

CIGAR DAISEY WITH DAVE HALL  
AUDIO OF VIDEO RECORDING  
MARCH 23, 1989  
Also present—Newman Merritt

[Throughout most of interview, the sounds made by Mr. Daisey whittling wood can be heard.]

MR. DAISEY: My name is Cigar Daisey. I was born and raised in Chincoteague, Virginia.

MR. HALL: Cigar, tell me where your people came from.

MR. DAISEY: Well, they tell us that we come from Delaware, somewhere up in Delaware. The oldest person, when I went to school I searched it up the best I could and that was in the 1930's. The old Dave Luvall, they called him, married an Indian squaw from the Delaware tribe and they walked down what is now Assateague Beach. Assateague Beach then, used to go from here to Rehoboth. There wasn't no inlet to Ocean City until 1932 and that first inlet, so he walked right on down the beach on a horse. And he rode the horse and the squaw walked behind him. He settled at Assateague here. Assateague at one time was a big settlement. A lot of people lived there. It's always been a place where people argued and fought over it. I guess it always will be. But that's where he moved to. And later, he moved to Chincoteague.

MR. HALL: Now, in them times, the people lived totally off of the land of course.

MR. DAISEY: He lived totally off of the land; hunting and fishing and trapping and whatever he could. They had dirt floors. My mother was raised on Assateague and it was the same at her place. She had a dirt floor.

MR. HALL: Cigar, tell me in your own words about the way people felt about Fish and Wildlife, however you want to put it.

MR. DAISEY: You have to go back to the beginning; to Assateague Beach the way it was. I mean, the people at one time made their living going to Tom's Cove every day. They had a horse and a cart and there's this little settlement of people. They go down to the cove; they oystered, clammed, fished and they brung them home and eat them. They also put them in a boat and bring them over to Chincoteague and sold them and what have you. Then the Sam Fields bought it. Then he hired a man by the name of Aliphant. I'll show you a picture of him. In the picture he has a big pistol on him. He took it over and drove most of them people off of the island. It was their livelihood. I think they shot him once or twice. But anyway, then the Fish and Wildlife comes along and takes it. They took if for ducks. When you take something away from people that they been used

to hunting all of their life, you really made all of them mad. I used to sit around at the country store and hear them talk bad about them. They really didn't like Fish and Wildlife. So they started out on a bad foot with them, with the public, right then and there. But it had to be that way. I understand that. So after maybe thirty or forty years, people accepted it. Now, they have turned around and given it back to the people but they've given it to the wrong people; the tourists. That's making the people mad again. So there's never been much public relations between the Fish and Wildlife and the local people. There's always been something that they done that's made a hardship on the people. I think that's one of the reasons why there's been a lack of respect for them.

MR. HALL: Let me ask you this; you probably know the history behind duck trapping' tell me what happened, as far as you know, when they started trapping ducks rather than shooting ducks, or the combination of both.

MR. DAISEY: As anyone would know, when you shoot Black ducks on the first night, the next night they're pretty sharp. They get wilder and wilder all of the time. When you trap them, you don't hurt them. You just catch what you're going to catch.

[tape skips]...it's unbelievable. And I don't like some of the pictures from the man that stayed here.

MR. HALL: So tell me about the start of trapping ducks and market hunting.

MR. DAISEY: Well, the idea of the trap was that it didn't destroy the duck. Most people would rather hunt that to trap, you know what I mean. But you could catch so many more birds and they weren't full of shot and people liked them better. They were corn fed. And there was more market for a trapped duck than a shot duck. So that's what people done. Now, the earliest trappers I know was probably in the 1920's. Sometime in the 1920's. That was the earliest I had ever heard of anybody trapping. Of course, they had problems with it because you'd set your traps in the night and if the wind changed or something like that you didn't have the means to get to them in these marshes. You just didn't get your ducks, you know. They would finally get out. But some people lived in watch houses. Old Man Dan Wilton, he lived in a watch house down there and he trapped right out of his watch house. He'd bring his ducks right back and hang them up there underneath the house. Of course the law would catch him now and then and take him to court. He was real old and they never done much with him. He was probably one of the oldest ones I knew of.

MR. HALL: Was there any feeling that trapping ducks or shooting ducks post season was wrong?

MR. DAISEY: No! Everybody thought that every year they were going to come back just as thick as they were last year, and that there was a never-ending supply of them.

After a few years; but the funny part of it was that all of the ducks that was trapped in my lifetime, the most Black ducks I ever seen, and Black ducks were the number one bird that we caught; but I have never been able to figure this one out. The most ducks I've seen year after year was after duck trapping was over. It was over by 1961 or 1962. Some guy, Jim Mays wrote a lot of articles about it. And then some Congressman from North Carolina got on it. They passed a law; two years and a two thousand dollar fine. That pretty well broke up trapping.

MR. HALL: Let me ask you right there; did the fear of being caught, and the severity of it have an impact on it?

MR. DAISEY: It certainly did! When you talk about six months and five hundred dollars you might can escape that the first time. The Judge might give you a suspended sentence or something. Of course, a lot of them he didn't do that. A lot of them, he put them in jail the first time. But when they said two years and two thousand, that was too much for me. I figured it was time to quit. It really wasn't worth it. And we figured that the ducks would get scarcer and scarcer anyway. But there was more duck after duck trapping. By 1967 there was probably the most Black ducks I ever seen, in 1966, 67, and 68. By 1970 they were beginning to disappear again. So I don't think duck traps...ducks only live so long. I don't think that was the real culprit in destroying the Black duck along the east coast. I don't think that was the real reason.

MR. HALL: Let me ask you this; after you or even before you stopped trapping you started guiding sport hunters.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah.

MR. HALL: Tell me what you were doing then.

MR. DAISEY: Well, we would, I would trap and guide too. I'd try to get up mornings real early and go fish my traps and put my ducks out. Then I'd go pick up my hunters and take them hunting all day, or until twelve or one o'clock, whenever they wanted to come home. It was another source of income for me you know, and of course a lot of times the people would buy some ducks from me. You could sell the hunters some ducks.

MR. HALL: Now, the "sports", did they tell you that you ought to stick right to the limit, or did they go out and violate too?

MR. DAISEY: I never seen many honest sports. The only honest people I know was newspaper people, sports writers. They were pretty clean.

MR. HALL: You didn't have to worry when you'd go out there and violate that the "sports" would violate right along with you?

MR. DAISEY: They would be the one that did it. A lot of times you didn't really care about shooting ducks yourself. A lot of times I'd leave my gun home. I wouldn't even take my gun with me. I'd just let them do what they wanted do. And like I say; the newspaper writers and people like that, they wouldn't violate, because if they got caught it would have been awful embarrassing.

MR. HALL: But you say that the majority of the "sports" violated the hunting regulations?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah. I'd say about eighty-five percent of them. They were good people basically, sure, but when you say four ducks; I think a lot of times back then it would be four ducks before you come to the point system. You probably remember the point system when it first came out. I don't know what year it was. But the point system was the greatest thing for the hunters because you could pick and choose you know. And you could kill so many more ducks. I remember that if it were five or six ducks, that wasn't very many and people just didn't figure they'd had enough fun, you know, and they'd shoot more.

MR. HALL: In your words, Cigar, why do you think that generally society, whether it was the islanders here on Chincoteague or Smith Island, or the "sports" from Baltimore or Washington never really felt like it was wrong to violate the waterfowl law? Tell me about that in your own words. What do you think about all that? Why was that?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I just think a lot of them had never shot a lot of ducks and they wanted the feeling doing it, you know, being able to shoot a lot of ducks. And they really didn't think about the hereafter of it. It was hypocritical too in a way I guess. The big club up the Bay here, that I know of, they'd cuss me and go on with me awful up around that club because people that worked there used to tell me about it. But they'd go out there and shoot fifty or sixty Bluebills a day, that was all right! They were allowed maybe eight or ten. But because I trapped, that was real bad you know.

MR. HALL: So there was more attention given to stopping duck trapping? There were Congressmen involved and everybody.

