Dialect and words of fishermen, only fishermen understand. But I'm going to go in and clarify this. "Look, this word means this," that.

Well, we've started recording. We're in Culebra. The day is October 10, 2024, and we're here. Can you tell me your name?

Interviewee Interviewee Interviewee Interviewee.

Interviewee Interviewee. Interviewee Interviewee, can you tell me a little about what you do?

Well, sometimes I go fishing because I like it. Sometimes I throw a cast net to catch sardines. I go to Las Piedras. Sometimes I catch snails, I go scuba diving. I love fishing. My dad used to go fishing and take fish to Santa Cruz, to San Tomás. Yes, well, my dad wasn't a man who made a lot of money, but from there, from fishing, he supported the family. He always supported them with that, with fishing. And that's where I learned. I got those fishing roots. I love fishing. It's my passion, and every now and then I go fishing to clear my mind and relax, because that's what it's all about.

Is that the only job you have, fishing?

Fishing. But right now I'm doing housekeeping. I work as a housekeeper. I've worked as a housekeeper all my life, from the age of 13 until now. I'm 34. I've worked all my life.

Housekeeping and also fishing. What percentage of your income comes from fishing and housekeeping? How much do you make?

As for fishing, well, it depends on what I'm going to catch. Let's suppose I catch—how do I explain? There's going to be a sack of snails. The weight of the snail depends on that. (True tulip, \*Fasciolaria tulipa\*) Three pounds, four pounds. Here, the snail (True tulip, \*Fasciolaria tulipa\*) is 12 pesos right now because it's cheap here. In other places, it's higher. This is where you get the cheapest fish. Around here, the price of fish has gone up. Fish here are eight pesos a pound. Fish here have gone up. And it depends on the pesos. Fifty or 60 pesos, depending on how much the fishing is going for.

Could you say that you make roughly half your money from housekeeping?

Half, yes.

And how many years have you been fishing?

Fishing? Since I was little. Since I was a child. Let's say from nine or ten years old, when I used to go scuba diving with my dad, and I used to go rowing. My dad didn't have a motor. He made his own boat, and we took him fishing. The whole family would go fishing at night.

[00:03:20]

Is that a family business?

Yes, family business.

And you sold the fish here?

Here, we used to sell fish. We made around 3,000 pesos, 4,000 pesos there. We ran it from 6:00 in the morning, arriving at 6:00 in the afternoon. And we closed at 3:00 in the morning, no kidding. Because the line was really long. People kept coming. They wanted fish because we had to sell them, because we didn't have electricity. We were without electricity for eight years. But we went fishing and made enough to pay the electricity bill for our house. And from there we earned 3,000, 4,000 pesos. But they were large fish, we're talking about 40 pounds or more.

And he sold it here?

And we sold it from here. Right here, from people from outside who were friends of ours, who would stay—they have Airbnbs, here in Culebra, near my house, in La Romana. Near my house there, there were a lot of people who bought fish from them. The fishermen came to my house, and we always sold the fish there to everyone.

From his house, he sold it.

From home. From the same house, it was gutted. I was the one who scaled the fish, whether they wanted it gutted or scaled. But the fish was always gutted so the person could take it clean.

And you, how old are you?

Me, 34 years old now.

Thirty-four. And well, he started fishing at nine.

Yes, at nine years old.

Is your dad still alive?

No, my dad died in 2002.

¿2002?

Mother's Day, in the afternoon. May 14th.

And since then, have you been fishing alone?

Yes, I fish alone. My uncle died. After that, at my father's side. He was also a fisherman. He was mute. Yes, well, half my family is mute. My father was deaf and mute, but he could talk.

And how did you do it? Did they help you sell your fish?

Well, we already have our customers. Yes, we already have regular customers to sell our fish to. They weren't looking for anyone else because the customers were already arriving.

And what kind of fish is it?

