was the Water Commission down there, I mean, he'd had his application in soon as he ret—got out of there, in about a year, he had his application in for Formosa Plastics. I
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mean, it's—it's known among environmentalists. They call it the swinging door. It's like they're just waiting so they can get out and make more money with—with industry. So you don't—one, you don't have the political will with these agencies and the other is like, you just don't have the funding. And you don't have environmental enforcement. You don't have these inspections. They all know when they're going to have an inspection, whether is OSHA, whether it's the state environmental, whether it's EPA. I mean, they like give a week's notice. You know, and then the plant manager. It's well known. The—the—the workers will laugh about it. You go talk to the workers, the workers will laugh about it. They said yeah, we knew OSHA was coming down. He met the plant manager, the plant manager took him to Victoria, they got a nice dinner and by the time he got back, he made through—one line through that—that whole unit in about
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five minutes. They said we barely saw his coattails hanging out. And that is what the people are supposed to be trusting. And—and—and the—the irony—the irony of it is like every time there has been—I've had a big environmental meeting and I—and, oh, I would get these people in the back and they said, you don't know nothing about this and leave this to the agencies. It's their business. And it's like, you have just got no idea about what's really going on. And I believe in the politicians, I had not one single—not one politician would—would step up to the plate. I remember I went to the most—and he was just running for a—on the Democratic position. And he was a liberal. He had pictures of Martin Luther King on his wall and I went up to him and I said just bring up the environment and he said you're known as a maverick and I'm not going to commit political suicide. And so, I mean, that's our liberal consciousness in Texas. It was—it
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was political suicide to talk about it. And, you know, and the rest of them have got—they got contracts, you know. They got contracts. They're getting campaign contributions in economic development. And so you—so you end up—you—I'd—absolutely—I remember the day when I found out just how—I mean, absolutely, they will look you straight in the face and lie up a storm. You know, and it was—I mean, it was an obvious lie and I—and I remember the day when it dawned to me how I could count on, you know, on the elected officials. And I remember, I had an address book that had—a notebook that had all their names and their numbers and I went in and got it and ripped it to pieces. It was like, it's not

going to come from them.
DT: Well, did you get help from anyone within the companies? Were there any whistle blowers or were there helpful people in the staff or the agency? You mentioned that some of them gave you files. Where were you getting your information and other support?
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DW: Well, I guess and—and—and I guess the reason why—the reason why I've been able to get some publicity is I got dynamite information from workers, even corporate people within the plants would give me information. Inspectors from—out of the Texas Water Commission would give me documents. And—and what it boils down to is—is you—you have—you have some good people. You have good people. There—there are good people everywhere. But the system does not work for having these problems corrected because the bottom line is money and it's as fast as you can and it's to hell with the environment. And I would have—I would have these workers that would try to talk to the plant manager, they would try to talk to their supervisor. And, you know, and some of them—th—they got—they got exposed. And then, once you get exposed, you're out. They fire you. You know, because there's no unions down here. There's no
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protection. So, they fire you. You're out. Here they are, contaminated with ethylene dichloride or vinyl chloride and they got their cancer—I mean, they're liver counts are out of the roof. And they're gone. And, I mean, and then, they can never get a job again. And then, what are they to do? I mean, their house payment's due, their truck payment's due. And—and I had—on one of them—and I came to his house and he couldn't work anymore, he couldn't weld anymore because he was welding into the pipes and they were—had like EDC, vinyl—ethylene dichloride in them. He was cutting in to—welding into the pipe and you're—you're supposed to have them where—where there's nothing—where there's nothing in them. They're supposed to be cleaned out. All the chemicals out because these welders go in and they—and they cut the pipelines. And the stuff just falls all over of them. And so, they get exposed so many times, it ruins their health. And—and this one I had talked to, you know, he had—he had talked—tried to talk to the plant manager, you know, and they tried to talk to a doctor. And it's like, to prove the