MR. DAISEY: That's right!

MR. HALL: And the penalty got worse for the trappers than it did for the "sports"?

MR. DAISEY: Yes. The "sports", they weren't going to bother the "sports". I remember Leon Cool one time, right up the Bay, he found a big baited area. He camped

there and staked it out. He flew over it and found it and staked it up. When he went back to wherever he worked they ordered him to go back and take them stakes back down again. There was a lot of politics in it. There was all the politics in these big clubs. So we figured that if the politicians could do it we could do it.

MR. HALL: Who was eating the duck that you were trapping, mostly?

MR. DAISEY: Judges, lawyers, doctors, all the House of Delegates, all professional people. I've sold ducks to everybody you could mention. I remember my Aunt used to sell a lot of ducks for me and I had an old place where I hung them close to the road. I had an old chicken as I went in the house and most of the time I wouldn't even bother to go see how many ducks she sold that day. I'd go look in the chicken coop to see how much money I had. Because couldn't tell whether she'd had a good day or not. She told me, "They said they know you, so I sold them to them." Sometimes she'd sell a hundred or more.

MR. HALL: Cigar, how many ducks did you trap, shoot and sell?

MR. DAISEY: Well, the best I can figure, one time I figured that I trapped over thirty thousand. I don't know how many I shot. I really don't know. I've got no way of knowing. But it would be a lot, I can tell you that. The most I ever killed in an hour and a half one day was fifty-four Black ducks in an hour and fifteen minutes.

MR. HALL: Now tell me what you think about it today.

MR. DAISEY: Well, I think it's all over today. Unless Mother Nature helps us out in the next year or two and unless we do it different. It's all over. It's all over for me anyways, because I can't never go out and enjoy myself again just shooting one or two ducks. It ain't worth me fooling with it. And it would get me in a lot of trouble, you know. I could get in a lot of trouble, which I don't want to. I'd rather not participate in it. It's all right, and I'm not opposed to anyone going out and shooting him a pair of ducks. If they're satisfied, let them do it. I'm not opposed to duck hunting, but its just so few ducks its really not interesting any more.

MR. HALL: Tell me the difference today between the 1930s when you...

MR. DAISEY: There was one time in the 1930s when ducks got pretty scarce you remember. I expect you've got records that will tell you that. The ducks got pretty scarce. But what we call, in other words, in the last three or four years...Dennis asked me would I help Danny Marshall band some birds down here on the Refuge. Me and him trapped for about two or three weeks over there and the most I'd catch every morning was fifty some Black ducks. Years ago, wouldn't have been near what you could catch

anywhere, you know what I mean? That was for banding purposes you know, what he was doing. So the ducks is just not here. There's not any ducks.

MR. HALL: The next generation, Cigar, who would be satisfied with hunting and killing one or two ducks, where your generation which had seen a lot of ducks may not elect to hunt; it's still worth trying to save waterfowl.

MR. DAISEY: Oh yes! I think we should all stand on our head and do anything we can do to save them.

MR. HALL: I left Chincoteague Island nearly twenty-five years ago. When I left here, it was still that the Game Warden was the enemy all the way. Now, I come back to this island and the guys that violated the worst are very friendly to me. It's obviously been a lot of change of attitude here. Tell me in your words about that. What think about that?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I don't think people were really mad, even then, at most of the Wardens. I don't think they were really mad at them. But a lot of times the Fish and Wildlife people didn't pick the best people there was in the world for them jobs. In your case, you're all right! John Buckley was a good man. I could name lots of good men. But there were some that were really not the best people. A lot of bad things was always said about them in the community. I think that hurt too. People take one rotten egg and associate everybody with that. They use that. And I think that was one thing that hurt them. I think they should have picked the best people they could have picked to enforce the laws. And there's all kinds of ways to do it. I mean just like last year; you get a new young man and you got a real problem. You get an old seasoned man, he's been here a long time, and he knows what to do. And he's a lot easier to get along with. These youngsters just go crazy some of them. They want to catch somebody. I think its better way. Most of the people that I know that get caught violating the game law are really not the ones who kill the ducks. The bulk of them that I've seen in my lifetime are first time hunters, or I'd call them novice hunters. They're the ones that get caught. The real people that take, the real true hard violators, they don't catch them anyway. And if you do it's very few of them. I mean, very seldom do you hear of one getting caught. So really, it don't... the fine system has not really hurt it much.

MR. HALL: There's better ways of penalizing a duck hunter then?

MR. DAISEY: It certainly is.

MR. HALL: Would you be surprised if I told you that we just did a study of duck hunters, and they said the worst penalty was five years revocation of your hunting privileges?

MR. DAISEY: Of your hunting license! Taken your hunting license is the most deadly thing you can do to a hunter. That will make him madder than anything in the world. Now, one of the big violators of the island is a good personal friend of mine. They took his license for five years. And look, he's just about quit hunting. It just about made him quit. So, they straightened him out. And I believe that's the best way.

MR. HALL: If the people around the community could see the worst violators get caught, would that have an impact on them?

MR. DAISEY: Oh yes! I've said, "You don't have to catch the violators. All you've got to do is show yourself in a boat pretty often and let people see that you're out looking for them." I say that prevention is greater than catching the guy and going to all the trouble.

By the time it takes you to figure what it takes to take a man to court, and what's it costing. It costs a lot of money to prosecute a man. It costs more than a hundred dollars don't it? That's what the fines, most of the time, are for minor things.

MR. HALL: What do you think the difference is in like public sentiment about violating today as compared to what it used to be?

MR. DAISEY: The more generations that you get going through it, the less you'll have that say it's not worth it. At one particular time, you didn't think about, "is this worth going to jail for?" And times was hard, like a say. And people had [nothing]. Most people today get enough to eat, particularly in the northern sections. Times is not as hard. It's a different day, a different time. And the old market hunter, that's all done away with. That went out with the buffalo. I mean, it's gone, never more to return.

MR. HALL: Well in that case, penalty and law enforcement did have an impact on stopping market hunters?

MR. DAISEY: It did, I think it did. But I think it would have stopped it anyway. I think it would have stopped itself. You see, if you wanted to stop duck traffic, all you had to do was let hunters hunt right down at dusk. That would have destroyed the duck trapper. When you passed a law where the hunter had to quit at sunset, why, the people would go into the marshes at just about sunset to get ready for the night's shoot. That would have destroyed the duck trapper. There's so many things they could have done.

I have a lot of people. I have about three thousand people a year come see me.

MR. HALL: Is that right?!

MR. DAISEY: Yeah. I've had that for twenty years, I guess, or more. I've enjoyed the people. I've learned from them. I pick their brain. I know what they like or don't like,

and how they stand on conservation and the whole deal on this island. I figure if they are going to pick mine, I'm going to learn something from them!

MR. HALL: It makes things more interesting.

MR. DAISEY: That's right. It don't bother me from working. I keep on working. I have all of my stuff up here, and I keep on working.

MR. HALL: Cigar, I want you to tell me about your first recollections about life on this island and how you lived and what was going on here.

MR. DAISEY: Well, it was a poor place. It was a poor, depressed place. Everybody was poor. There wasn't very many rich people. There weren't even no stone roads. It was dirt roads. I'll tell you what it was; when I look back on it, it's about the prettiest little place, or island, that a man could ever see. Along about 1934 or 35, Roosevelt came out with digging out the ditches. He was the first man that started destroying the ecology or the environment. Of course he done it for the purpose, I guess, for to create jobs. They started draining the glades and the ditches, see? They dug ditches right down through the center of this island to drain out them fresh water glades. They done the same thing with every little old place, they dug a ditch out. That was the beginning of hurting the island, you know. But these ditches that they dug out filled up and in later years, along come the tourists. When the tourists would come a mosquito would bite one of them once in a while. They weren't about to put up with that. It's all right for them to eat the native people, but you can't bite them tourists! Then, they dug them out again. Let me get back. Where were we now?

MR. HALL: When you were a little boy lived here?