Well, we sold grouper (Nassau grouper, \*Epinephelus striatus\*), redfish, grunt. We sold sama (mutton snapper, \*Lutjanus analis\*). We sold all kinds of fish. All kinds of fish. Porkfish. Everything was sold. Everything was sold at that time. Snappers (Lutjanidae\*). Everything was sold. All kinds of fish were sold.

He told me that fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) –

And the queen conch. (Strombus gigas) There's more queen conch (Strombus gigas) here, near a beach [INAUDIBLE]. Near Zoni, closer here, which was called Manzanillo. We would go kayaking (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*) from Friday to Sunday, and there were three of us. My brother, my stepfather, and I would go fishing for queen conch (Strombus gigas), snails, and we would sell queen conch (Strombus gigas) too. And with that, we also fed the family at home. Because we ate fish all the time, seafood. Nothing outside, no meat or anything. It was always seafood all the time.

[00:06:25]

Always with fish every day. For dinner or?

The sustenance was always seafood.

And how did he eat it?

We ate it in a salad. It was mostly salad all the time. Yes.

Salad. Do you also grow things here, or do you buy them?

Yes. We plant. I harvest. I harvest. I have bananas. I have pineapple. I have passion fruit. A beautiful passion fruit. I have mangoes. I have quenepas. I have pigeon peas. I have a little bit of everything at home.

When she mentions a seafood salad, it is seafood meat with onion and pepper.

Onion.

In vinegar. It doesn't include lettuce or tomato. It's a seafood salad with onion, pepper, and vinegar.

Exactly, just like they used to make it. So they used to eat it, and it tastes so good that way. You don't add lettuce or tomatoes. None of that. Just that. Onion. Pepper.

Did your mom cook like that too?

Yes, my mom cooked like that. But right now, my mom is in the United States. [INAUDIBLE]

With my daughter. My daughter is 17. She's almost in fourth grade. They're all out there. My brother, my mom. My two brothers, my mom, my stepfather. I live here. I take care of his plot of land. My grandfather passed away in Fiona. I'm staying with my husband now. But my husband had an accident a few days ago. He's over there in the living room.

After Fiona?

Yes. When Fiona passed away, my grandfather passed away.

Who died?

And my grandfather was a fisherman too. His name was Elías Ortiz, who's also in the fishery. He's listed there. A tremendous man. He sold a lot of fish and also worked in the fish market.

How long ago was that?

What time was Fiona? I don't remember.

Fiona was due in 2000 – she checked quickly here. September 2022.

And he died on February 17.

¿2023?

2023.

'23. After Fiona?

When Fiona passes by, he dies.

But during Fiona or after?

No, no. Later.

After Fiona. When Fiona passes away – it happens today. On another day, she dies. She had a seizure. She had a pacemaker. She had two seizures in a row.

[00:09:11]

He was sick before, but he continued like –

Surprisingly, Fiona passed on September 19, 2022. And September 19, 2017 was Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

Exactly. He spent 12 hours on every plant there was. The house, everything exploded. I had to open the windows just a little, because otherwise the house would explode.

Because of Hurricane Maria?

For Hurricane Maria. 12 hours I was there, [INAUDIBLE] there, there. How much vegetables did it take? It took everything. All the vegetables.

Is this during Maria?

Yes, during Maria.

Who stayed here for many hours.

He had 12 hours.

And he survived.

Yes, thank God. We were fine. We were safe. We have everything. Always before a storm hits, like now, I'm prepared. I have everything in my house. Extras like food from the brothel, things. I have everything stored away. You know, just in case something happens, we're already prepared in case something comes.

Since when did you start doing this? The preparation.

Always our family. We have that—I don't know, we always get it into our heads that we have to prepare in case something happens. So, we always prepare in case something happens, like a tsunami, or an earthquake, or something. We have a bag packed in case we have to run away. So, we're always ready for whatever comes.

And tell me a little about what you do to prepare?

Well, to prepare, I buy things. And sometimes people give me things, like pottery, things like that.

What is potería, excuse me?

Potería is canned food.

Cans?

