



Interviewee: Richard Brown

Place of interview: Mosquito Beach, Charleston County, South Carolina

Date of interview: February 14, 2019

Interviewer: Michael A. Allen

Transcriber: Home Row, Inc.

Length of interview: 45:17

BEGIN INTERVIEW

Michael Allen: Good afternoon, Richard. How are you doing?

Richard Brown: Well. How are you?

MA: I'm good. Well, thank you for coming out today and spending some time with us as we talk about the history and legacy and culture of [00:00:13 unintelligible] region. I just wanted to say you have a lot that you want to be able to share with us. So we'll just have a simple conversation about your experience and your life here at Mosquito Beach. First, just tell me your name, please, sir.

RB: Richard Brown.

MA: Richard Brown.

RB: Yeah. Sixty-six years old.

MA: Okay, I even asked that, but that's cool. Sixty-six years old.

RB: Yeah.

MA: Cool. And I guess you're a native here?

RB: Born and raised straight behind you, over there. Yeah, just off of Mosquito Beach.

MA: Okay, just off of the beach.

RB: Yes, sir. When I was young we used to go to bed listening to music and wake up listening to music.

MA: Well, good.

RB: All night long.

MA: Well, I was going to ask you about your first experience. [00:00:56 unintelligible] long. Tell me a little bit about your first experiences.

RB: On Mosquito Beach?

MA: Yeah.

RB: Well...

MA: Hearing at home first and coming here physically second.

RB: Well, I was born in [00:01:07 unintelligible] she lived with my grandmother and grandfather. And we would help them on the farm during the week. And except Fridays, we would shell lima beans and pickle okra and figs and whatnot. Yeah, up the tree, and then they would take these down to the market downtown. But when we get our little change, our thing was to come over here on Sunday evening on Mosquito Beach and spend our little money, you know?

Sodas was 11 cents. Nabs was a nickel. Sugar Daddy was a nickel. [00:01:48 Scroll Net] was a penny. Mary Janes was a penny. All these good things back in the day were plentiful and reasonable. Yes, sir.

MA: So that's kind of your first experience coming to Mosquito Beach.

RB: Yes, sir. Absolutely.

MA: How long did it take you to walk from your house here?

RB: Three minutes.

MA: Three minutes. Now, when you walked here that three minutes, did you walk with your cousins, brothers, sisters? Family? Who did you walk with.

RB: All the neighborhood kids. We all would come down, you know, spend a little time.

MA: But in your younger days, you came in the daytime.

RB: Yes, sir, absolutely.

MA: Why you come in the nighttime?

RB: Well, that was the older folks time.

MA: Old folks time.

RB: Yeah, and back in those days, the older folks had a saying. "Stay with your equal." You know that that means, right?

MA: No, tell us.

RB: Stay with your equal means going with people your age. Stay out of grown folks' business and conversation. Not like today where these young kids be right up in their mama and daddy's conversation and they're allowed. That's creating disrespect. You know what I mean?

MA: Okay. So, when you came, let's stick to your younger days, and you bought the Nabs and the sodas and everything else. What were some of the building that you were able to buy these things from, or where did you go?

RB: Okay, let me give you a little history. When I was a young fellow, the first Mosquito Beach was right here. That was the first one. That's the one [00:03:23 Hurricane Gracie] took.

MA: Took out, okay. Yes, sir.

RB: Hurricane Gracie took that one, okay? Then it was, that place on [00:03:32 Anne], Mr. Jack Walker used to run that one. Then they had another one right next to it. Joe Walker, called him [00:03:42 Nucker], he used to run that one. Then coming on down, it was where they had the bumper cars over there, on the other side of this place. And then before they built that hotel now, it was another place right in between there. A lady named Miss Ethel used to run that one. WAY back there.

This one here was built later on. You know what I mean? It was strictly dirt road. No concrete or nothing. And it was just a lot of fun and enjoyment. Not a bunch of violence.

MA: So that's how you remember it as a child.

RB: Right.

MA: That's how you remember it as a child.