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links between exposure, I mean, it's like going—oh, you know, they're going to say you smoked cigarettes. They're going to say you ate barbeque, because you know, they love to say it's the barbeque down here that is causing all the cancer. That's a fact. And in Louisiana, it's the bar—it's the Cajun sauce. That's what causing all the cancer down there. And so, you have these fellows that—you know, and—and I'm not their first option. They, you know, they—they—they look at me and like, is she crazy or what? But they run out of options and I'm the last option so that's the reason why I got whistle blowers. And they had dynamite information. I knew about kickbacks, I knew about FBI investigations, I knew about buying off of Senators, I knew about burying of drums, spills. You know, payoffs to EPA officials. I mean, I got this directly from the workers. They gave me cancelled checks. I remember Susan Wang wrote out a little 25,000 dollar check to one lady to keep her quiet. You know, and—and I—I got—I still got copies of cancelled checks. And so I got all of this dynamite information and—and I would take it
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to an investigative reporter, and usually it was the one in Houston, and it was—I can't tell

me how many times Formosa Plastics was front page of the Houston Chronicle, on the kickbacks, on the buyouts, on the contamination. And so, I have—I have got most of my help from the workers and I've become a strong ally. I've—I'm—I'm a—I will—I will always speak up for the—for—for the worker. And, matter of fact, I was probably the only—when I finally—I did a hunger strike and got an agreement with Formosa and the unions went berserk because it was the first time an environmental agreement had provisions for the workers in it. And, you know, and I—I just thought it as a matter of fact. It was just like—I mean, any—anybody that leaves out the equation of the workers, you're missing it because they—they are the allies and their just people and people are just—the environmental movement, I think, is reluctant to go that way. It's—they're—it's—whether they're intimi—timidated by them. And a lot of times, the industry uses that possible antagonizement because I remember one time I did a—a demonstration
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against Formosa Plastics and I had—I had my kids there, I had a couple old lady's, I had a couple old deck hands. So there was like ten of us and the company hired 300 of the workers, they paid them overtime, for being out there. And I mean, it was like start a fight, start a fight, see if you can—you know, and it was—it was intimidation. It was like—and the—the thing was, I—I felt such—such—it's such an irony because it was this huge banifit—benefit for Formosa and it was every politician. I think there were 500 elected officials, wearing gowns and furs and Cadillacs. They were given this big benefit for Y.C. Wong. I was on one side and all these workers were on the other and it was like, they're being exposed, they're—they're being kicked out and here between us ringed in all of this political agenda. The jewels, the wealth, and I was like, that is such a sad thing that they have put us in opposition there. And that was—that was their agenda, is to—is to put this opposition, for us to fight, for us to clash. And what did I ended up doing is, I aligned with them and the—the workers became my—my best source of information.
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When things happened, it was the workers that called me. So that's why—couple of times, I remembered the plant people didn't know what I know and they would call me and say Diane, where did you get that information? You know, and it was because I—I knew stuff that was going on. I knew where documents were. I knew where spills were happening. I know where cover-ups were and—you know, and there was a lot—because there's a lot of—there's a lot of engineers or corporate people in there that have no idea. Because people—people that don't have a real understanding of the way industry—a chemical plant out there, how it really functions. And especially, when you got one like Formosa Plastics, that was Taiwanese, so you had two different levels. You had the Taiwanese that were really running it and then you would have this kind of Americanized version that was kind of for show. And they—and they—they had absolutely no—they had no ability to change anything. And I remember, at one time, I was getting information from the Regulatory Affairs and he was—because he said they were trying to
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make some changes because they—they hadn't started learn about them. And so—but the other level had totally banned them from going into the units. So they just kept them in the administration. So, you know, so you've got this—this whole little life that's really going on and—and people think this agency's—the EPA's taking care of it and the—there—there's inspections.

(misc.)
DJW: Two questions related to that. One is, without revealing your sources, what are the techniques to making friends of the workers? Obviously, trust is important and they know that somehow you're not going to leak who they were. But what might be some techniques for making friends with the workers? And the second would be, what retaliation does the management take against you? Did you feel that there were guys in unmarked sedans following you at all times? And so these would be two questions, I would have, particularly address them to David.