Cans, yeah. Long-lasting canned food.

You can save it, and it can last a long time, but you can keep it there. Well, I save that. Right now, I'm ready for anything.

And how do you prepare the house?

The house? Well, I have everything stored away. In a drawer, I have everything stored there. Everything there, neatly tucked away in a corner just in case. And if something comes up, well, I've already got everything ready in that corner.

But what I'm asking is, does it do anything to make the house strong?

I live in a storm.

What is a storm shutter?

Do you know what a storm is?

Is the storm shutter the one you put on the window to protect it?

The storm clouds are what they made in the past, which are stronger and can withstand tremors and earthquakes.

[00:12:06]

Your house?

Dog.

Well, no. I don't know what it is. If you could explain it to us.

A storm door is a reinforced house. If something strong comes, the house will hold up. It will endure. And then, on top, we have a cable system, like strong cables, which is what it's for. To hold the zinc, because it's cement around the edges, but zinc on top.

Is that what you call "storm", zinc?

It's a storm. Exactly.

Zinc is a hard aluminum material that is used to make the roofs of houses.

And the whole house was made of that?

Yes, the whole house, the roof is made of zinc. And the rest is cement. And on top, it has two reinforced cables, which will hold me up if a really strong storm like the one that happened this week comes. It was really strong, I thought—but not mine. The neighbor's roof did collapse. But not mine, because the zinc is embedded in the cement. We built a wall there. We poured cement in there. We poured cement on top, and we pulled down the entire roof. We pulled down the cables there, and it held, and it's not going to move at all.

Did you tell me that's something you did in the past?

Yes, I used to make storm shutters a lot because it was more difficult for the family, like women who have children, whose families are large, you know. Well, they have to have a safe place to put their family.

And how old is the house?

If I tell you, that house was built in 2000, 2001, 2002. Around there, more or less. And we built it in eight days. In eight days. Because we were on the streets, and we had nowhere to live, and we had to walk. We don't have a car either. Because from there—where El Navegante is—my grandfather lived there before. That belonged to Marta Cánovas. El Navegante, that belonged to Marta Cánovas before. They sold it there. Well, my grandfather lived there before because my grandfather worked for them. So, from there, they walked up there and we carried everything. But then we got another person to carry the cement, the blocks. We brought it from the island too, because cement is very expensive here. Everything is very expensive. You have to bring it from there to be able to make things.

Let me know if I understand correctly. You lived with your grandfather. And he died. He passed away. It wasn't his house there. It belonged to the owners.

To another person for that time.

[00:15:00]

Of.

And now -

He passed away.

I stayed in his house, living.

I understand. But in the past, was this type of cause you mention adjacent to another house here, as if by tradition?

It's a tradition, because they always did it that way because it was safer for the family. It gives them more security.

It's like – it's a bunker.

Something like a bunker, but it's a storm cellar. It's safer than a bunker.

Are there other people who have something like this on the island?

No, no one here has that. Only me.

And how did you think of doing it that way?

I live in La Romana.

In La Romana?

In La Romana, yes.

Is that what it's called?

It's a neighborhood.

La Romana, Calle Siete, Parcel 11. Yes, it's like a residential development. Yes, there's La Romana and Las Delicias together.

And how did you come up with the idea to do that?

Well, we came up with that idea because the family was quite large. We had a house with nine rooms. In those nine rooms, there were nine of us. And so, we have to plan and figure out how to support the family to make sure we're okay tomorrow. And then, my grandfather got it into his head. "Look, let's make a storm shelter just in case. The day we're not here tomorrow, well, the baby"—he would say to me, "the baby." "Baby, this house is for you, so you're safe. Tomorrow, if something happens, you stay in there and nothing will happen to you." Well, that's how he made it, and that's where I live now. I'm living.

So, your grandfather remembered the past? And so he did.

And he left me safe before he died.

And who helped him? He told me that –

Everyone in the house. Yes, because we all did everything.

He tells me who is who in his family.