RB: Absolutely.

MA: Okay. Well, that's a little bit up in your [00:04:37 unintelligible]. Tell me a little bit more. What was it then for you coming as an older person? Teenager going to young adult as opposed to a youngster?

RB: Well, as far as going out, when you get cleaned up, you didn't have to go very far. You didn't have to hitch no ride. You walked to Mosquito Beach. All the girls come from everywhere but [00:05:02 unintelligible] here. Everywhere.

MA: Everywhere all [00:05:04 unintelligible] County.

RB: Right, you know? We didn't have the high violence like Riverside Beach now. You know what I mean? There were fights now, don't get me wrong. But you know, a fight was a fight back then. When it was done, it was done. Finished, you know?

MA: So it was a little bit different for you coming as a young man as opposed to young child.

RB: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely, because you're eying the girls now. You know what I mean?

MA: Okay, yes, sir. Okay.

RB: Now, you know, that's a part of life. That's a growing stage. That's a phase.

MA: Yes, sir, okay. So, now that you are here in your young adult life, it's just a different story for you.

RB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MA: But the fun was different? Probably a little bit different then.

RB: But right now, I come and look and ride through every now and then, but I don't...

MA: Hang out much.

RB: Right. You know, I'm past that stage now. I'm looking to the hills, which come [00:06:12 unintelligible] health. My health comes from the grand master of the universe. Yes, sir.

MA: Well, good. I noticed a couple of times we've been out here, we saw you in the water and oysters. Come and tell me about that. How did you get into it? How long you been doing it? Do you enjoy it? How do you benefit from that?

RB: Okay. I started with oysters when I was about six or seven. Irvin Singleton had a commercial oyster house over there, right across the street from where I lived. And tractor trailers used to come in and pick up oysters. He used to load them up, and he used to take them all over. I can't tell you where they took it, but they took them out of here.

MA: These are oysters that were picked right here on Mosquito Beach.

RB: Right here, right here, right on the flat. Right here. Right in the very close proximity. And he had his commercial licenses. He had everything. He had a shucking house and a shipping house. You know what I mean? And I was a kid. You know, like I said, I didn't have to go to Red and White to be a bag boy. I could walk right across the street and work in oysters.

MA: You were gainfully employed.

RB: Yeah, we used to single them up for him. You know what I mean? Wash them, bag them, shuck them.

MA: Was this an all-day affair, to do all this?

RB: Well, you know, working in oysters, it depends on what you've got to do. I mean, as far as picking oysters, I go two hours before low tide and work about an hour and a half to two hours behind the incoming tide, which gives me time enough to get a good load. You know what I mean? So that's about four hours working. Then you've got to come back and clean them up and bag it up and put it in the cooler, you know. Another hour and a half.

MA: So, on a good day, how many pounds would you haul in?

RB: I don't do oysters by the pound. See, that's a fish market thing. You know what I mean? The pound. Because that's the way for them to make more money. You know, I do it by the bushel.

MA: By the bushel.

RB: Right.

MA: Then let me rephrase my question. In the course of a day, how many bushels would you pull together?

RB: I could do about 16, 17, 18 bushels on the day. Between a bad day, you know. But it all depends on what you want. How you dedicate your time to picking, and how you procrastinate. And the [00:09:00 unintelligible] you're going to sit down and watch the porpoises or something, you ain't going to get much work done. But if you go out there with that goal to get --

MA: To get it done.

RB: Sixteen, 17, 18, you get it. You could do it.

MA: And so for most of your adult life in doing oysters, you did it right here were we are right now.

RB: Yeah, right here. [00:09:19 King or Kane] Flat. This is the best flat in the world, bar none. It's picked hard every year and produces oysters every year.

MA: Wow. That's good.

RB: But part of that is how you pick it.

MA: Okay, tell me about that.