MR. DAISEY: The people lived tough. I mean, nobody had nothing. I don't know of anybody that had anything. I lived with an old lady. She wasn't my Aunt, but she was my "Aunt". She married my Uncle. He died and I lived with her. My mother was still living. I just didn't live at home with them.

MR. HALL: Was you daddy a trapper and a hunter?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah.

MR. HALL: What was your daddy's name?

MR. DAISEY: Herbert.

MR. HALL: Herbert Daisey?



MR. DAISEY: Yeah, he trapped ducks and hunted a little bit. And he raised poultry. He went in the poultry business in the 1930s, about '34 or '35. At one time he had about a million capacity or more, three times a year on here, of poultry. That was the only industry there was other than seafood, you know. But the capitalist system destroyed that and the feed man and the chicken man. The first thing you know they owned it all. The poor man out kicked out of that.

MR. HALL: When did you first start hunting?

MR. DAISEY: Dave, I was so little, I don't know. All I can tell you is this; the big deal was to follow after the bigger boys in the glades. They'd go to Dave Melvin's old country store and you could buy three shells for ten cents. They were Monarchs; I can see them right plain in the box. You'd get three of them for ten cents. The boys would take an old double-barreled gun, buy them three shells and go for the glade. The little boys like me would follow behind him you know what I mean? We'd go down there hunting with them. That's the first of me hunting. I was so little it's pitiful. Then, the day come when I wanted to shoot. I was so small that the kick would get me. The big boys would let you shoot once in a while just to see the hell kicked out of you! It was a big deal, you know. It would near about knock you down! I remember the first Yellowlegs I ever shot. I shot them with a .410. I killed three on the first shot with her. I caught some muskrats and sold the furs and bought this gun for nine dollars. The first time a shot her I killed three Yellowlegs and I never did kill three with her from that day since. That was good to me, to kill three at one time for as long as I kept her. I guess I lucked out on that first shot. See? We'd go back in them glades right in the middle of this island and shoot Yellowlegs all day long. They just fly up and down that glade all day long like you wouldn't believe. And ducks, and even in the spring Blue winged Teal was in there. You'd shoot Blue winged Teals in there.

MR. HALL: What does duck hunting and being in this march mean to you?

MR. DAISEY: Well, it was a way of life. Trapping and hunting and fishing you might say, were my boyhood dreams. I mean that's all I thought about. When I'd go to sleep at night, the last thing you could see would be hunting and trapping and fishing. That was the only thing that mattered in them times. And I will say today, in all fairness, that I've done exactly that. I've fulfilled it, in other words. I've done it to the point where it really don't mean that much to me anymore. I'm satisfied.

MR. HALL: But you want to help make it better?

MR. DAISEY: I would like to see ducks for everybody; for my grand youngins' for now and in the future. I'd like to see that everybody could go duck hunting whenever they wanted to. With reasonable laws, and a reasonable limit I believe it can still be done. But

you've got to make some tough choices when it comes to progress. I was born a Democrat, under Roosevelt, I guess and that's all I knew. And I stayed that way till Lyndon Johnson. After Lyndon Johnson, I became a Republican. But for the last eight years, they ain't done a damn thing as far as I'm concerned for the environment, the Republicans haven't. That's the way I feel about it. I think they've let us down there. Anything concerning progress I think they say go ahead and do it.

MR. HALL: What is progress?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I think it's something that you do slowly. And you don't do it all at one time. You know it's going to happen. We know it's going to happen. I don't think you can stop it completely. But I think you've just got to slow down to the point where a change takes place and not a real abrupt one. If it does, why, I think that's where all the hell is. And you have to change people's way of life too, when you do that. The whole way of life changes. Recently they passed a law around here where they won't let them drag with their boats any more in the inside limits. I think that's wrong because they're going to drag them in North Carolina and the boys weren't really catching that many fish. It's the same thing with the fish laws and the duck laws. It's all the same. The people that makes them; ninety percent of the time really don't know what the hell they're doing. I don't know what the answer to it is. Any too many people any more who wants to be a politician anyway. They don't want people to look straight down on them.

MR. HALL: How do you feel about the fact that the government and the wildlife organizations need to be talking more to the people, using better communications?

MR. DAISEY: I think that's the most important thing that they could do; is to have better relations with the public. But, if it means satisfying the public, like for instance this refuge; if it means that they've got to be buddy-buddy with these...the first thing they do with a man that comes here is try to get next to him; the local business people on this island. There's maybe fifteen of them let's say. They try to get close to him and be good friends with him. They want to sway him for the things they want the use of the refuge. That is not the kind of public relations that I am interested in. This refuge belongs to everybody; these two hundred and thirty, forty or fifty million people who live in this country. It belongs to everybody! It don't belong to fifteen business people on Chincoteague Island. As far as I'm concerned, they ought not to have that damn much to say about it.

MR. HALL: What about the ducks?

MR. DAISEY: What do you mean?

MR. HALL: How do they fit in to all of this?

MR. DAISEY: Well the ducks, we've just casted them aside. We've not considered the ducks. I mean if you spend your money chasing tourists up and down for speeding and all of that kind of stuff, you certainly ain't spending it on ducks. There's things that could be done; improvements. One part of the government is against the other part of the government. For instance, you could make improvements by impoundments, you understand that. Many things can be done. You can plant a lot of duck food in duck areas to make ducks fat and healthy so when they leave here they'll be in good shape when they go back. There is so many things that they could do. But all of the money is spent on tourists. That's the only thing they've got their minds on I guess.

MR. HALL: Tell me in your own words how important wetlands and the heritage of ducks, not only to this island here, how important is this to the future of the American people?

MR. DAISEY: I think it's your whole background, of the whole country! I mean our ducking hunting is unique. It didn't happen; decoys and other things like that didn't happen in other countries like it did here. And hunting was a way of life I guess. Fur trapping is just about as old, next to prostitution I guess. It's a way of life and it's slowly been destroyed through progress. I don't think the violation is the big deal. There's been a lot of violation but you know yourself that if ducks don't have a place to nest and rest you ain't got no ducks do we? Now [sounds like] Jimmy Rogers said, I read an article by him in *Sports Afield* Magazine; he said water didn't mean ducks. But I disagree with Mr. Rogers. He's a fine writer.

MR. HALL: But it does if you don't have breeding ducks. He's saying if you don't have...

MR. DAISEY: Well, we're going to have a few breeding ducks. We're always going to have a few anyway. But that water is what I think we'd better concentrate on more than any one thing.

MR. HALL: Yeah, but what he'd saying is that there's areas that even I am familiar with, where there's good water and there's no breeding ducks on it. If you look out here; I'm going to tell you, the worst disaster in my life is when I moved from the Mississippi Flyway to the Atlantic Flyway. Hey, you haven't had any ducks up here in two hundred years.

MR. DAISEY: No.

MR. HALL: Compared to what I know if as to be ducks.

MR. DAISEY: That's right.

MR. HALL: When I came up here to the Chesapeake Bay, and what I saw, good god! They don't have any ducks here! And now, we kill more ducks in Louisiana every year than wintered in the entire Atlantic Flyway?

MR. DAISEY: I don't doubt it.

MR. HALL: And what bothers me is that now it's gotten down to where they want to start releasing Mallards. What do you think of that?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I don't know of no alternative. I don't know what else you can do. I don't know if, for instance, this year if Mother Nature is cruel to you again, what are you going to do? Are you going to have a season next year? I don't think you should have a season. I think close it for a year or two and try that. But I'm scared if you close it, you'll never open it again like you did the shore birds. Others will put so much pressure on you it'll never be open again. So I'm frustrated and a little mixed up too about this mess, you know. But I think that may have to sooner or later go to the Mallards. You might have to have just a Mallard season for a number of years.

MR. HALL: But they should be able to shoot the otherwise called "wild" things?

MR. DAISEY: Oh no. I think if you go to the Mallard you'd just better shoot the Mallard by lottery and just let it go at that. That's what they do in Europe don't they? Don't they raise a lot of birds?

MR. HALL: Well, how do you feel about that? You there's people, the local people here, you felt on this island that hunting was a God given right, or it was a privilege that should be enjoyed by all people. How do you feel about just a few select people being able to hunt?