My brothers.

Do you have one?

Two siblings. They are two boys, and I am the only girl.

Their children or their wives? He told me there are nine of them.

They were all family members, including cousins ​​and nephews who lived in the house. Yes, because sometimes they didn't have a place to live, so my mom always consoled them. "No, come here, I'll make you a room." Yeah, you know, my stepfather and my brothers. Since he does carpentry, and I do too, I would get my mom to work on making our rooms. So that each of us would have our own room and wouldn't be on the street or paying rent, you know, to avoid that.

Is the land you live on yours?

Yes, it's my mom's. Right now, yes, because the deed is written in my grandfather's name.

Okay. And can you tell me a little about why your mother and daughter are in New York?

She's out for health reasons. Because, look, she came out with some minor issues and all, but she's fine, thank God. And she knows a lot. She's very intelligent. She's already in fourth grade, and she's 17 years old. And my mom has lung problems, and she has to use a machine to sleep. And my older brother also has to use the machine because he has sleep-deprived anemia. And he has to use it so his brain gets oxygen. Because if oxygen doesn't reach the brain, he can die. Because if oxygen doesn't reach the brain, the body and immune system won't breathe properly.

[00:18:39]

Did they go there because of problems –

Due to health problems.

I understand now. Well, thanks so much for sharing.

Thanks to you.

No, no, we are not smart.

Thank you because –

To share. You're welcome.

That interview was very important to me because I love fishing. That's my passion. I even have books, and if you look at them and say, "Wow, but where did you get these books?" Well, they're old books. Nobody has those books. Nobody is taught about them anymore, because I don't sell those books to anyone. They're fishing spots that nobody here has yet discovered. Fishing spots that I have in those books at home. I have a boat, that's where I'm going. That's where the money is going to be. Yes, because I love fishing. I go out to sea to fish. I'm not afraid of anyone, but I respect the sea. Yes, I respect the sea. The sea can never—how do you say it? Challenge the sea or anything like that.

Is it your dream to buy a boat?

Yes, my dream is to buy a boat and work for myself.

But now he only does it without a boat.

No boat.

Scuba Diving or Tank Diving?

No, no. Scuba diving.

To lungs.

Nicolás has suggested I go, to practice and all that. But for now, I haven't dared. But one day, God willing, I'll do it.

And fishing takes place around the island. Shore?

Yes. Sometimes I go out and catch snails. It depends. You know, snails weigh about that much. Yes, I like big snails. That sells, and it sells a lot. And sometimes I also go fishing. You know, carefully because I'm diabetic. I came out with diabetes. Five years ago, I came out with diabetes. I have to be careful. So, sometimes it goes up and down. It drives me crazy.

Diabetes. But does that make it difficult for you to fish?

No, it's not difficult for me. Thank God, no. Health-wise, nothing. They've asked me there at the fishery, to work on it, to do something.

Can you tell me a little about what you do when you go fishing? From morning to afternoon, what's your day like?

My day? Well, I go, I catch sardines. I throw the cast net. I throw the cast net. From there I go to the rock to fish with a reel. I like to fish with a reel, not with a rod. I like to fish with a reel. And from there I stay fishing. After that, I go home. I eat fish. It depends. [Phone ringing] What's playing? Hello, yes, good afternoon.

[00:21:29]

He was telling me about a day of fishing. What's it like?

A day of fishing. Sometimes I go catching snails. Sometimes I catch octopus. (Octopus, \*Octopus spp.\*) You know, sometimes scared because of the moray eels, (Moray, \*Muraenidae\*) the congles [ph] and all that. In congles, the green ones are poisonous. People didn't know. Green congles are poisonous. If you don't go to the hospital early, you can get something in your heart. And I've also caught stingrays. I've also caught stingrays, good ones that are fried. Yes, I've eaten a bit of everything.

Tell us a little about how you catch octopuses (Octopus spp.) and manta rays. How do you do it?