RB: When you pick oysters, you've got to knock the little oysters off of the one you're getting ready to put in the basket. You knock it off. Your reasoning for that is to have something to come back to and to replenish what you're doing, you know? Some people, these new pickers today, they carry everything and it's kind of killing the oysters out. But a professional picker, that's what I call myself. A professional picker knows how to do it, you know? You're knocking them off, leaving something for tomorrow.

MA: There's a way to preserve the environment.

RB: Absolutely.

MA: To have where you can come next season.

RB: Absolutely.

MA: Well, let me ask this. I know probably over the years, and you being like a sort of flat as you call it here. Have you noticed an increase of maybe trash or pollution or things that may be accumulating here? Or you haven't had to face that here? And then it was sea level rise and all these things like that --

RB: You don't see too much trash out there in that river. More trash is along the shoreline, you know. But not out in the creek, but along the shoreline, you know. People throw a plastic bag or a bottle. And when the tide's coming in and the wind's blowing, they're going to come right back to the shore.

MA: Well, also a concern that we have in terms of conversation is, how has this flat changed in the time of your life being here in terms of it being accessible for you to get there easy? And also the amount of work that you can pick. Does it feel like the days it was a long time ago?

RB: This flat right here?

MA: Mm, hmm.

RB: You could actually walk on it. Picking oysters is a technique that you have to acquire. You just don't walk out there and pick oysters. You know what I mean? And walking in pluff mud, soft mud, takes some doing. You know what I mean? But if you're walking in soft mud, if you've got from point A to point B you don't stop. You keep walking until you get where you're going. You know what I mean? Yeah, if you don't, you're going to ease on down and the struggle gets harder.

MA: So, when you did -- as you do now as you did back then and you picked your bushel. Did you sell any of them to some of the establishments that were here along the beach or took them to -- ?

RB: Those people had the capability and the family to get their own.

MA: Get their own, oh, okay.

RB: Yeah.

MA: [00:12:24 unintelligible] provided [00:12:25 unintelligible]

RB: Yeah, back in yonder days, I remember when I was little, man. I mean, you know, Sol Legare was always a good place to be. You had food, you could get fish and shrimp. Crabs. You know? The old folks planted the fields, they did a lot of canning. You know what I mean? They had okra, tomato, string beans, they jarred everything and put them up for the winter. Times get a little tight, they got food in there. You know what I mean?

MA: I think what you just described, needing to be self-sufficient, do you think that was something that people living here on Mosquito Beach or the Sol Legare area knew they had to be self-sufficient?

RB: Yeah, absolutely. The older folks, they were people of their word. The older men, if they told you something, that was book. That was it. That's the way it's going to be. They didn't go back on their word and change direction. They were men. And when a man tells you something that his word, that's him. That's it. It's lock, stock, and barrel. If they were to give you a piece of property, couldn't nobody build nothing on that property because it was for you. You see what I'm saying?

And the only way that would be is if you didn't want it. You know what I mean? But then old people bought all this property for nickel and dime. They worked hard. You know those people weren't even making but 10 cents a day and maybe less. And they worked hard. And to get some of this property. And as sad as [00:14:25 unintelligible] to an extent, that some of these younger folks would get these properties and let it go for tax dollars. Three, four, five, six hundred dollars a whole year for tax, and they'd let a property go.

Or sell it to go buy a house somewhere. Don't pay for the house, right? And they'll pay for the house and then end up losing their house, then they ain't got nothing.

MA: Well, you know, that's part of the reason --

RB: Nothing.

MA: That's part of the reason why we're here. Because the [00:14:55 History Tulson] Foundation, the state of South Carolina, a number of organizations recognize that Mosquito Beach is a very historic place. [00:15:04 unintelligible] our interview here, I guess I should ask you. You somewhat maybe have touched on what makes Mosquito Beach and the Sol Legare area special to you? What makes it special, if you had to tell somebody else that?

RB: Okay, look. When we were raised, we were raised with courtesy and respect for people and their possessions. You didn't go and bother another man's property without his permission. When you seen the elderly folks, you're walking down the street, and you pass an old folk on

that road, you better say good morning, good evening or whatever, because by the time you got home, I don't know how they did it, but the message was there. And you'd better look out, because they didn't spare the rod.