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DW: Okay. One of the—the—I guess the ways that I started approaching the workers and—and matter of fact, it was a little strategy that Cesar Chavez said. And it's—and it's—and it's difficult, even hardnosed environmentalists find it. It's this door-to-door thing. It's like—like you—you—like there was a lot of the workers over there at Point Comfort and I would go and knock on the door and try to talk to a worker there. And a lot of them, I mean, had them slam—and I mean, these are—these are fellows that are getting memorandums sent around by the company saying this woman is trying to shut
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down this facility. She's trying to literally shut it down and that you're going to be out of a job. And these are fellows with families, with truck payments, with house payments and they are scared. And so, they're—a lot of them are angry. And so, you have to just be there to communicate and show that you want to talk to them because otherwise, I—I—I—I think the environmental movement has this real reputation of being real middle class and absolutely nothing to do with the working class. I mean, it's—it's a whole…
(misc.)
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DW: Okay. A lot of times I just went over to Point Comfort and I just started knocking on the doors and asking to speak to workers. And I knew—I—I knew a lot of their names and I knew where a lot of them lived because I was talk with one worker, he would give me a couple more workers and then, each one—so I gradually developed this list of workers. And I would go and start talking to them. And—but also, another—a strategy is just being out—being out there consistently, so when they—say, for instance, a worker got exposed. It's—when he went to the plant management and they wouldn't do anything. When he went to OSHA and they didn't do anything. And you run out of options and so, they would—they would come to me. I remember one of the workers calling me and said what are my rights? You know, she worked all night long, out on the tire. She—you know, it—it—by six in the morning, she was tired and she slipped and
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fell. And the company fired her. They said oh, you were drinking. And it's like, she wasn't—she wasn't doing any of that, but—but she had no other option because there was—you know, this was a town that had 15 percent unemployment. So you have a whole line of workers just ready to take her place. And you know what, anybody that's got any kind of exposure or they've hurt themselves is—they get rid of them. So you finally—you're the person they eventually have to talk to. And, I always—I always—even, you know, I—I've been threatened to be sued. I've been in—had them do a deposition against me and I never, ever gave the name of the worker because their—their life. Their, you know, they wouldn't be able to get a job anywhere around these parts. So I always guaranteed their

confidentiality and, let's see.
DJW: You also mentioned about a class issue about the workers, that the environmentals were perceived as being middle class.
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DW: Okay, but—and a—a lot of the workers, like I said, oh, they—they don't get involved in environmental issues because they—they feel like it's a classes type thing. It's—it's like—almost like a—a luxury to be an environmentalist. And even, I go to some environmental meetings and it's mainly white faces I see. And they're very professional people and th—and—and they don't understand the shrimpers and they don't understand the workers. You don't see the workers there; you don't see the shrimpers there. And I remember even one professional was talking at a big environmental conference and he said this thing—this thing will not get over until we start bringing in the working class people because those are the ones that—I mean, this is their community because this is a classes, almost a racist thing, is that these companies, they build in these small, working towns where you got high unemployment, where you got people with a bit—they don't have a great deal of high education. They don't go in the middle where you got scientists and—and a lot of these professional people. They—
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they—they go into these areas where they think they're going to be so beat down, they're not going to make an outcry. And I know, when I started making a headway, though, is like, you know, suddenly—like I had my boat sabotaged twice. You know, I was out in the middle of the bay and I had a net over and I happened to glance over and I noticed the boat looked low in the water and I lifted up the hull and I mean, the boat was full of water. And somebody had—they had jerked off the wires to the—it's an electric pump that—that you always keep in case you ever hit something and you don't know it and it'll automatically start putting water out. So they had ripped the wires off. They had taken the bilge pump wires off and they had loosened the stuffing box. And a stuffing box is the—you—you got a rudder and a propeller, it turns on the end. And a stuffing box, it keeps the propeller in the shaft turning, but if you loosen it too much, I mean, all this water floods in. And so, that is one of the things, the critical points, shrimper checks everyday is you check your stuffing box. And someone—and I had checked it that night and that morning when I went out, I was already in drag and the boat was sinking. And I