The octopus (Octopus, \*Octopus spp.\*) I prepare a gaff. Here I make a gaff like a car antenna. Let's assume that's what I have now. A car antenna. I bend it in front, make the edge. And when I go, I put on gloves just in case. There are lots of sea urchins and things. And there I put the gaff under the stones. That's how it comes out. I've even hooked a string. The string has also stuck to me. Here there are octopus (Octopus, \*Octopus spp.\*) from the tentacles, as they say, that grow.

They regenerate, you cut them and they grow.

Yes. There are five different kinds of octopus. (Octopus, \*Octopus spp.\*) There are some that grow tentacles, which are the largest, and then there are others that are smaller like this.

How big is a normal octopus (Octopus, \*Octopus spp.\*)?

Well, normal, about that big. They're big.

Along with tentacles.

Yes, but sometimes they're really big. I've seen them like this, and you say, "Is it an octopus?" Because it's like this, really big. And you say, "It must be a male." Because the female is smaller. Also squids. (Squids, \*Order Teuthida\*) I've seen squids (Squids, \*Order Teuthida\*) also when they're in – I'll tell you the truth. When they're in a school. When they're in a school. A school is when they're like that in a bunch. That's called a school. It's like with fish, when you see a ball of fish, it's a school. Well, I've also caught squid there. (Squids, \*Order Teuthida\*) A bit of everything, actually.

[00:24:14]

If you tell me a little bit, you've been fishing for many years now. Have you seen any changes in the type of fishing or the places where it's fished, a change in the environment, or a change in the abundance or location of fish?

Yes, sometimes the fishing is poor. There isn't as much fishing as there used to be. And the weather system is also changing a lot. The water temperature is very warm. The land is warm. You go in next to it, and you say, "What is this?" The temperature is too high. It's warm. It's too warm here. I've been to the beach here, like in Datiles. Let's assume in Datiles that the water there, when you go in, is warm. You have to go deeper to be able to get into cold water. The weather system is changing, and it's also rising more. It's also rising higher than normal, than it's rising here in Culebra. Sometimes it drops off at an unusual rate, too. And sometimes it takes a while to rise. Because it's a time of year. It depends. Sometimes it drops at 12:00 noon. It rises at 2:00, 3:00, or 4:00 in the afternoon. Or else it stays high and drops at 12:00 at night. You know, the climate system here is quite different. It's changing.

When did you start seeing these changes?

It's been going on for a long time, you see. For a long time, there have been these problems with the climate system and all that.

A long time. In ten years or so?

Yes, because it's not something new. This has been happening here for a long time. Sometimes the water level rises more than it should. You go to the mangroves, and you see the water beyond what—instead of being there, it's higher up. And that means the tide is rising. That's like assuming the sea is taking its own space.

In other words, he saw no change in the species, so much so that he saw that there isn't as much abundance. That's what he tells me.

Yes, in the places I go fishing, yes, there isn't much fishing—there aren't many fish or anything like that. But it's because of the climate system, because of the warming of the water. Fish sometimes have to be in cold water, not warm water, because they die. They won't have the oxygen they have in cold water.

What fish is that?

All the fish.

All.

Yes. It's like the manatee. I don't know where I saw the manatee right now. I think it was on the island. All the manatees are immersed in warm water. It's incredible that you say, "Why are manatees in warm water, because they don't like cold water?" Right? If I'm not mistaken.

[00:27:17]

That's your opinion. And can you verify why?

The reason why they are in hot water.

It comes to be because of food.

What are you saying? Did you like being in a different place before, a colder place, but now you like it warm?

Dog.

So, they changed their behavior.

Something like that. Such different behavior from them.

Do you know where they were before? And if I show you a letter, could you tell me how they changed that behavior?

There in La Parguera. Because I don't know if it was in La Parguera or somewhere else, because I don't remember where I saw them specifically.

The thing is, this map is of this area. Where she mentions she saw that, it's the other side of the island.

On the other side of the island.

The south of the island.