Because they wouldn't have spoiled no kids around here. You know what I mean? You had to answer for what you did. It's like today. If you don't want to do the time, don't do the crime. If you didn't disrespect nobody right here because them old people would wait until you went to bed, nodding out, lord have mercy. You feel the cover draw back. The door lock. You can't run. Then they beat you. Then when you try to grab the strap or the stick, they beat you all in your head. You get beat up. You hear me?

Now, time for a good sleep. After a good whupping is a good sleep. That's right. You wake up in the morning refreshed.

MA: So, things like that or experiences like that, and the oysters and everything from here, you made Mosquito Beach a special place --

RB: Absolutely. You know, I mean back in yonder days, as you know, you couldn't mix and mingle over there on Folly Beach. You could go over there and go to work, but you had to be on out of there at a certain time. You know what I mean? So you learned to do with what you had. You see what I'm saying? I mean, right now I can tell you the last time I went on Folly Beach, because it never excited me. Not Folly Beach. Not all the problems [00:17:35 I saw]. Them things never excited me. I didn't see the big brouhaha over going there. You know what I mean?

MA: You were happy and content here.

RB: I was satisfied. And during a certain time of year, they used to have these excursions. We used to go to Atlantic Beach. Hey, I was satisfied. You know what I mean? What's the profit in going there. There's no profit. And there's nobody no good. They only thing what it is that you were free to go where you want to go. That's the whole thing about it. Don't stop me from coming here. Let me go where I want to go. I ain't bothering nobody. I ain't taking nothing from nobody. Let me go where I want to go.

MA: Well, you know, a part of the work that [00:18:25 unintelligible] and I were doing here today and talking with you, it's also talking about civil rights. And I think you somewhat touched on that. That you as an African American person of color felt that there was a freedom that was here. And people talk about that. Why did you feel that there was a greater freedom here than driving 10 minutes to the next island where you think there was greater freedom there?

RB: It's like this. You go where you feel comfortable. If you don't feel comfortable in a club or a restaurant or something, you won't frequent that place, right? So you go where you feel comfortable and relaxed. It was all about enjoying yourself. It ain't about this, or I'm on Folly Beach. Mr. [00:19:17 Sun Brown] used to own Folly Beach. That was a black man on that island. And there by hook -- listen to me -- and crook, they took that island from that man.

As they do right now with a lot of -- they're still taking people's land around here, and that's a shame. Because a man could go down in your property and put up a little camp, right? A makeshift camp. And then turn around and claim your property for squatter's rights when you're still paying your taxes because you ain't back on your taxers. You ain't nothing in arrears or nothing, and they can challenge you in court for your property. There should be a law against that. They should not even entertain that in the courts.

You know what I mean? But that's another way to take people's property.

MA: So, coming here to Mosquito Beach where you have to face these challenges, it gave you a --

RB: A sense of freedom.

MA: A sense of freedom.

RB: Absolutely.

MA: Okay. Others that we have interviewed have also said that. And I guess as you somewhat alluded to, people came here from all over the county and there was a sense of freedom or a sense of being in place where you felt comfortable, where you could communicate, where you met people. You met people from all over the county here, I bet.

RB: Yeah, you feel this breeze?

MA: Yeah.

RB: Well, if you're going to go around here. And this is like a daily thing right here. This breeze blowing through here. On Sol Legare waterfront area. Man, I'm telling you, it's heaven, you know?

MA: [00:21:00 unintelligible]

RB: It's heaven, you know? Barring the violence. And you know, that's everywhere you go. You know what I mean? You don't raise your kids to be violent people, but they pick these things up.

MA: [00:21:18 unintelligible]

RB: That's right, you know.

MA: Well, let's kind of come back to kind of -- I see [00:21:18 unintelligible] maybe older in age, and you came to some of the little [00:21:24 unintelligible] joints and clubs there. Tell me a little bit about that experience.

RB: Well.