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don't even know what was going on. So—so that happened twice. My boat was sabotaged twice. I—and I had the helicopter landed in my front yard. Shot my mother—shot at my mother in law. Killed the dog. Shot at the house. And—you know, and the sheriff's department, it's like they couldn't care less. They couldn't care less. You know, sheriff's department wants a computer system. The ambulance—if you try to get how many workers are being hurt. The ambulance is getting defibrillators. The churches are getting all kinds of stuff. The libraries are getting on computers. And so, you can always tell when there is a dilemma with the industry because suddenly, you can ask for anything. Anybody in the county can ask for anything and they'll get it. Because you—you want to—it was like we're giving to the community. We're giving to the community. And—but they are—very definitely, they—they try, when you start making a inroad, they start trying to intimidate you. And especially when you're—you—you—you know, you're—people are afraid to do it. They can't even get loans at the bank because these people are sitting as directors of the

banks, you know. And—and—and so
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they don't speak out. Their husband works at the plant, they'll lose a job. Their cousin works at the—works at the plant. You know, and it's everybody—especially in a small town like that. It's like everybody is connected. And so, they—they become very frightened and intimidated. Privately, they think you're doing a good job. But, you know, I've had cards. Anonymous cards, anonymous phone calls telling me you're doing good, you're doing good. Somebody's got to do this, but I can't. You know, and I'd have workers telling me when they're—when they're burying drums of waste and when they're having spills and—and so you—and so I've—I've—I've become used to doing solitary actions. And that's where—and especially when you don't—there's—you can't work with the—seem to work within the—the establishment. Because I believe, the rules, they make the rules. It's their playing board. And it's—and it's not level. And so,
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I—I—I do my civil disobedience. I—I do my unreasonableness. And—and it—and it works. And—and I believe you put—you put your—you put yourself on the line. It's—it's more—it's more than a cause. It's—it's your—it's your life and it's—and—and—and, to me, I guess, where I can do it, I see—I see what I do as almost like a myth. I get this—I—I guess it's I'm a little bit of a mystic, maybe, from being out in the water. And you get this big—big picture and you see all your struggles as this mythic struggle and—and—in—in the trials you come to is like something to overcome. It's something so much bigger and you're not ever separate from it. It's not just a cause. It's not just a—an issue. It's something you can't just drop because if you drop it, you're killing the—the best part of yourself.
DT: Can you tell about some of the protests you've done? The direct actions—I know there was one where you took your shrimp boat…
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DW: Yeah. I guess I've done—to get Formosa to zero discharge; I did at least three hunger strikes. One was over 30 days; it was a water-only hunger strike. Then the last one, which really, I think, really outraged them so much, they—they decided to do zero discharge is I was fighting their wastewater permit. I had an appeal. And I was doing this all by myself. I had—my lawyer had quit. He signed an agreement with them so I didn't have a lawyer anymore. I was writing my own briefs. I was sending in my own—my own resources, my own documentation and I—I can still remember going into, where you had to fax all this stuff to them—I don't—at the critical time. And then you would get the response from the company lawyers. And I remember one time, it just started faxing, faxing and it was filling up the floor and I was like—this sinking feeling. It was like oh, my God. And I just went out and shut the door. It was like I wasn't even going