It's really hot over there. And the steam from the water—can you see it? Nicolás was over there, I think. Nicolás was in that area. Over there, like this, investigating some things and all that.

Can you tell me a little about what it means to be a woman in fishing here?

Well, it's my passion. I love fishing. And there I clear my mind and feel calmer. You know, I always try to be involved in that. Called to the sea. I love the sea. I've always loved the sea.

And you're part of the fish market, right?

Yes. I'm also part of the fish market, thank God. They signed me up there. I'm part of it.

But there are not many women in fishing.

No, there aren't many here in Culebra. I see like two or three there, but they don't go to the meetings. In fact, the last meeting with Nicolás, I went, you know. And I said, "No, well, Nicolás, I'm going to go because I'm interested." Well, I went. It ended around 8:00 at night, but it was great. We talked about Cayo Pirata, about what they were going to do, which is a benefit for us Culebra residents. Because right now, we don't have anything to spend the day, like to focus on something. So, it's always work, work, but we don't have anything to spend the day, like having fun or passing the time. Well, that thing about Cayo Pirata, well, that will be very important for us.

What's going to happen there?

[00:30:00]

I think they're going to put fish there, things, and they're going to put something around it. I don't know specifically, how they say you can dive there. You can go around Pirate Cay. They're going to open the cabins that were there so you can sit with the family or share. Things like that.

Like a park for the people of Culebra.

Yes, but that's right there, in the same bay. It's in the same bay, in the same environment. If he's going to get there, he's going to get there by boat.

Ah, I understand. You're telling me there's nothing like that for the people of Culebra.

No, there's nothing here for the people of Culebra. It's always work, work, work. There's nothing else to do.

Since when? Has it always been like this?

Culebra has always been like this. It's never had anything for a person to at least share with their family. Like an amusement park or something like that, there isn't one here in Culebra. I've never seen one.

I don't know if I understand correctly. The location is going to be in the water, right?

Yeah. That would be good. It's good because when you go scuba diving, you're going scuba diving. You go around Pirate Cay, and you don't have to use a tank. You can mostly go freediving. It depends on the person. Because I don't like the tank out of fear. You know, because it's really delicate. A bubble like that gives you a heart attack. You can die, you know. But I've never used a tank. I jump to 15 feet deep. The minimum I dive is 15 feet for scuba diving.

The bare minimum.

The least I've done so far.

How long do you stay in the water?

Well, it could be 15 minutes. It depends. It depends on the fishing. Because if there's a lot of fishing, you know, you collect the snails until you fill the bag. When you fill the bag, you raise it up. You know. Like that.

Can you show me on the charts? Are there any places you think are particularly important for fishing in Culebra?

Well, the important areas that I have gone fishing, Melones in Las Piedras.

Can I score here?

Melons.

This is Culebra here.

Melons, where is it? Melons is over there. Over here. With Dates, dock.

To the dock?

Dog.

Here. This is the dock part. It's here.

Well, then, Melones has to be this here, right? Or is this Tampico and Dátiles? Yes, because there are two small beaches here. It must be Tampico and Dátiles.

And Luis Peña.

Luis Peña.

[00:33:00]

Searching around here.

Luis Peña. I think there's still—might this be the place?

Could this be Luis Peña? So the ferry is here.

Here. So, Melones has to stay in this area.

Circle it there.

Because Melones is over there. You know, looking at Luis Peña.

Flamenco over there?

No. Looking at Luis Peña. Melones in front of us. You know, when the hospital goes up, instead of the hospital itself, it goes down the slope.

I'm going to frame it, then, over here.

Which is right here. Exactly. It has to be this place, Luis Peña's, then. Which is separate from here. Yes, because Luis Peña is separate. So, Melones is here. And then, Zoni. Zoni is on this side, right?

Yeah.

Zoni is also a fishing spot. You can also catch good, large grouper fish in Las Piedras. I've been fishing, but there are also sharks (Requiem sharks, \*Carcharhinidae\*) there that eat the fish. Yes, there are plenty of dolphins there too.