MA: This is a different story here.

RB: There was a place right here. [00:21:38 Jewish Haywas] had a club right here. Mr. Jimmy Lafayette had one right there, right? And these two would be open year-round. This one would open on a Easter Monday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday. All the rest of them would open on Easter Monday. But they used to live here, and he used to live right over there, so they'd open up year-round. Had a nice wood stove and a big pot of lima beans and fried fish. Man, and you could eat well for literally nothing.

You know what I mean? But back then a dollar was a dollar. I mean, you could take a dollar and you could go a long way with a dollar. But it's something you can't do today, you know?

MA: So, when you came in your more adult life. And I guess those music party... Tell me a little bit about that. An evening out here in your more of an adult time.

RB: Well, my mama had some restrictions on me. You know what I mean? I just didn't run wild. You understand what I'm saying? When they say, be home, you be home or you sleep on the dang porch.

MA: Okay.

RB: You had to abide by the rules. I mean I used to come down here, and you dance, you're young. You might drink a little bit of beer or something, you know. And the thing right here, being back in them days was moonshine. Everybody had a still. You'd be hunting birds and stuff and you'd walk and you'd walk up on a still, right?

MA: Yes, sir.

RB: We used to walk up to the still and take the stuff all over the barrel, right? You take and you move that stuff, and you just put your head right down there and drink. That's right, I'm telling you. It happened that way. You know what I mean? But I mean, hey, that was part of growing up. Oysters and moonshine was Sol Legare back then. You know, a lot of people had their jobs and stuff, but you know...

MA: [00:24:00 unintelligible] somebody on the side.

RB: People with their families, they had to do what they had to do. It wasn't nothing they're stealing.

MA: Honest living.

RB: They're working. They believe in working. And I'm thankful for that, because I ain't got no problem getting up at two, three, four o'clock in the morning and go to do what I've got to do. No problem. None whatsoever.

MA: So you would say from -- I'm just asking really your experience here and doing oysters your whole life has just been a joy to you.

RB: Yeah, absolutely. I still love it. I go out there in 20-degree weather. I get me a bucket and make a fire and I go to work. And that's the way it is, you know? I ain't looking for nothing from nobody for nothing. God make a way for me and I go and I use that way, and I don't complain. I could go get a job, but that's a good enough job for me.

MA: So all your life you've lived here?

RB: No. No, I was in the military for a good while. Yeah. That was in the United States Air Force for a good while, you know. But I left doing oysters and I came back doing oysters. You know what I mean?

MA: How did you describe where you grew up to the folks you met when you were in the military? Because they probably asked you where you were from. You told them Charleston or you told them Mosquito Beach?

RB: That's right. I told them where I was from. And they always said we had a Jamaican-type accent out there, you know? "Are you from Jamaica?" No, no, no, no.

MA: Well, so you know they have color, but you didn't [00:25:42 unintelligible]?

RB: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I knew it was color back then, too. But hey, I'm from James Island. That's right. And you know, country boys are a gem, so to speak. Because you could go anywhere and as slick as them city boys are, they just can't fool you. They can't fool you. You see them coming way down the road. You know they're coming with something outlandish. You just let them go and have their say. I mean you've got to do, just let them have their say. You know what I mean?

MA: In the little bit of time we've got left, if you can, tell me, just tell us, you know, speak to us as to how do you see this place today? What would you want to see it in the future? And if there's one thing that you could tell a young person about your experience [00:26:47 unintelligible] what would you tell them?

RB: Well, from Mosquito Beach, I know Mr. Wallace, in his late 70s. But I'd love to see them put a pavilion back right there. That would be awesome. You know what I mean? I know you're going to do certain things, but I'd love to see that go back. And a lot of these places are not raggy places. And that young lady [00:27:18 unintelligible] from growing up, that thing is beautiful inside, you know? And if they allow him and let him fix up his little building right here, the hotel, that would be awesome.

And I'd just love to see a little more family-friendly stuff for the youngsters.

MA: Bring the bumper cars back, too?