MR. DAISEY: Well, that's what it will eventually amount to, and I'll tell you why I say that; we never had no deer on the mainland until about 1960. That was the beginning of the deer and now we've got oodles of them. Now, I could go over there hunting anywhere I want to, with no "Posted" signs. Now it's posted and rented to somebody from New Jersey. The pulp and paper company, they rent all of their land to people from New Jersey. The local people get shut right out. They take it over. There's really no place in the State of Virginia, in Accomack County where you can go hunt on the mainland where the deer are that somebody don't own. So there again, you create a violating situation. You see a big old buck in somebody's field you say, "Well, Hell!" and shoot him anyway, the hell with him. You know, you just go ahead and shoot him. Then you've violated the law, see, and it's hard. The State seems like it's worse than the federal government when it comes to Wardens and the way they run things. I mean, if they come to you for hunting and your hunting legal and they can't get you for hunting, they'll get

you for not having a life preserver or something else. Some little tinny damn thing that don't really amount to a whole lot as far as I'm concerned.

MR. HALL: What do you think about having more simple laws?

MR. DAISEY: I think they should be simple. Real simple. And with the limits spelled out so there won't be no mistakes. And like you say, if you catch a man and he's a real...see, there's a difference in a man who makes a mistake and a real violator. I think the law pretty well can tell the difference. If you do want to take a man's license do it, but don't hand a man a fine for a little tinny old thing that don't make a damn bit of difference. It's just an inconvenience to you because you've got to appear against him in he don't send it in.

MR. HALL: Can you identify yourself again for the videotape?

MR. DAISEY: My name is Delbert L. Daisey. I live at Chincoteague my entire lifetime.

MR. HALL: Where is that?

MR. DAISEY: It's a little island of the coast of Virginia where a lot of greedy people live. A lot of greedy business people live there.

MR. HALL: How come you talk the way you do Cigar?

MR. DAISEY: Well, 'cause I tell it like I see it.

MR. HALL: No, I'm talking about your accent. Where did that come from?

MR. DAISEY: God only knows! I really don't know. You see, when I went to school if you talked proper people would make fun at you. They'd say, "He's getting to be a smart ass you know!" It was the way people did. So we talked like they did I guess. You took up talking like they did.

MR. HALL: Now on this island, when I lived here, they had different little groups and cliques. They had Snotty Ridge and....

MR. DAISEY: I was raised on Snotty Ridge. I was born and raised down there right next to the water. Yep. It's so much difference, that I can't sit here and explain to you to say what it once was and what it is today. I look for it to be worse tomorrow. See, the people that live out there on the Refuge...see, the Park Service should have never been on there. The Park Service should have never been on there because all they dream about is tourists. If I'm over there fox fur trapping, well, I don't dare go anywhere near it because it's against the law to set a trap on Park Service property. When I come to the line, with

that barbed wire fence, I have to stop. It's Park Service Property from there on, and what's going to stop those foxes from coming on underneath that barbed wire fence and coming on down the beach? It's a big joke. The way they do things is a big joke? I don't know how you cure all of these things.

MR. HALL: You've done real well carving these decoys.

MR. DAISEY: Well, let's just say I make a small living carving decoys.

MR. HALL: You survive though?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, I make a small surviving living.

MR. HALL: And that ties into the ducks again.

MR. DAISEY: Oh yeah, I'm still feeling close to the ducks; from making things and going to the shows and judging and what have you. I really enjoy it. And I'm too damn old to do anything else now, to do some hard work.

MR. HALL: You can't run from the Game Wardens anymore?

MR. DAISEY: I sure as hell can't! I ain't even going to try running from him 'cause I ain't going to do nothing wrong! I ain't going to try one thing and do it no way!

MR. HALL: Tell me what was going through your mind when say you and Newman would load up at ten o'clock and make a run up the island. What was going through your mind? What were you doing that for? Of all the things, as you look back now, why did you do that?

MR. DAISEY: For whatever the intended purpose was; if we were going deer hunting we went deer hunting. And we just figured we wouldn't see no body. We wouldn't bother no body and no body would bother us. No body would know about it and we accomplished what we set out to do without having any problems.

MR. HALL: If you were going to go night gunning ducks, you....

MR. DAISEY: Same way.

MR. HALL: ..you'd night gun ducks. Well, tell me about that. I am looking for whether or not...was it a thrill to beat the system?

MR. DAISEY: I think it might have been in the later years. But in the beginning it wasn't.

MR. HALL: Well, you talk about beating the system however you want to put it. Talk about how you felt?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I would say that in the very beginning, you didn't know nothing about the system. You really wasn't out to beat nobody. But when they send fifteen or twenty times, they'd send fifteen or twenty Game Wardens in here on me. And I knowd that I couldn't beat it so the only sensible thing for me to do was to just close right down until they left. And that's what I would do. I would close down. And when this many left I'd go back to trapping again, see? Because I knew I couldn't...there wasn't no need to keep going while there were here. One on one, they'll get you. They'll get you like that. But if you take one Game Warden and forty or fifty people he's got a hell of a job to keep up with you. There ain't no way he can. You have so few law enforcement officers. I've been checked three or four times say, in fifty years. So I've really not had it that bad around here.

MR. HALL: How many times do you reckon in your life you violated the waterfowl laws?

MR. DAISEY: I violated it two or three times a day from the first frost until March lets say. Two or three times a day.

MR. HALL: How many times were you caught and convicted?

MR. DAISEY: I was never caught neither time, but I was convicted once. I paid a seventy-five dollar fine in 1952. Ralph Harrison chased me in a airplane all day long and he carried me to court. They had my trial and never give me no chance to have a lawyer. It was on a Saturday evening. Today, they'd run you out of the courthouse if you came there with a case like that. He charged me with endangering government property because I run from him. On possession of migratory game birds, he never seen one of them. I only had one and the damn cats go him, so he certainly didn't see him. I was carrying a concealed weapon in my pocketknife in my pocket and it was a three-inch blade. I had a trapper's permit and the season wasn't out until the 15<sup>th</sup> of March or something like that. So I had the right to have that.

MR. HALL: Tell me about the feeling when you were trying to use your skills to outdo the Game Warden. Was that part of the reason that you did it?

MR. DAISEY: Well I went to a lot of trouble. In other words, I would always...a red fox ain't smart but he's scared. I was scared. I was scared that they would get me. I always said that you could get me if you do it right. And I always said that when I went to a trap. When I picked out a place where I was going to trap, I always said that I would pick a place where I would look for you to be, and I'd come here. I always figured out

these places so that I would have the edge. And for years and years, they never had no big motors. Then along about 1960 they started buying them great big motors and boats. They could run me down then. It was different. They just made their mind up that they were going to break it up and they done it!

MR. HALL: But they didn't break up the sport hunting violators?

MR. DAISEY: No. With the sport hunting violations, the law would be some of it, but I don't think it's as bad as what people think. I don't think it's really that serious.

MR. HALL: There's not enough ducks now is there?

MR. DAISEY: No. Most people don't even get a shot to start with anymore when they go, even if it's one of them good days.

MR. HALL: The Atlantic Flyway is in real trouble when it comes to the numbers of ducks.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, I would say so. As a matter of fact there used to be Black ducks all of the way down this peninsula, all seventy miles of it. And there was some hot spots where they...then they turn around and let these non-profit organizations put them back.

MR. HALL: Cigar, tell me about when you were trapping and how you felt about who you sold the ducks to.

MR. DAISEY: Well everybody eat ducks in them days, particularly on Sundays. And even the Game Warden would come to me once in a while. He'd be riding by the house and he see the local police going out with their ducks, and State Troopers. They had big brown paper bags. There would be a pair in them, just two in them. If they had two bags, they had two pair. And that's the way I'd pair them up you know, the best I could with a duck and a drake. A man from the House of Delegates, executive people, doctors, lawyers, and like I said State Police and Sheriffs. I used to sell the Sheriff a lot of ducks. They had regular duck "set outs", [A special dinner or picnic] you know. These ducks were fat and they wouldn't have no shot in them. That's what they wanted. There's never much demand for ducks with shot in them as there was for a clean duck, you know, as a trapped duck. So I sold to just about anybody you can mention at one time or another, including one under cover agent. I sold to him three or four times, but he was the "go between" and he couldn't get me for it.

