Interview with Richard and Patricia. Richard (aged 68) and Patricia live on Cedar Island, North Carolina.

Q.1.: Connection to Down East

Henry: Tell me about yourselves and your connection to Down East.

Patricia: We have always lived here on Cedar Island. Richard: and I were both born here. We were both raised here and our ancestors were from here. I have three brothers that do not live here and a sister that moved away, but the rest of us live here. There was seven in my family and there was three in his family, and they all live here. Our families were from Cedar Island from as far back as we can remember, or our mothers and fathers could remember.

Henry: So is the place where you live here today, is this inherited family land?

Patricia: Yes sir it is -- part of Richard:'s family.

Henry: What is it about Down East that keeps you living here?

Patricia: Well, we travelled for years, but we always were looking forward to saving our money to build a home, to come back home because we like the way we were raised and we liked the place to raise children. The people here are friendly, and God-fearing, and people here try to be honest and raise their children right. They want their children to have an education. We have some very smart children here on Cedar Island. The people here would help you in any situation. But, they don't like for people to try and come here and bring their way of life here and change us, ‘cause, we don't like change, we want it like it is. We know if there’s development that we will face changes, but we think we've done pretty good with our values.

Henry: What are some of your favorite things to do or experience Down East or in Cedar Island?

Patricia: Well, there’s not much to do here really.

Richard: If you want a mess of seafood, like oysters, clams, crabs, you can get in your skiff and couple hours you'll have it and be back home. I mean, every now and then everyone will get together and we'll have a barbeque–something like that you know for the community building. Fish fry stuff like that, oyster roast.

Q.2.: Connection to Down East natural environment

Henry: What about the environment Down East, or the landscape Down East? Are there things that you particularly like or value about the environment down here?

Richard: We have clean water. Our water in the bay… you can go along the shore and pick up oysters or clams. I've been working on the water all my life.

Q.3.: Professional perspective on Down East

Henry: Tell me about your work.

Richard: I started working on the water and everything I put my hand at, I made money at. There was plenty stuff in the water and I put in a lot of hours. I built two boats; the last one was a forty foot one I worked twenty years -- by this time I was commercial fishing on Portsmouth Island. In the summer time I'd be a shrimping, all night long and I’d come home. I’d have to go to Portsmouth. I’d get back home about twelve o'clock, one o'clock that day, get me four or so hours of sleep jump, on the boat that night, and shrimp all night, and come back the next morning.

I built that boat, I built that forty foot one in ’84. I was crab potting before that a little bit. I would be crab potting until the fall of the year and then in the fall, I was pound netting for flounder. After the floundering I didn't have nothing to do until the next spring. Well, most of the time… I’d take the boat and go clamming. I’d set crab pots in February and fish 'em right on til the fall again. But then when I built that boat in ’84, I did away with the crab potting. I’d go shrimping. I’d shrimp up til it was time to set my pound nets for floundering, and I’d fish them til December, then it was time to go crabbing, take the boat and go crabbing. I quit that in March. After March I put the boat on the railways, paint her, get her painted all up and get my gear ready to go shrimping in the spring, but I mean it was from one thing to another. In the winter time, I’d go crabbing. I’d go crabbing with the trawls on the boat.

I mean, it was a year around job, back then. I mean, like I said we made money. I mean, you were getting a little bit of something for your stuff. We were getting more for shrimp and clams back in the eighties than they getting today. We were getting anywhere from 15 to 20 cent a piece for clams. Now today I think its eleven cents that they get for them.

Q.4.: Community and environmental change

Henry: So, do you feel like Cedar Island has changed in some ways less than other Down East communities, just because of the distance from anything else, or not?

Patricia: Our land is still all in the family, except what the Wildlife Refuge took. The Wildlife Refuge came in years ago and got what they wanted. You didn't have a choice about that. That was probably in the 70s. You didn't have a choice about whether the Wildlife took your property or not, but, it’s the best thing that ever happened to Cedar Island.

Henry: Can you explain that?

Patricia: Because, if that had not happened the people here would have sold this property to every Tom, Dick , and Harry from off, as they say. And they would have gotten the sewer system through here probably. People with money and influence and its going to happen, I mean we know it’s going to happen, if the economy ever bounces back. Cedar Island will be different than it is today, and I am all for development. I do think it should be regulated, so that we can preserve as much of our heritage as we can. Now we do know with development you do lose a lot of your heritage. Harkers Island is a prime example of that. Development is progress, and we need jobs Down East. The commercial fishermen's way of life has diminished so much and it’s not all because the resource is not there. It’s a lot because they're overregulated.

Richard: And fuel

Patricia: Yes and fuel prices have hurt the commercial fishermen, but that has just occurred in the last couple three years. Marine Fisheries is good, but Marine Fisheries goes too far sometimes and the people here are hard working proud people. They like to, and all of Down East, they like to be self sufficient, they don't like to be on any kind of welfare, and I'm sure there’s some that has to now, but the people down here like to be on their own. We do want our way of life preserved, we do want progress, we do want development. The big development that was supposed to be started over around Snug Harbor, that would be nice for Down East—the marina and all that stuff. As long as it’s regulated, the waters are protected, I think the majority of people of Down East are for it, but we do want it regulated properly.

Q.5.: Vision for the future of Down East

Henry: What is your vision for the future of Down East? You mentioned earlier that we need some development Down East…

Patricia: I think development would be good Down East as long as it is regulated properly to preserve our heritage as much as possible. I know there has to be some change but we want to preserve our unique way of life. It’s not a hustle-bustle life, and I’m for anything that will provide jobs for our children and grandchildren that want to stay in this area. There are some of them that go off to college and they don’t want to come back and that’s fine, but I know there’s just got to be something for the future. I mean there’s just got to be, and I don’t think it’s going to be on the water.

It’s very, very expensive for a person to get into commercial fishing anymore. The ones that are sticking with it now are the ones that have got their gear. Our son does it and I’m sure the only reason he does it is because he’s got his gear already. If you have to start with a new boat and new motors and new nets it would be awfully hard for a person to get started in it now. Our son not only fishes he takes out sports fishermen and he guides hunters in the winter time. And his wife is a nurse. And that’s the way it is with a lot of men here on the island, their wife has a career. It helps provide them with their medical insurance and that sort of thing.

Q.6.: Barriers to and opportunities for achieving your vision

Henry: What do you see as the opportunities for or obstacles to achieving the vision you are talking about?

Patricia: One of the obstacles would be the natives not wanting it. There are a lot of natives that don’t want it. That has to be overcome. I think education is a big thing, educating the people, the natives, of the benefits. I don’t want it overdeveloped. I don’t want a Myrtle Beach strand Down East. I just don’t want to see that happen, but I do see far enough in the future to know that my children, it may not affect my grandchildren as much, will not have a Down East way of life if there is not some kind of development. The way the economy is now that’s not going to happen in the near future.