RB: If they could. If they've got the room. You know, you really ain't got much acreage to do that.

MA: Okay, and you remember the bumper cars, sir?

RB: Yeah, I was a little fellow. I was a little fellow. Man, I remember I used to come from school. And you know I got a nickel. And they used to be in here. And it was Uncle [00:28:01 Apple] who built these places. They used to be like be in there playing checkers. And I'd come in there and I'd disturb him, and I heard him say one day, "Every day at the same time that boy right there comes and is bossing me when I'm playing checking." But I'm a kid. I just want my Sugar Daddy so I can go on about my business.

I had no interest in nothing else. You know what I mean? And then there was little stream right behind here, we used to make boats off of a piece of wood. And you put all kinds of little stuff on it and you'd be walking down there pulling your boat, sucking your Sugar Daddy, walking from here all the way down over there. You know what I mean? Just enjoying yourself, you know? We used to make little mud buses. You get a juice can and a hanger wire and you make a car, right? Put a string on it and pull it behind you.

Them kids don't know nothing about them toys these days. You know what I mean? And as far as the oysters, well, I got my son OJTing with the oysters.

MA: How does he feel about it?

RB: He loves it. He loves it. And that's why I take the time to let him do what he wants to do with me. You know, I ain't going to be here forever, but I love showing him and tell him. You know what I mean? The first thing when he got in the boat I said, "Listen, man, this is school. No BSing. Okay?" I said, "You're in class and you come here to learn. You ain't come here to play around." And that's the way me and him go.

MA: How long has he been doing with you, sir?

RB: Couple years. And I told him, "When you pull up to a bank, son, the first thing you do is throw your anchor out." I had the boat leave me in cold weather. I'm talking about cold weather. You know what I mean? So, you don't want to get caught up in that. Especially being nobody around. Because you're going to have to go in the water --

MA: To get it.

RB: To get it. That's right. That's correct. So, you know, it's a future in oysters. Because it's a seasonal thing. But then they got these [00:30:30 unintelligible] culture things now, they're doing. It will be a year-round thing, too, if one wants to get into that. You know what I mean? Now as far as years ago, they used to have shucking houses all over. But the Department of Health and Environmental Control regulated those things out of business. You hear me? They over-regulated the industry. They put regulations on things that didn't have to be regulated.

Right now I'm telling you some of the things I don't understand. They'll put a sign right where that camera is, and they'll say, on that side of the camera is bad water. And on this side of the camera is good water. I can't comprehend that. I just don't understand it. You know what I mean? I just don't understand it.

MA: That's why I asked you from the beginning about you feeling safe and comfortable all your life being here.

RB: Yeah, I ain't never got sick off no oysters out here. No. I mean least year, they had the big sewer spill up in Hollywood? Man, those people told us about that sewer spill two, three weeks after it spilled. Then what did they come and do? Close us down. After that amount of time, if something was in there, we'd done eat it.

MA: Well, yeah, I guess so.

RB: I'm serious. But I guess they did what they did to save face. But there ain't no saving no face in those situations like that. You know what I mean? They hire a lot of people that went to four-year colleges and got their little sheepskin, and then they go out and they know it all. That man who's out here working, if you want to learn some stuff, check with the man who's working out here. Check with the man who's doing the work. And try to get some insight from him. You'll learn a lot, trust me. They can't tell me nothing about an oyster. I ain't saying I know it all, but I know enough to know how to replenish it or make it grow. I know that much, you know? That's right. And I know where oysters ain't going grow. You know what I mean? I know that much.

So you've got to get off these high horses. And there's nothing wrong with going to school and getting an education. By no means am I saying that. What I'm saying is, change your direction. Come to the people who are working in these areas. Don't sit in the office and assume and make decisions without consulting the people that it's going to affect.

MA: Well that's why we've spent most of the winter. I guess you could say coming and sitting here when it's cold, windy, or whatever, to have conversations with folks who live here, who work here, who grew up here. Because you can tell me more about the place and we got --

RB: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

MA: [00:33:42 unintelligible] read a book. [00:33:44 unintelligible] this place is still popular with people still coming in and out all the time.