MR. HALL: You never felt that you were doing anything wrong?

MR. DAISEY: No. If it was wrong, why would these people... for instance, it's just as wrong to smoke marijuana, as it is to sell it as far as I'm concerned. It's both wrong, you



know what I mean. But these people thought they wanted ducks and we just didn't look at as there being nothing wrong about it, nothing bad about it. We figured the ducks belonged to God to start with, and He give us the right to take them. We resented Yankee people coming in. Most of them would come from the north you know, law officers. Some of them was real mean and tough. We resented that.

MR. HALL: Tell me about the couple of times that you went over on the Refuge and helped set duck traps.

MR. DAISEY: Well, the first of it was when John Buckley was trapping there. He was the second Manager you had. We used to catch a lot of Pintails right there on what we call "between the roads". Now it's where the circle drive is on the south end of it. I used to go over there on my pony and ride around and look and search him out good. When it come night, I'd go back and help myself. Most of the time he'd have so many any there he'd never miss them no way. He'd catch four or five hundred at a time with the big traps. They were great big old traps; "swim ins" is what I called them. They'd swim in there. This particular time I lost them cigars. There was four of us that night. I am the only one living. Thomas Fish, George, Mark and myself, Thomas was my Uncle. They got me in there running them down and I lost these cigars in the trap. They come out of my sweatshirt pocket. I had a sweatshirt on and a old jacket. I had them in the pocket and the fell out. When I got down the beach, I missed my cigars. I said, "Great day, I bet I lost every one of them cigars in that duck trap!" So from then on, that's all you heard, "That's Cigar man", you know! Yep, that's where the name come from. Buckley, he soon found out who it was. And when I'd go to the beach on a horse, then when he'd see him coming...he used to have an old command car; I used to go hide. I'd see him coming, you know, on a Sunday. I'd take off riding and go hard back in the bushes. I was over there with the fire company. I used to ride all of the time with Tracey Winburn and Elwood Quillen and Bob Maddox. And I was just a little boy. At that time there was only one man living on that beach, that was Royce Cobb. Right down in front of the lighthouse, he lived in an old house and we used to ride up there on Sundays and drink water from an old pump he had in the yard, you know. He was the last of the people, too, on that island. Buckley never bothered him.

MR. HALL: You'd take those ducks out of the trap then and what would you do?

MR. DAISEY: We'd, most of the time we'd crank their heads and tie them up and start walking for the boat. If you wanted to make two trips you'd chain tote. The most a man can tote, unless he's a big strong man, is about twenty-eight. That's just about enough for one man. And you lay them down and go back and get you another drag if you wanted to do that if you have time to do it before daylight. If you thought daylight was going to get you you'd only get what you could take at one time, you know.

MR. HALL: You'd take them and sell them then?

MR. DAISEY: Oh yeah. We'd sell them. One time, I went there; I remember the last time I ever went there, I don't remember who the Manager was in them days, but it's been many years ago. I think I got seventy Pintails; seventy males and eight females. While I was taking them somebody had been and robbed my traps! After I got them I went to fish my traps and somebody had beat me to my traps. That happened a lot too. Duck trappers would steal from on another, you know?

MR. HALL: Tell me a little bit about when you were guiding the "sports". What happened there? Would they come here and stay or what?

MR. DAISEY: A lot of them would come here and stay. They'd get out of the car and never take the gun out of the car the whole weekend. Then another car would come from Baltimore or somewhere with a pretty woman in it. I don't know what kind of hunting that man done, but he didn't do no duck hunting! That's what happened a lot of times, down to the old club. And some people we'd take out gunning. We'd take them out that morning and they'd hunt a while and they'd come in and have lunch. Then I'd take them out by the branch shooting in the evening. They'd five me five or six dollars, you know. I'd take them out long enough for them to get their limit and bring them back to the lodge. I'd get two more and do it again, you know. At that time, this channel...I don't think you'd remember a lot of them days because this channel was full of [sounds like] Brandt. There was a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand brandt around here. In one days time you'd kill a hundred and fifty brandt. They were all killed legally but they were wasted. That was the sad part of it. Most of them ended up right back overboard just floating away.

MR. HALL: Why didn't they eat them?

MR. DAISEY: Some times they'd sit there to the fireplace and pull a breast off one. And if they got real drunk, you could see the juice run right down to the corner of their mouth when they'd eat him. He was about half done, and half raw. But no, I'd say ninety percent of them, they wouldn't take them.

MR. HALL: In those times were most of the clubs up there baiting?

MR. DAISEY: Well, there was clubs up the Bay that didn't have brandt like that. They really didn't have them. The brandt mainly was right down through this way. The club right now, the old Yacht and Sportsmen's Club, that was the main club that had the brant shooting.

MR. HALL: I'm talking about duck up the bay. Most of the clubs were baiting?

MR. DAISEY: All of them were baiting. They'd go up with a monster load. When I say monster load, I'm talking about two or two hundred and fifty bags of corn in one trip. They'd take it and split the mouth of the bag and put right over the stern. Then they crank the engine up and dump it out. But that don't happen any more. I don't know of a single soul that does that. Now, somebody might throw a handful of corn or something but it really don't happen anymore. That's something happened years ago.

MR. HALL: That's what I mean. But who basically had those clubs up there?

MR. DAISEY: The prominent people. I could tell you the organizations. The same organizations that built the Bay Bridge. But they always did bait it. And then they'd have a place they baited that they didn't hunt to show the people that come to the hunting lodge.

MR. HALL: Did you guide up the Bay any, or did you just guide on Chincoteague?

MR. DAISEY: No. No, I always guided down here. If you guided up there, and they never did ask me no way, but if you guided up there you had to live up there with them. I didn't like that.

MR. HALL: Well you and some of the other Chincoteaguers who were trapping ducks then were talked about bad up there?

MR. DAISEY: Oh yeah! Now, we wasn't very famous now when it come to the real Yankee duck hunters that come from Washington and places like that down to the lodge up here. No, they hated us. They watched us at night. They were afraid we'd light. They had them Bluebills baited, and we'd know it. They didn't want us pulling in them Bluebills at night with that light. They know we'd scare the hell out of them. We wouldn't kill that much but we'd scare the hell out of them.

MR. HALL: In other words, you'd gun some of the clubs baited ponds?

MR. DAISEY: At times. We'd gun about where ever we wanted to. We done just about what we pleased.

MR. HALL: You've hunted with some of the best marsh men, probably in the world. Tell me a little bit about who your running mates were.

MR. DAISEY: Well, I'd rather not mention their names but today a lot of them don't think of that part. I hunted with some good hunters; there ain't no doubt about that. I hunted with all of them at one time or another. Me and Newman hunted together all my life you know. He was a good hunter; about as good as there was. He wasn't necessarily

a market hunter. That doesn't mean he didn't sell ducks, but he wouldn't necessarily.... He had another job doing something else, you know.

MR. HALL: He was good hunter wasn't he?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, he was a good hunter. A lot of the boys on here was good hunters.

MR. HALL: Now tell me about old man Tom Reed.

MR. DAISEY: Old man Tom; he was a good hunter, no doubt about it. He was a good hunter and a good duck trapper. He had a really brilliant mind, you know. He was pretty brilliant to start with. He's a right nice old gentleman.

MR. HALL: When you were a little boy, you knew him I assume?