Well, put a circle to see.

If you can write "dolphins" and –

Yes, I write it.

And tell me more? Or are you still thinking about this, about the important fishing spots?

Yeah.

Take your time.

Zoni is for this area. Zoni will be here. And this would be here. So, this would be Culebrita here. This is the other callus there.

What is Cayo Norte? Fishing is also practiced in Cayo Norte.

Do you fish too?

Yeah. Cayo Norte, Culebrita. They're fishing areas. All those areas are fishing areas. Culebrita, Cayo Norte. There's a lot of fishing there.

So, at Zoni Beach, there will be lots of dolphins. Lots of Nassau grouper (Epinephelus striatus), lots of sea bass (Serranidae), and sea bass.

The rufous-tailed grouper. The misty grouper (Epinephelus mystacinus) and the butterfish grouper. (Graysby, Epinephelus cruentatus). There's a bit of everything. So, this area called Playa Larga—where is Playa Larga? Right around here?

Yes, right there.

There's also fishing at Playa Larga. I used to catch a lot of queen conch there. (Strombus gigas) I used to go fishing there. I used to go here a lot. I used to go fishing there a lot, too, for shore snails. You can catch snails by walking all over the shallows.

Snails and conch? (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*)

Carriños and snails. Big carriños. And the snails are the ones stuck to the rock.

[00:36:09]

Que son burgao. (West Indian Top Shell, \*Cittarium pica\*)

Yeah. They call it "burgao." But I know it as "caracol."

Yes, yes, yes.

And was it always like this?

Yes. Yes, because that's where the family supported themselves in that area. Because that's where the most fishing was on that side. We always fished in that area. So, Dates. What's Dates in that area, right? Also.

That name doesn't ring a bell. That name doesn't ring a bell.

Sardinas Beach. (Sardines, Herrings, Clupeidae) As shown on the cell phone map.

Playa Sardinas. (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*)

Because I know it as Tampico. But before they called it Playa Sardinas. (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) But it's actually called Playa Sardinas. (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) Tampico is where this is. The Tirapiedras. This, the Tirapiedras, is a wooden doll. It's called Tirapiedras.

This here.

There we also caught many conch.

Carruchos.

Yes. And we used to dive there too. Fin conch (Strombus gigas), small dwarf conch (Strombus gigas), and the other one. The natural one, which is the one from here.

And how do you decide to go to one place or another?

Well, it depends. It depends on the catch. Because if you already have enough fish, you'll have so much fish that you can't fit anything else in the boat, you have to empty the boat and come back again. And that's how fishing is. You stay on the shore, sitting, opening the conch, (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*), taking out the conch, (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*), cleaning it. And there we go, catching more fish. And there we go, cleaning and cleaning until we keep bringing in more to keep selling.

In one day, you may go to two or three places in the same day.

Every day, it depends on 300 pounds of conch. (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*) Because we catch a lot of conch (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*) to sell, because we used to catch conch, (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*) and my mom would sell it. So, she was the one who dealt with the money.

And now how do you do it?

Now it's different. I sell the carrucha for 5 pesos a pound.

Where do you sell it?

It depends. Workers who come from the island here to work, like construction. Those who work over there on the highway, those who work here, who are here Monday through Friday. So, it depends.

You go to a client you normally have. And, "Look at this. I have this."

And they have a menu. But mostly. I haven't gone fishing this week. Well, I don't have time. I work a lot. I'm very busy working.

[00:39:04]

How many hours do you work in housekeeping?

Housekeeping work depends. It depends on how many rooms there are.

Just one hotel or?

Just one hotel. Just one hotel with—you caught me counting, let me see if I remember. Yes. I run them all, but I don't know how many. I'm going to clean the restaurant downstairs, my restaurant, the bathroom, the table. Sometimes I also do the washer. I have to do the washer on Mondays and Tuesdays. Now that they've given me Mondays and Tuesdays, it's going to be longer hours, too.