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to look at it. Well, this is these critiques from the company's lawyers. And it's like I just can't believe she's so stupid as to think this because, you know, I was putting out this information. But—but anyway, so—oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. My action. Okay, so I had—I had had this appeal in Washington and had legally, I had stopped their permit. They could not move until a Washington federal judge decided whether they could have a discharge. And so, one day I was on the phone, talking with the EPA lawyer—and my name is Diane and Formosa's lawyer's name is Diane. And so, she thought I was Formosa's lawyer. And so, she was—they were—she was just discussing about their wastewater discharge and how it was doing and

how many gallons and I was like, what? It's like, you're not supposed to be discharging. You know, I got it blocked. And here they were discharging. The state knew it. EPA knew it. Formosa knew it. It just—the
00:38:57 – 2288
public didn't know it. And it's like—and so, the reality is—is whatever they're going to do, they are going to do. It does not matter how many laws they break. That's just the reality. That's what it boils down to. And it was like—it was like I—I—I could—I could not stand to just let it go like this. And—and—and—and you have to—you have to do something to grab people and say this is not right. It's like people get so used to compromise that they're finally so compromised, they don't even an arm anymore and—and they look down, like I got a whole complete arm. And their whole arm is gone. And so, I was like. And so—and just off the top of my head, it's—I—I—I—I knew I was going to sink something and I knew it had to be my own boat because one, while I do civil—civil disobedience, it always—I don't—I don't do damage to anybody else. I bring it—it's a personal thing. And so, I felt I had to sacrifice my boat. And—and the—and the reality is it is a truth. That boat is nowhere as—as valuable as that bay. And it's
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like, well, how has it got where we think a boat is more valuable than a bay? It's not. And so, in reality, I really wasn't doing that much. But, in the way life is twisted, it's like oh, your boat. It's like a forum. It's like—I mean, how can you do something like that. So I—I took the motor out of my boat, because if I had spilled the diesel and if I had spilled oil in the bay, everybody would've looked at the oil and said oh, look at that polluter. And they wouldn't have said anything about Formosa putting 7 millions gallons a day of wastewater out there illegally. That wouldn't have been a issue. It would've been me. So I took the engine out, because I intended to sink the boat. And I got a shrimper to pull me out in the dead of night. And I was going all the way to Lavaca Bay and I was going to get Formosa's discharge and I was going to sink it right on top of that discharge. And it was like, it was going to go down and the only thing was supposed to
00:41:18 – 2288
sticking up is the mast pole. It was going to be a monument to Formosa's wrong and evil deed of destruction, what they were doing to that bay. And it was just going to be a monument. And—except that the Coast Guard got wind of it, so I had three boatloads of Coast Guard and they said that I was a terrorist on the high seas and 15 years in the federal pen and 500,000 dollars in penalties. And—and they had—they said if any shrimper dared towed me out there any further, because I was—I was—I was almost there. I was—I was probably like half a mile away from the discharge point. And that they would confiscate their boat, too. And so the Coast Guard confiscated the boat. And, matter of fact, there was—I spent the night on the boat, tied up and the—the Coast Guard spent the night, there was three truckloads of them, in a—in trucks because they were afraid, somehow or another, I was going to that boat. And still, I don't know, maybe they thought I was going to fly it out there. But they stayed around because they was afraid I
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was going to somehow get that boat out there. But the shrimpers, who normally haven't been supporting me because they—you know, they—they—they just quit believing. They just quit believing you can make a difference. They were so taken by what I was doing. They all got in their shrimp boats. The Vietnamese and the Anglos and the Hispanics and it

was a huge norther that had came in, so it was a really rough time out in the bay. And, on Lavaca Bay, when it's really rough, you can sink a tanker, it can get so rough. So it was very dangerous. But they all took their boats and they did this blockade and this protest. And it was after that, Formosa said—it was like, what is it going to take to shut her up? And so that's when I got zero discharge.
DT: Can you explain what zero discharge involves?
DJW: And back us up a little bit with this sort of the science of how you came to it, for those in the audience who might not be environmentally conscious.
DW: Like what?
DJW: What zero discharge.
(misc.)