MR. DAISEY: I did hear tales of him. He used to be a great storyteller. He'd tell great stories about himself, you know and what he'd done. He's a member of the Masonic Lodge and I've heard the old Masons down at the country store sitting and talking about him and his killing all of this stuff, you know. I never did figure a lot of that out because he never had the....as far as I'm concerned what made really good duck trappers and good hunters was the outboard motor. You could just travel so many miles. It don't matter how hard the wind blows or what happens. You could go anywhere want to, any time you want to. You couldn't do that before the outboard motor come out. So I say that the real years for trapping was the minute that Kehauver made that first Lighting outboard motor; and that was about 1940 something. I don't know what it was, it was getting late. I was trapping duck long before that. I trapped ducks for eight or ten years before that. It still wasn't the same. For instance, in 1945 I went down in the marshes with an old boat and stayed the whole winter. I come home once a week of Friday. I trapped out of this old boat, an inboard you know. It had an old gasoline motor. It was about thirty feet long. But the outboard motor was what really made duck trappers, hunters, fishermen. I think it destroyed the whole east coast to tell you the truth. I wouldn't want to do without them today. But they put a hurting on just about everything.

MR. HALL: Cigar, do you think what I'm doing by going around with these videos and talking to some of these guys who have been in the marsh for all of these years and lots of them were famous outlaws that I feel close to, whether in Louisiana or in Virginia; do you think this is going to have an impact on educating the next generation?

MR. DAISEY: I hope so. I hope...well, it's going to be different for the next generation anyway, because I doubt if something don't happen in the schools, hunting will be a thing of the past anyway. Because you know these "anti" people, that's all they preach now in the schools. Schoolteachers preach that; "No hunting, No killing, No hunting nothing". So, and it may go out anyway.

MR. HALL: But that wrong though, isn't it?

MR. DAISEY: It is wrong. It don't mean you're going to have more fowl, fish or game. You belong to take some of it.

MR. HALL: Well hunters are actually the ones that paid for these refuges and paid for most everything didn't they?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, but the tourists is the one's that's going to use them. I predict that if this refuge falls, and if they turn this over completely to the tourists, which I think will happen in time, all the refuges are in real danger. The Audubon Society has come out against this refuge as being one of the most abused there is. This one and two or three more. I read the article about it. Judy Johnson with the Preservation of Assateague; she's some out against it. I don't think you can turn thousands of people on to this refuges and let them do what they want to. Now you can say that we're not letting them do what they want to, but you cannot police all of these people. You can't watch them. There ain't enough....

MR. HALL: What do you think of the fact that these refuges were bought, some of them with Duck Stamp money and that maybe the ducks aren't being emphasized on the refuges?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I think it's the wrongest thing that every happened! That was the original idea. And on this particular one over here, it was bought as a resting area. If it turned out to be a good nesting area, take advantage of it. That's a bonus. But it looks to me like this is a people's refuge! They can't even make them keep their clothes on over there. So if they can't do that, I know damn well they ain't going to keep them off certain areas where [they shouldn't go]. During the nesting season they can walk and go anywhere they want to with the exception of the hook and the place up there, the horse flats. I think they're going to fence that off this year like they did last year. No one is supposed to walk in that area but there'll be people that go in that area. You'll not keep them out. I've been on the refuge myself, with the Manager, and happened to ride up there and here would come people on bicycles, five or six miles up that beach. I've been up there and seen people with a Honda clean up to the Maryland line! This is not to say that the refuge people ain't doing their part. Because you just can't watch everybody, every minute. It's just too many people! And when you turn people loose...If you tell him he's got a right to be here, and you turn your back and he'd over there what do you have to say about it? "Hey you ain't supposed to be here, move!" That's all you can.

MR. HALL: Tell me about, you've got as much experience as anybody about predators and nesting ducks. Tell me a little bit about that.

MR. DAISEY: I think predator control is probably the worst thing that's happening to the ducks today, combined with the drought. It goes along with the drought. No water and the predators are going to have a field day. It wouldn't be so bad with the predators if you had more water. But like we say, Mother Nature has been cruel to us for the last seven or eight years. Unless we get a lot of rains this year the predators are going to be ten times worse this year. I'd say right now this whole country has got a prime crop of predators for this year. Because very little trapping took place due to the fact the "anties" against the fur have destroyed the fur business. They've destroyed it in Europe and it means now that this year there was the lightest catch that there's been in years and years. That means the coyote, the fox and raccoon is going to take the day. It's his day. And he'll destroy everything there is if you have a dry year.

MR. HALL: Cigar, when I was on that beach over there we raise anywhere from twenty-five hundred to three thousand ducks on Chincoteague Refuge.

MR. DAISEY: You don't rate a hunter there now.

MR. HALL: Tell me in your own words about you know about what was raised over there.

MR. DAISEY: I would say that in all fairness I have seen years where I've seen years where twenty-five hundred to three thousand ducks was a conservative estimate of what was raised there. Clark McGee, and others who used to go over there years ago and you'd see rows ahead of you like you wouldn't believe of Gadwall mainly. Mainly Gadwall, and the Black ducks and Mallards. But that would be the most ducks you would see, the Gadwalls, and Blue Winged Teal; they nested there. You'd see just loads and loads of them. Today, you don't see any. The reason for it is that has been predators and no water. There must be some kind of way they can have water there. I don't know how but there must be a way they can have some water there.

MR. HALL: Why don't we have water now? We had water when I was there.

MR. DAISEY: Well, because I think they weren't nobody paying attention. There's no body really...there should be one man in charge of nothing but the dikes. But on the other hand you've got another bunch of people who come around and say, "We want to drain all of this so we see these shore birds". Bird watchers want to see these shore birds. If you ain't got two or three inches of water, you can't enjoy them. They've got plenty of beach for them to get on. As far as I'm concerned let them go on the damn beach. Let them go on these exposed mud flats at low tide and places like that; they're protected anyway. We don't need a refuge for shore birds. They are protected everywhere anyway. I think it should be for the ducks. This refuge was bought for the ducks, and I think it should be used for the ducks, both as a nesting and resting area and the people should only get a small use of it for like traveling through it to get to the ocean. I don't

object to that, I don't think it would do it no hurt to it. If they want to go swimming or something in the ocean, I don't object to that. But then I don't think you can allow all of the automobiles. For instance, we had a meeting in town here and the ex-mayor jumped up there and he wanted a back up parking lot in case this one gets washed out, for the public. Would I expect my government to support a back up parking lot? He said he wanted to annex it. He wanted to annex it so they wouldn't have to sit there and talk with you. They would have closer ties with the town of Chincoteague if you annexed it. Right we are in the process of being annexed. Right now we're fighting them. We ain't in court but we're having a meeting in a week or two about it. They say they're going to annex the rest of Chincoteague, which is the majority of it. There's fifteen hundred that lives in it, and two thousand that lives outside. That will can in part of the refuge now, the wildcat, his part of the refuge. That will be annexed and be part of the town. The town will have something to say about it. What this town wants is a right to let these people fill in these fresh water glades where the cattails are. That's one of the most damaging things they can do. But you couldn't set and talk these people out of it for nothing in the world. They think that's going to be the greatest thing in the world to fill in these glades. Of course, you know as I do that that is where life begins for many creatures.

MR. HALL: In other words, there's continuous battle of saving habitats everywhere.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah! It's right on this island, right in the middle of this island. Where people have got homes today, I trapped muskrats and shot ducks. All of this whole island.

[Tape skips, when it begins again, Mr. Daisey is using hammer and chisel while carving.]

...and Duck Stamps is a lot of it I guess. I'm sure some of it might come out of the general fund or something, I don't know just what. Anyway, I know one thing; they put a hurting on the local people. The local people are moving away from this island just streams of them; loads and loads of them. I bet we've lost two or three hundred people in the last year that have left here because they can't afford it. They can't afford the taxes. Four or five years ago, my taxes was about a hundred and twenty-five or thirty dollars a year. I paid fourteen hundred dollars last year. Now that's still cheap compared to a lot of places in this country, don't get me wrong. But we're going to catch up with them. I know damn well I had something wrong; I had the wrong glasses on.

MR. HALL: While you're chopping there Cigar, tell me about how many ducks you estimate that you trapped and sold.

MR. DAISEY: Well, I know I trapped over thirty thousand Black ducks and sold them. I don't know how many I shot.

MR. HALL: How'd you sell them? Who was buying them?