Can you tell me about your ancestry, where you come from in your family or if you have ancestry that is outside of Culebra?

Well, my dad lived in Fajardo, up there on Isla Grande. He lived there on Isla Grande. We've been coming here from there since 2000. We lived in Punta Soldado. Punta Soldado is also a fishing spot. We used to fish there, too, because Punta Soldado is up here.

What is it? Circulate here.

We lived there, in a wooden house. The whole family lives there. My father's family. My father's family and my mother's family. Yes, they were different families, but we all lived in Punta Soldado in one house over there. If you go to Punta Soldado one day, you'll see the names listed by section, last name. They have signs, last name: Interviewee Interviewee. Well, we fell into the Interviewee. Yes, we are Interviewee.

But he told me that they came from Fajardo.

From the island, yes.

Why did you move here?

Well, because my grandfather always fished here. He always brought fish here. St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix. I fish everywhere now. Like my dad, he did the same. Because that's where he made a living for the family.

So, you decided to move. Tell me a little about the community in general, the fishing community, or the Culebra community in general. What's it like? How do you relate to them?

The people here are good. They're good people. We talk a lot. We engage in conversation. It depends, because sometimes there's no one around. It's like The Walking Dead, where there's no one. Yeah, there's no one on the street. I mostly don't go out because I'm working so hard all day, so I don't have time for anything.

Was it always like this that there were no people on the street?

Well, yes. Sometimes. Like from Monday to Tuesday, there aren't that many people on the streets. But from Wednesday onward, yes, there are people and all that.

[00:42:03]

Why is that, do you think?

Well, because he works a lot.

Do you work more on Monday and Tuesday?

There are many people who work too hard. They dedicate more time to their jobs than to ourselves, like spending time with family, going fishing, or going to the beach. We don't have time. We always focus more on work than on ourselves.

When your grandfather was alive, was he the same?

Well, it was different because there we could have more time to go fishing. Because the coral pier there is always fishing. The coral pier is like the Navegantes pier. My grandfather used to live there. Well, we would leave from there and go fishing. We would fish there all the time.

And what changed? Why do you think it's changed now, since there isn't as much time?

Because I live higher up. Now I live on the other side. I live in La Romana, before reaching the area.

Is it much further?

Yes, the road is longer.

But is it the same with the community in general?

Yes, it's the same. We have the same communication with people here.

If, for whatever reason, you can't catch a queen conch (Strombus gigas) anymore, for example, what do you think? What impact might that have? Not just economically, but also on the island's traditions and culture.

Well, that's a good question. Because if fishing can't happen, it's because something is happening in the climate system. Since the fish are warm, the queen conch (Strombus gigas) goes out. The only ones that can withstand that heat are the snails. Snails are always stuck to rocks and corals. They're always stuck there, but the queen conch (Strombus gigas) mostly find them out on the bottom. At about 5 feet, 10 feet, 15 feet.

Do you think everyone in Culebra eats conch (\*Strombus gigas\*) and snails, or more conch? (\*Strombus gigas\*)

I really don't know, because there are mostly people who don't eat seafood. I've seen a lot of people who eat fish. But there are people who don't like conch (Strombus gigas), queen conch. They're more strict about fishing, eating, and all that.

Well, are there any things you want to add to what we talked about, that you think would be important for people to know?

Well, they should fish. They should fish more and spend more time fishing.

Because?

[00:45:00]

Because that's important. Fishing is important. That's part of our lives. Fishing, fish. Because that's been a tradition for many years, it's already been there. And it's important that you do that, that you go fishing and take your time. And also that you focus on yourself as a person. On your mentality.

Do you think the new generation, the children, has a future in fishing here?

Yes, there's a small group of students who focus on fishing, and Nicolás teaches them classes. Yes, it's important.

Well, thank you very much for taking your time, and thank you for being here and telling us about your life.

Thank you. A pleasure.

Oh, I don't know if you have another question.

No no.