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DW: Every chemical plant—every city has waste and it's generated and they take the pipelines and they dump it out into a waterway. They—sometimes they dumped into the rivers. Sometimes they're dumped into intercoastal canals. Sometimes they're dumped directly into the bays. And, like all of the bays around—all the chemical plants down here, on the average, they at least dump 5 million gallons a day apiece. Some, like City of Houston, they got 40 outfalls. They got huge amounts of discharges are going into the bay. And zero discharge, it was actually—it was a part of the 1972 Clean Water Act. In the 1972 Clean Water Act that was endorsed by Congress, that was passed, it said we have a goal of zero pollutants by 1985. That was the goal, that was the vision. It was like—and the thing of it is, we put people on the Mars—I mean, we put people on the Moon, we sent up satellites, we got all this technology and it's like, we can make zero
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pollutants going into that bay. We can have so little discharge. We don't even need a pipeline out there. And—but by 1980's, they took that Clean Water Act and they changed the goal. So then it became how much can a bay stand? What's the holding load? How much can it take? And it just all depends on the modeling and—and you get your environmental engineers in and the permit writers in and we figure, you know, you do your little calculus and you come up with something like I think that bay could take this. You know, and they don't talk about the synergistic effect, about chemicals working together or whether there's six plants together, putting in stuff. And then, also that they monitor their own discharge. So it's like if we have a discharge, it's like oh, we're supposed to report that ourselves because nobody else is reporting it. So, no wonder you have superfund sites. No wonder you have bays that are contaminated and closures. No wonder you have birds that are diseased. No wonder you have fish in
00:45:51 – 2288
Lavaca Bay that have mercury contents and the crabs with the mercury content and when the shrimp uptaking it. No wonder all of this is going on. It's—this is the state of our waterways and my—my goal, my vision was zero discharge. Exactly what the Clean Water Act was. It's that there should be no pollutants. And the thing it is, this is not pie in the sky. This has been around for—this technique has been around for 20 years and it began originally because—because places like Saudi Arabia, South Africa, where there is no water, you can't afford to throw away water if you don't have any and you want to build a chemical plant, you can't afford to be constantly hauling in these millions of gallons of feet of water you got to have everyday. So they recycled it. There's techniques to totally recycle

the entire thing. But over here in America, we got the mindset we got all the water we want. We got the bay where it's free to dump. And so, they do. And mine was I—and—and also, the—the public does not realize zero discharge is out there. Any—anyplace I have went to and talked to the public and said
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you can do zero discharge, they're like what? You mean, there's such a thing? And it's like yeah, there's such a thing. You go to the companies, there's like there's no such thing as that. There's no such thing. And you keep it up and they say well, we can't do it. And then, pretty soon, it's like, you know, but—but you have to, so far, I have had to wrestle the plants down to get them to zero discharge. And, you know, and I believe it's—it's like this hundredth monkey thing because you reach a—a—this critical point and it's going to be a way of doing things. That's—that's the way this change happens. You may have to get a few reluctant players in the beginning, but after awhile, they're going to accept it as this is the way to do it. And—and that is—I feel like it's my—my role. That's the role I play is to bring zero discharge to this country.
DW: Okay.
DT: Could you tell us how your efforts in direct action and traditional sort of appeals finally brought Formosa around and what the resolution of that story was
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DW: The end results of my attempt to sink that shrimp boat was that Formosa sit down with me and I brought in a environmental engineer, Jack Matson from Penn State. And—and it's very critical to have a person on the activist side who understands the concept of zero discharge because even while you get companies to talk about it, their mindset the whole time they're discussing this with you is to go back exactly what they were doing. So your—your dilemma is to convince them and keep showing them how they can do it. And because we always put in the—the agreements I made, and probably why they agreed to them, is not only environmentally superior, but economically feasible. We had to show, by sound science, that it was environmentally superior, economically feasible. And—and you can do it. Matter of fact, Jack Matson, who teaches environmental excellence at Penn State and has worked—did many zero discharge pulling processes at a lot—in a lot of plants, is that any chemical plant can go zero