MR. DAISEY: People from all walks of life, mostly professional people. A lot of the poor people didn't have a couple of dollars you know. Of course, you'd wind up giving them a pair. I've give away enough ducks you wouldn't believe it. They'd come to you and tell you that they'd like to have it but they didn't have no money. Then you had to give them a pair, and you done it.

MR. HALL: Are you doing to be judging the decoy contest? Tell me a little bit about that.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, it's a little old local show that we have here every year. It's going to be on Saturday. I'm going to judge it for them again.

MR. HALL: Are you looking forward to that?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I don't like to just judge local people 'cause some of them might look down their nose on you. I like to judge strange people, you know, to the big shows. That way you don't know who you're judging.

MR. HALL: Tell me a little bit about your feelings about being invited to go to Washington, D.C. to talk to an international waterfowl symposium.

MR. DAISEY: Well, I'm scared to death. I can tell you that! If you want to know the truth! But I'll beat through it.

MR. HALL: Do you think that fifty years of experience in the marsh, to have people recognize you; how do you feel about that?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I don't know. I really don't know. Maybe they need to hear some three letter words and some little bit of Huckleberry Finn in it you know. Maybe they can get a better understanding of that.

MR. HALL: Did you ever imagine that you'd be one of the biggest outspoken spokesmen for ducks on the eastern shore?

MR. DAISEY: No! I never visioned much to tell you the truth. What I envisioned was hunting and fishing and trapping; that was the end of it.

MR. HALL: Tell me about how you didn't ever think about them, the ducks, running out.



MR. DAISEY: We just didn't think nothing about that. We thought every year they'd come back thicker than ever, you know. There'd be plenty birds and this thing would go on forever, but that's not the case.

MR. HALL: How do you feel when you go to bed and think about that?

MR. DAISEY: Well, I listen at my TV when I see people show me about holes in the atmosphere and all that mess. I begin to pay more attention to them about cutting down the forests and all of that. I've seen my own...when they talk about how many wetlands since we've been talking, how many acres have we lost? You probably know. What is an hour that we lose? We lose a lot don't we, per hour? I've seen what we've lost on this island in my lifetime! It's unbelievable!

MR. HALL: One thing I wanted you to say while you're hacking away there is that you want to do everything you can to support Ducks Unlimited and the habitat and trying to get people to realize why they should obey the game laws; in your own words, you say it.

MR. DAISEY: Well, for a number of years now, I have supported Ducks Unlimited. I am a sponsor and help support them any way I can; through carvings mainly. And I believe what I think they believe. I'm not sure all of them believes it but. But I believe in conservation. I've always believed in conservation. Like you say, there's that much trapper in me that would tell me that. You said something while ago about the trapper that makes sense than anything I've heard. The trapper is a real conservationist.

MR. HALL: Don't you think that the duck hunter in general, who would probably if we save ducks and duck hunting, it would be the duck hunter who does it?

MR. DAISEY: If it can be saved, yes. If can be saved, it would have to be the duck hunter who does it. He's always put his money down. We realize that. But it's going to take more than that. It's going to take some help from nature. I think that could help us more than anything, and some kind of restrictions on progress.

MR. HALL: And he'd got to be sincere though, when he goes out in the fields though, and do it right.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah! The hunter his self, has got to do his part. It's a teamwork job. I mean, in a way. But I don't know if we're going to be able to do anything about the progress.

MR. HALL: But it's worth trying isn't it?

MR. DAISEY: It certainly is! If we lose it...like losing anything, if you do all you can do, then you can say 'the hell with it'. Then you can say, "Well, I've done all I can do to stop it." If it don't work, well, that's all that's expected of you.

MR. HALL: Okay, one final thing; [Mr. Newman Merritt enters room and is greeted with gladness. Mr. Hall instructs him to go and sit over by Mr. Daisey.]

MR. MERRITT: I've got two more nights on this head. Here's two of them. The machine did the other one.

MR. DAISEY: The machine did the other one? Well, I can fix you up.

MR. MERRITT: You going to give one to the Girl Scouts for their Easter decoy thing?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah.

MR. MERRITT: It ain't got no eyes on it.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, it's crude looking. I'll get to it in a minute.

MR. MERRITT: I went over and got my Golden Age Passport!

MR. DAISEY: Did you? There you go! Man's got the Golden Age Passport, how about that?

MR. MERRITT: They handed it right over to me!

MR. HALL: Cigar, tell me about who your partner is there.

MR. DAISEY: This is Newman Merritt. He's an old duck hunter.

MR. MERRITT: S---, old is right!

MR. DAISEY: He'd killed a few in his lifetime.

MR. HALL: Was he probably your number one partner?

MR. DAISEY: I would say so, yeah. Yep.

MR. MERRITT: I could even get the "Golden Age"!

MR. DAISEY: That's right. We've done a lot of duck hunting.

MR. HALL: Newman, what do you think about Cigar going over to Washington to that Ducks Unlimited Symposium because they want to hear what he's got to say about what we've got to do to save the ducks?

MR. MERRITT: Well he can tell them something. He can tell them what to do.

MR. DAISEY: The boys always said I always had an answer for them, didn't they?

MR. MERRITT: Yes sir! He'll give them a good send off. If he want to go up there and get them business people and keep them from ruining this refuge!

MR. DAISEY: That's what we're sore about. We're sore about these business people running this refuge.

MR. MERRITT: They won't be satisfied until they can get high rises over there.

MR. DAISEY: That's right, that's what they want.

MR. MERRITT: I tell them that it's not right and I feel like I been thrown to the wolves!

MR. DAISEY: Sometimes he says I throwed him to the wolves, you know, when we get in a [meeting or discussion], but I always come back to get him though. I always come back to get him!

MR. MERRITT: I ain't took a wrong duck since way back then when we were down there on Christmas Eve. Hey, I don't want any more running. The asthma has set in on me.

MR. DAISEY: No, when you get older, you can forget about violating the game law.

MR. MERRITT: It's too hard.

MR. DAISEY: Them days is all gone.

MR. MERRITT: It's just no fun no more is it?

MR. DAISEY: No!

MR. HALL: Newman, tell me in your own words what kind of thrill you got out of that. Looking back, why did you do it? Was it the challenge or the money?

MR. MERRITT: It wasn't the money. You never did get no money out of it, even if you could sell the ducks. What'd you get, a dollar a piece?

MR. DAISEY: That's right. A dollar, or a dollar and a quarter.

MR. MERRITT: Years ago, it used to be you could sell them on the island.

MR. DAISEY: I'll give you an example about that. In 1962 when they had the March storm, I stood out watched the beach from the porch. I had two damn boots on my feet and one of them leaked. And I had thirty-five dollars to my name in the world. I had an old 1148 shotgun, she was shot out and fifty or sixty old tools and an old band saw. That was about the extent of it.

MR. MERRITT: That's what you had accumulated?

MR. DAISEY: That's what I had accumulated by 1962. That shows you what violating the law amounted to!

MR. HALL: Well why'd you do it?

MR. DAISEY: I done it because there wasn't nothing else to do! There wasn't much around here to do! When you come right down to it.

MR. MERRITT: We never paid that much attention to violating the law. It didn't feel like we were violating nothing really, at all. At least I never did.

MR. DAISEY: No.

MR. MERRITT: I'd said, 'I'm going to go kill me some ducks', if we minded to. And lot of times you wanted to stop if you got over your limit and so forth.

MR. HALL: But you thought about the possibility of getting caught?

MR. MERRITT: Oh yeah, I guess some of the younger people did. I never thought too much about it. In fact, I never really got chased or anything like that.

MR. DAISEY: How many times you been checked in your lifetime?

MR. MERRITT: I don't believe more than a couple of times, really.

MR. DAISEY: That's right, just a couple of times. I've been checked three times. Now we're talking about all of these years and all of these bad things they say about the way the law was; it really wasn't that bad to tell you the truth.

MR. MERRITT: The law didn't really stand a chance in a way. They were spread too thin, especially the federal people. There just wasn't enough of them. There was an awful lot of them boats on the water between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean too.