RB: Oh, yeah.

MA: Well, that's part of the reason we're here. Because hopefully whatever comes out of this here would allow us to be able to help you all, work with you all. So people when they drive by, they know where they are. We know where we are in the history books. That car, wherever they're from, they don't know. They're just taking pictures. The people who rode by on that

motorcycle, they don't know. They just happen to ride by on the motorcycle. So, again, we want to thank you for finally catching up -- well, we finally catching up with you. Having a chance to --

RB: Oh, yeah. I mean I was always willing to do it. It's just a matter of timing, you know?

MA: Yeah, we didn't want to interfere with your craft and with the oysters. So before we sign off, any last thing you want to say that you think is important about this place?

RB: Well, a coming together of the minds will make a significant difference. They had a little -- what do you call them -- Mosquito Beach revitalization effort a while back. And what I suggest to them is to get together and think of some ways to increase the business and where everybody will be onboard with it. A lot of times you're pulling one way and I'm pulling another way, or somebody else is pulling another way. We ain't never going to get nothing done. And one man can't do it all.

[00:35:25 Cubby Works] is behind [00:35:27 unintelligible] right here. [00:35:28 unintelligible] me from the head of the road all the way down here. Grass. Keeping the place clean. And I understand what he's doing. You know what I mean? I understand what he's doing. And it won't take much for this place here to boom, You know what I mean? It don't take much for this place to boom. All you've got to do is, if you can, is keep the violence out. Every time it's something going good, the crowd heavy, you hear bam, bam, bam.

Lord have mercy, you know? When is that going to stop? I remember when I was young, there could have been 100 people around. One person might have had a blank gun and made a 22-caliber pistol out of it. All them other guns, it was in somebody's house. You know what I mean? I'd just like to see more love and less violence. You know what I mean? And a part of that is the establishment came into your home, right? I hope you all are listening. You all came into these homes and you tell these kids that if their mom and daddy beat you, to call 911. What an awful thing to do.

And God's word, he said, you spare the rod, you spoil the child. And he said it. And he's the supreme. God is the supreme, and he's telling you how to raise your child. And then the government comes and interferes and intervenes and says, if they beat you, even though you've been bad and you did something wrong, if they beat you, call 911 on them. That's undermining authority. That's undermining the parents.

Another thing also. Mothers are awesome. I lost my mama about two weeks ago, okay? But my mama was a single parent for a long time, and she did awesome work. You understand what I'm saying? So I don't want to hear nobody say a woman can't raise kids by themselves. They can do it because they're strong-willed and they didn't spare the rod. My mama, if she said, "Don't do this," and you do it, you know what's going to happen.

It only made how much you want to sleep in the house. I remember one morning, I was a young fellow. I was about seven. My mama dressed me up in her new clothes she bought. Give me my 15 cents and tell me to go to Sunday School. I when back in the creek back there,

[00:38:29 Hawley] Creek with my mama's good clothes on. Got muddied up. And I come back home and my mama sees her clothes. Lord have mercy. Mama, please don't kill me. Don't kill me. But I ain't never did that no more. Because I realized I was wrong. After she did what she did to me, beating me up. Yeah, I got beat up, and I deserved it because I didn't do what she told me to do.

I didn't go to Sunday School like she told me. And the money I was supposed to drop in the basket, I bought sweets. Yeah, man, I did my thing. But I suffered my thing, too. It's a good thing. You know, life is good, man. And it's awesome. Just live life, enjoy life. Don't be so nitpicky, you know. There's a lot of rules to follow, yeah. But my god, stay out of some of these people's houses sometime and let these people raise their children like they used to raise their children so they can stop some of this violence.

You all is the one that really caused all the violence because you don't want people touching them kids. And they ain't always abusing kids. There was less abuse back in my time than it is today. There's more abuse now and they're doing what they want to do.