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discharge. It's like a chemical plant takes, perhaps, 2 percent of its capital budget to do the wastewater. And for like 2 percent more, you can go totally zero discharge. And it's like each chemical company has to be customized. You know, like one thing may work for one chemical plant that doesn't work for another, but it can be—it can be done for every chemical plant. And with Formosa Plastics, the first agreement, we got 33 percent of their wastestream recycled. We saved 2.6 million gallons of freshwater a day. And we also—and—and it was also, we started the second part of it to do—it was zero discharge across all mediums. And, not only the wastewater, but the air, the land. You know, the waste that goes to the land. Because you can take—when you do these techniques, you can take the waste from it, the solid product, add something to it and make a whole new product. Like with Formosa's, you can make high-grade gypsum wallboard. And they can make money on it. You know, it's—it's like—it's an imitation of—what do they call it, biological mimicry? It's like the environment does not waste nothing and we don't have to either. And I do know after I did the zero discharge

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agreement with Formosa, and like I said, it took about—it was 1994. I started in 1989. It was 1994 before I got zero discharge out of them. But, as soon as I did that, I walked over to Alcoa Aluminum and I said—I remember walking in the door and I said well, do we do zero discharge or do we do the other thing? And I was—I was red—I was ready. Just let me know. And they—they kind of looked at each other and about fifteen minutes, they agreed to zero discharge. So I did it with zero discharge with Alcoa Aluminum. So—so a lot of it is you get on this momentum and people see what you do and they know where you will go, how far you will go. Because I think a lot of it—the industry will figure, you know, we can tire these people out. You know, it's like—like getting rid of a lawyer, you know, just dump documents on him. Just overwhelm him. Get him in a black hole. But when they see you won't quit. You know, they used to call me—they called me a—a nut. Everybody said I was a nut. And now they say I'm a
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persistent nut. And so, you know, it's—and so I got the zero discharge from Alcoa and then I fought for zero discharge on DuPont. And I went on a 30-day hunger strike on them to get zero discharge and I remember, I even went it—took it to Delaware and did it in front of their corporate headquarters. And the interesting thing that came out of that is the Chemical Week magazine, they did an article on zero discharge and the people that do zero discharge tech—technology, they said the—just in that month time we did this whole media focus on the hunger strike and zero discharge on DuPont. Zero discharge. Zero dis—it quadrupled the demands of people calling in to zero discharge technology. It quadrupled. And so all—to me, that means all it has to do is just get out there. And you—and get it to where it's on people's lips and so they start asking for it. The companies themselves started saying, okay, show me what you got. And—and that's the
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whole point of this—this mo—momentum. And—and also, I—I've got the—it used to be the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and now it's the Paper Workers have aligned with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers. And they en—endorsed on their national platform zero discharge. It's because it does not remove jobs. It makes their jobs safer and I can't tell you how many workers have come to me and said we don't want these bays destroyed. I take my kids out there. We live next to it. You know, I've been around a bay my whole life and—and they do not want to see the bays destroyed. So my best supporters—every time I went with zero discharge, I always got the workers. I got the unions on those.
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DT: Well, let's see if we can find some sort of a way to sum this up. You've worked so long on trying to show the importance of the bay and of the environment, in general. And of the possibilities for improving the way industry works and lower the kind of impacts on the bay and on the environment. What kind of advice can you give to others who might be activists or concerned individuals about how they can follow your lead?
DW: Well, I just—if I have—ever have one message, because I've—I've had an opportunity to go to different places and speak. And if I ever have one message, and it's really not so much I tell them to do zero discharge. I tell them one person can make a difference. And I am—I am probably the—the most unlikely person because I didn't have the leadership ability. I didn't have the speaking. I didn't have the education. But the one thing I did have was my passion. And that's all that matter. And even Gandhi said it's a myth to believe that

you got to have the people and that you got to have money. It's because you don't need—in the beginning, you don't need none of that. All you have to do is have a vision, have an intent and just go right for it. And it's like—and it's like
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you step out into empty space and something is there, where your foot will reach solid ground. And it's—it's—it's—it's—it's—it's—it's visionary. To me, it's visionary. It has something to do about hope and—and about integrity and it's about your—your path. It's—it's—it's about your life. And it's—you know, this old thing, as above, so below. It's like there's—there's nothing separate. There's no division in that philosophy and anybody—anybody can do what I did. And I always encourage them is to step out, take a risk and it will change your life like you cannot imagine.
DT: Good.
(misc.)
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