MR. DAISEY: You know, today their more of going off with a six-pack of beer in the boat now; between the damn Coast Guard and the State Game Wardens. They are the ones you've got to worry about as far as violating the law. They'll give you hell just for having a six-pack in there or something. I ain't never going to go off when I ain't got me a six-pack of beer, a little something to drink in my boat, you know!

MR. MERRITT: Well, you're taking an awful chance.

MR. DAISEY: I know you are!

MR. MERRITT: You might dehydrate.

MR. DAISEY: That's right.

MR. MERRITT: You never know. Anything might happen to you.

MR. DAISEY: That's right!

MR. MERRITT: You've got to have you a little beer.

MR. HALL: Cigar, do you think you trapped more ducks, or drank more beer? If you had to make a comparison.

MR. DAISEY: I've drunk a lot more beers than ducks I've trapped. Yeah, I have. There ain't no telling how many beers I ain't drank.

MR. MERRITT: Did you tell him about that day you drank thirty-nine beers and a Pepsi-Cola?

MR. DAISEY: Thirty-nine beers and a Pepsi-Cola!

MR. MERRITT: I wanted to know what you drunk the Pepsi-Cola for and you said you were kind of thirsty!

MR. DAISEY: Yeah. But you know what you can do? You can come out to a place like this in the summer time and you'd be surprised how much beer you can run through in a

day's time. You wouldn't believe it. Keep it nice and cold and keep right on working. Start early.

MR. HALL: Newman, did you ever guide sport hunters?

MR. MERRITT: Very little. Just a very few times.

MR. HALL: But you were around hunters?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. HALL: Tell me in your own words, did the sports disobey the law just as bad as the guys who were hunting for the market?

MR. MERRITT: I have never, ever been in the company of too many of what I would call genuine sportsmen. I can remember maybe one person, maybe, who wouldn't shoot over their limit or something like that. Of course here in later years the limit has just got so ridiculous like on Black ducks, you've got to go two days to get a pair of Black ducks. Not too many people are going to do that. If a pair of Black ducks comes they're not likely to stay there.

MR. HALL: Tell me in your own words about how you feel that the sports didn't feel like the guys like you who were shooting to eat or sell, they didn't feel like they were doing anything wrong did they?

MR. MERRITT: No, not really. I think we had the idea when we were younger of course, you know, I think we had the idea that there was just a plenty of ducks and they was creations of ducks when we were violating the law!

MR. DAISEY: That's right.

MR. MERRITT: There were so many Black ducks you wouldn't believe it!

MR. DAISEY: Tell him the most Black ducks you ever seen; duck trapping and what years, you remember them, when you'd go down there hunting in the evening.

MR. MERRITT: Well, after that '62 storm there was a lot of ducks.

MR. DAISEY: I'd say '67.

MR. MERRITT: You could say '67 or '68. There was no end to the Black ducks you could kill, really, if you wanted.

MR. DAISEY: You could kill thirty-eight or forty, if you wanted to, with no trouble at all any time you wanted to go then.

MR. MERRITT: In the years after that they weren't nothing but baby ducks. There was just creations of Black ducks at that particular time. But what happened to them I don't know. The trapping sure as hell didn't break them up.

MR. DAISEY: Trapping wouldn't do it!

MR. MERRITT: This was after trapping!

MR. DAISEY: Trapping was all over by then.

MR. HALL: Don't you think that after the trapping was over, that one of the reasons some of the Black ducks came back? Because there was a lot of ducks trapped up and down here.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, there was. It'll never be know how many were trapped I guess.

MR. DAISEY: No, that's right.

MR. MERRITT: But what I always thought might have happened to the Black duck was when the people quit trapping and putting corn in the marshes; all they had to eat down here in our marshes was minnows and I think those minnows were full of DDT.

MR. DAISEY: Every one of these farmers used DDT.

MR. MERRITT: The eggs won't hatch. I heard that the DDT makes the eggshell so thin that they won't hatch properly. And I can't help but think that that's what happened to them.

MR. DAISEY: That's what I always said. I'll tell you the reason why; I went one day fishing. I went ashore down at the hummock that's down on the south end of the island. I went ashore to look for some ducks and I seen two or three Blacks ducks and they had one or two. I seen that the Gadwall had eleven. That's the way it was every time you'd see a duck with... the old gander, one that didn't eat minnows he'd have a nice brood of ducks. And the one that eat the minnows didn't have nothing. So that told me something. In them creeks, he was getting something that he wasn't supposed to have. Black ducks will eat them minnows, that's just about all he'll eat. Put him in a freeze he'll eat them till he's right full of them.

MR. MERRITT: He'll eat them any time. He'll eat just about at as many as a [unintelligible] does. But I saw a few more Black ducks this year. I didn't go hunting that

much, but what times I went, I saw more Black ducks this year, right here, than I've seen in quite a while.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah.

MR. MERRITT: I did go down a couple of times oystering to down below around Quinby and Sandy Island and those places there was always great Black ducks down there. And I didn't see anything at all down there!

MR. DAISEY: That used to be the Black duck capital of the world!

MR. MERRITT: I didn't see a dozen, all through them marshes.

MR. DAISEY: That's hard to believe too! And just as soon as you drop your anchor there, they'd start shooting you, cause you were close to their duck traps. They didn't want you around there.

MR. MERRITT: I talk to the boys that oyster and work on the water all of the time and they say they don't see Black ducks like they used to. Whenever you'd sail up the gulf you'd jump them right ahead of you all the time. Some of them ain't even gun shy no matter what you'd say. You could sit right in the boat and kill what you wanted. But I did see the bulk of them right here around Chincoteague. Maybe we've got the bulk of them, I don't know.

MR. DAISEY: Could have.

MR. HALL: Newman, what do you think the future holds for the ducks?

MR. MERRITT: My lord, I don't know! I'm a little scared about the ducks. I'm going to tell you if they keep gobbling up the wetlands and filling in and the building and stuff, that the ducks has had it. I think they'll have to do like they're doing with oysters and things like that. And they might have to raise them in ponds, you know, aquaculture. I think the best way will be to raise ducks and turn them loose like they do in Maryland. They've had pretty good success with the Mallard program in Maryland.

MR. HALL: Tell me about you feelings about Ducks Unlimited. Do you support them trying to still save the wetlands?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, I would say every bit should be saved. It would be a big help. Yeah, I support Ducks Unlimited or any other organization that's trying to save the wetlands because I think it's pretty vital to the future.



MR. DAISEY: But you know what? You get out there to them meetings and as soon as we mention something about the wetlands we make them so damn mad you wouldn't believe it. You can see these people get madder than hell over it. They even treat you a little different when they get madder than hell over it.

MR. HALL: You mean two guys that hunted all their lives and didn't pay much attention to the game laws, now stand up and say that wetlands is important?

MR. DAISEY: That's right. Me and Newman both have said something about it at the meetings and the people don't like it. No sir, the business people out here don't like that. They say that's their goddamned land. I say it's only land that's been lent to them for a little while to use, and they ain't got no damn right to destroy it completely. That's my theory about it.

MR. MERRITT: Because they'll do it.

MR. DAISEY: They're doing it right today! There's dump trucks coming out right today coming out and filling in the wetlands! Right today; right this minute while you're here!

MR. HALL: There's no doubt; and I want you two to talk about this back and forth; that if we do save it, it's going to be the guys that duck hunted, the duck hunters that stand up for wildlife including obeying the law. You all back and forth because this is the only way, because the developers damn sure ain't going to see.

MR. DAISEY: No! It's just like them fish; them little fish over there at Virginia marsh and all up and down through them glades. They come up there and spawn in them little tinny spots and all up through there in all them little fresh water places. See? We need them places. And when the fall comes the fish will go on out and there'd be more fish. But if they had their way, they'd fill her in!

MR. MERRITT: I think that generally speaking the duck hunter even with all of his faults; and like we say, we used to violate the law and shoot over the limit and all of that, but I really think the duck hunter has paid his dues and put him money where his mouth is.