

Interview with Dorothy on April 21st, 2009, in Williston, North Carolina. Dorothy is a retired department store clerk.

## Q.1. Connection to Down East

**Henry:**

*What is your connection to Down East?*

**Dorothy:**

Well, I've lived in this area – well, I've lived in this house since '63. I was born and raised in the house next door. I know both of my sets of my grandparents were born and raised in this area. And I would assume their parents. And I would imagine most of them worked on the water or farmed.

**Henry:**

*Is this, where we are today, is this inherited family land that's still part of the family?*

**Dorothy:**

Yes, yes. I know both my grandparents were born and raised further on down the road toward the shore. And this land here, I don't know who it belonged to at the beginning, but they could go in and clear a plot of land and claim it. And that's what my granddaddy and two of his brothers did.

## Q.2. Connection to Down East natural environment

**Henry:**

*Are there particular places Down East that are important to you? I mean, you talk about how special the whole area is. Are there particular parts of it that are particularly important?*

**Dorothy:**

Well, here, of course, Williston, of course. I love Harkers Island. I love Atlantic. Davis is nice. Well, every place in the county is nice. But of course, Williston is my favorite. But all of Down East is important. You can go anywhere in the world, and when you head back home, and you get to North River, you could put your car window down and *[sniff]* say, "Yeah, I'm home. I can walk the rest of the way if I have to." But yeah, there's just – there's just something about that marsh that you know you're home when you could smell that.

**Henry:**

*What are some of the things you particular enjoy doing or experiencing Down East?*

**Dorothy:**

When I was growing up, in the summertime, 10 or 12 of us kids would go down to the bridge in the afternoon and go swimming. Most of the time, the girls especially—well, I'm sure the boys had chores they had to do, too—would help with canning vegetables, or freezing vegetables, from our mothers' gardens. Well, today we'd help one mother, and tomorrow we'd go over and help the other mother. And then late that afternoon, we'd don our swimsuits and walk down that road, and by the cemetery, and went right on down to the shore. We didn't have to get on the road. We'd go down to the shore, go swimming. Sometimes we'd have a picnic down to the shore, clean up our mess, and we'd come home. Some nights one of the boys would have a boat. We'd go out in the skiff and just mess around on the water. But there was just so much to do. And we could go out, if we wanted to go out and walk around out in the woods and just explore. But now, everybody's so particular about their property, you can't do that anymore.

### Q.3. Professional perspective on Down East

**Henry:**

*Has your family made its living from the water?*

**Dorothy:**

My mother and father made their living, more or less, working with people that worked on the water. My husband—my first husband—and his father worked on the water. My husband was a longshoreman. So, water has been a big part of my life.

### Q.4. Community and Environmental Change

**Henry:**

*Over the course of your life, when you think about how Down East was when you were little, and how it is today, what are the main differences?*

**Dorothy:**

Well, I think the seafood industry has changed the most of anything. We used to have – Mr. Elmer Willis had a clam house over here. He not only did clams; he had scallops. I can't remember, I think he may have handled oysters. But I know it was clams and scallops, and he did have fish, too. And he had a boat-building business right alongside the store.

There was, of course, the fish houses...Clayton Fulcher's and Billy Smith's in Atlantic. Clayton Fulcher's is not running anymore. There was two or three in Sea Level. There was several in Stacy. There's still some on Cedar Island. But the seafood business was a big, big business.

**Henry:**

*So, what caused the decline of the fishing industry?*

**Dorothy:**

Bad water quality.

**Henry:**

*And that was over what time period? I mean, how long has it been declining?*

**Dorothy:**

I'd say probably between 10 and 15 years. Maybe a little longer than that...

**Henry:**

*And what was causing the bad water quality, or has been?*

**Dorothy:**

Pollution. I really don't know. Agriculture had a lot to do with it.

**Henry:**

*Right. What about the development? Has that affected the fishing industry?*

**Dorothy:**

I know it has on Harkers Island. Not so bad in Atlantic, but overdevelopment, especially over on Harkers Island. That's where we've seen the most development really.

**Henry:**

*So those things have affected the water quality, and then that's affected the fishing?*

**Dorothy:**

Sure it has, especially in the sounds. But they have more scallops now, and oysters – the last three years, I'd say, oystering season has really been good. And this year, in the spring– the early spring, late winter/early spring, the scallops were– there was gobs and gobs of scallops.

**Henry:**

*So, the fishing industry, that's a big change. Other changes, what other main changes?*

**Dorothy:**

Well, I'd say, other than Harkers Island – Harkers Island has seen the biggest change, I think, because of the building, because of the homes, they've seen the biggest change. And some of it

is for the good, and some of it is not. I know it's gonna grow, because it has been dormant, I guess you could say, more than any other area in the county, other than Harkers Island. And I'm so glad that the National Seashore took over Cape Lookout because it would have grown over there just like it has on Atlantic Beach in that area, that strand there. Atlantic Beach has really changed so much over the years.

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

**Henry:**

*What would be your vision for the future of the area?*

**Dorothy:**

I know it's gonna grow, but if it's gonna grow, I want it to grow the right way. If the population does increase, build with caring for your neighbors: "If I do this to this piece of property, how is it going to affect my neighbor? If I put concrete all over this to keep from having to cut grass, how's that going to affect my neighbor? And not just your next-door neighbor, but we're all neighbors. How's it going to affect the environment? And the environment affects everybody. The fishing industry, the seafood industry.

**Henry:**

*Are there places or things Down East that you would particularly like to see protected from change, like things that would not change?*

**Dorothy:**

The greenery, the marshes. Those marshes need to stay there. They don't need to be messed with. Just like the sand on the beaches. Those beaches have changed from day one. They're gonna keep changing until the end of time. And these people that build their houses right down on the beach – it never ceases to amaze me because that sand is going to move. It's going to change with the wind and the storms. Every time a storm comes, that sand's gonna shift. It might shift back eventually, but not tomorrow. And you keep putting all this sand in there, I mean, it's time for that to be gone, it's gonna be gone.

## Q.6. Barriers to or opportunities for achieving your vision

**Henry:**

*What do you see as the opportunities or obstacles to achieving the kind of vision you've laid out?*

***Dorothy:***

Oh, goodness. Too many rules and regulations would be required, I'm sure, for a lot of people, but I don't see any other way around it. But rules and regulations were made to be broken. That's – if everybody cared, it would be different. And that's what it's gonna take – everybody caring. Not just about me, but about everybody else. But that's not gonna happen. It's all about me and what I want, to heck with everybody else.

***Henry:***

*Are there any opportunities that give you hope that this kind of thing is achievable?*

***Dorothy:***

Now might be the best time. People might listen more right now, because right now, there's not as much building going on. So, maybe it's time to really reorganize and say, "Well, this needs to be done, and that needs to be done, and we need to do it this way."