MA: Well, we thank you for your time and I guess we've talked to a number of people and we've heard a lot of different good things about Mosquito Beach and we'll do our best to work with you all [00:40:10 unintelligible].

RB: Or Joe Chavis?

MA: Yes.

RB: Let me tell you something.

MA: Yeah, we need to know that, too.

RB: Joe Chavis, when I was a little boy, he was an old man. I'm serious.

MA: A kingpin.

RB: A kingpin! And kingpin used to go in the river, a lot of times by himself. And they had a foot tub, remember? A foot tub and No. 3 tub. A lot of times when you had running water you had to bathe in that No. 3 tub. But he had taken a No. 3 tub and filled it up with his catch. It could be full of fish. It could be full of shrimp. And the old man picked that tub up, set it on his bare shoulder, and he was just barely walking. He'd taking his slow time of walking. He never runs. Never rests or do nothing. Put one hand on to balance it, and walk it up and right where this place is at, he had a pavilion built there. A deck, so to speak.

And he set it down there, the head of the shrimp. Wash up the fish. And right down here, when the crane first dug this out, you could set a -- he had what they call like it's a big trap. About 10, 12 foot long. It's sitting down the water. He'd catch the crabs and stuff, right? Drop them in there. And then the water all there, they're alive. And if he wanted to cook some for

somebody, he'd come out here and go in there and get it out and go back and cook them. And the terminology California [00:41:56 whiting], it was etched right here.

MA: [00:42:03 unintelligible]

RB: You know what that is, right?

MA: No, go and tell me.

RB: That's a mullet fish. Joe Chavis used to go get some of them big old pretty mullet fish and clean them. And his wife was the best cook in the world, bar none. [00:42:17 Middie]. Middie could cook. Middie fried them fish and they said, "What kind of fish you got [00:42:24 Conjewel]?" Conjewel said, "I got some California whiting, cuz. Some California whiting." And man, they'd buy them up. They'd buy them up and they'd eat them up. I'm telling you, man. It was something else.

MA: So you all didn't spill the beans and say it was mullet.

RB: No, man. No, that California whiting is mullet from day to day.

MA: Well, we can get in on this laugh of the California whiting and kingpin. But you know, in all honesty, all of this whole thing that you've shared that came from your heart, let me know that we made -- this is the right decision to come and sit and talk with you. And again, on behalf of everybody, we just want to say thank you for coming and [00:43:08 unintelligible] --

RB: Glad to be of some kind of assistance, you know? We're all just passing through. And we try to help somebody on the way through. Have somebody do better than we did. Or we couldn't do. You know what I mean? I love to see kids strive. And I'm so proud of some of these young girls, educating themselves and they don't have to be dependent on nobody. And I congratulate them all the time, man. I'm telling you, you know? I tell them I look at them and I say, "Listen, do what you've got to do for you. You get a boyfriend later. Don't get a boyfriend in high school." I tell my granddaughter that.

I say you don't need no boyfriend. I said you need to get in them books. I say you need to take care of your business. You know what I mean? I say your aunt come in this house and never had to say, "Study your lesson." From a baby, never had to tell her to study. Never had to tell her to do her homework or nothing. She came in, she graduated at University of South Carolina. Graduated in four years cum laude, sat out a year, went back the next year to law school. Graduated law school, passed her bar on the first [00:44:29 lam]. Yeah, man. And I'm so glad.

My niece went to USC upstate, RN. You know, them young girls is working, man. And I love to see that, you know? Help yourself to you won't have to be dependent on nobody, young ladies. Work. They boyfriend thing, he says, "Oh, you look good, mama!" Yeah, you look good. You know you look good. But later for that. You got time for that. You don't have to jump in them things right now. Take your time and let that come to you. That's right. If something happens and you ain't -- hey, I'm good.

MA: That's the [00:45:12 unintelligible] for you.

RB: Yeah.

MA: All right. Well, I appreciate it.

RB: That's the way it works.

MA: Thank you for that.

RB: Yes, sir. Absolutely.

END INTERVIEW