# COASTAL COMMITMENT:

## AN ORAL HISTORY OF VOLUNTEERS AT MOTE MARINE LABORATORY AND AQUARIUM

INTERVIEWS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS BY
JASON HARRIS, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

**JUNE – JULY 2015**

# Foreword

Coastal Commitment is an oral history project conducted in June and July of 2015. The interviewer and curator for the project was Jason Harris, a History undergraduate and Mote summer intern. Jason came from Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. The project was coordinated by Robert Rogers, Volunteer Coordinator, and supervised by Alyson Gamble, Librarian, at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida.

The participants for this project include, in order of interview date: Joseph Mathis, David Bowman, Virginia Sanders, Cathy Marine, Dwight Davis, Tommy Vaughan-Birch, B.J. Peters, Virginia Miller, and Lin Vertefeuille. These volunteers were selected for their hard work and long-term commitment to volunteering at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium. Their experience and contributions to the institution are highlighted in these interviews. Of course, it should be stated that there are many other volunteers at Mote who have also provided years of dedication and service.

Participants were given an interview protocol for review before sitting down to the recorded session. Transcriptions for each interview are presented here, representing a faithful facsimile of the recorded audio. In some cases, the transcriptions were edited by request of the participant.

Digital recordings of the oral histories are available on the Library and Archives' digital repository at
https://dspace.mote.org/dspace/handle/2075/3475

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**JOSEPH MATHIS WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JUNE 8, 2015**

[This interview was recorded in the Volunteer Lounge at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. The transcript was edited by request of Mr. Mathis.]

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[0:00 - 0:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: And we're recording. Okay, so today is June 8th, 2015. and we're in the Volunteer Lounge, and I'm talking to Joe. Joe Mathis.

[0:13 - 0:14]
**MR. MATHIS**: That's correct.

[0:14 - 0:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And you had a chance to look over the questions, so you probably have a rough idea of what I'm going to ask you. What is your family and educational background to the extent you're comfortable talking about it?

[0:28 - 0:30]
**MR. MATHIS**: You mean my current family?

[0:30 - 0:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: Sure.

[0:31 - 0:48]
**MR. MATHIS**: Yeah. I'm married and my wife and I live in Bradenton, Florida. I have two grown daughters. One living here and another living up in Virginia. And two grandsons both with the daughter that lives in Virginia.

[0:48 - 0:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you're currently living in Bradenton. Are you Florida natives?

[0:52 - 1:11]
**MR. MATHIS**: No, both my wife and I grew up in upstate New York, born and raised there. After I moved around professionally for... about ten years, I took a job back in Syracuse, New York and spent the last 27 years of my career there.

[1:11 - 1:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And what is your career background?

[1:15 - 1:40]
**MR. MATHIS**: Career background is I worked as an agricultural economist... in the dairy industry. I did

government affairs work; I did market analysis, and price forecasting. And the last... six years of my career I was the Assistant Manager of a large dairy farm cooperative that was headquartered in Syracuse, New York.

[1:40 - 1:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So did that have any influence on your involvement here [at Mote]?

[1:48 - 3:30]
**MR. MATHIS**: Remotely. Not really. I didn't even know what Mote was. I had a daughter down here as I indicated to you earlier, who came up to me one day after we moved down here and said, "Dad, have you been to Mote?" And I said, "No. What's Mote?" I was a SCUBA diver. Had been for many years, and she knew that I liked the sea and the animals that lived there. So... and that itself didn't get me here. I [am] an active Rotarian and [have] been for many years [since 1972]. One of the men in the Rotary in my club was the Vice President of Development here. And he was also the District Governor for our rotary district. And I was doing some writing for [him]. So I was here checking over some of the things that he wanted done. And when I retired, I [had] started my own consulting business. And I was getting tired of it. So I said to Howard one day – his name was Howard Crowell – and I said to Howard one day, "Do you ever have any part-time jobs here?" I was looking for something to do, and [he said], "Why don't you volunteer?" I said, "Oh Howard, I'm not ready for that yet." So he said, "Oh, you'd like it. You like talking to people." So that's where it started. So I came in. I interviewed with the lady who was in charge at that time of volunteers, and it's been uphill ever since.

[3:30 - 3:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Excellent. So that kind of sounds to me like this was your first... well at least long-term volunteer project?

[3:40 - 4:11]
**MR. MATHIS**: Not really. In retirement it was. But during the course of my career, I was a scoutmaster [in Windsor, Connecticut]. Had my own scout troop. When my wife presented me with two daughters, I decided I ought to get into something that girls do. The girls started to ride horses, so I got involved with an organization called *United States Pony Club*. And I was the head of the pony club in our community there for a few years. So yes, I did volunteer there. [Mr. Mathis also joined the Rotary Club of DeWitt, New York in 1972 and served as its President from 1980-81. When he moved to Florida in 1997, Mr. Mathis joined the Rotary Club of Sarasota Bay and served as its President from 2002-2003.]

[4:11 - 4:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that gave you some animal background at least. Maybe not marine, but at least some animal background. So...

[4:20 - 4:49]
**MR. MATHIS**: That's right. In my undergraduate work at school in college was in [dairy] food science. So I had a lot of chemistry and biochemistry and microbiology and so forth that all came back to me when I started studying fish. People will ask me when I talk to them, "Are you a Marine Scientist? I

say, “No. I’m an agricultural economist.” So that kind of blows their mind, but that’s okay. But that’s where the connection is in terms of the science [and animals].

[4:49 - 5:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, it’s still interesting to see how what you learn still comes back to you later on in life. And in an environment like this where, on the surface, you wouldn’t think that there’d be a connection but...

[5:00 - 6:14]
**MR. MATHIS**: And I got interested enough back in the science as it came back to me that even though I was signed on as a docent or a guide, I started doing some writing for the guides about what some of the labs do. That led to a request that I help another gentleman out that was a volunteer that did lab tours, if I would help him. So I did that and I still do; both for members as well as for visiting dignitaries that come into town and want to go through the laboratories. I also do it for volunteers. Once a month during the season, I [conduct] a special lab tour for our volunteers; those who are interested in knowing what’s going on upstairs with the science. I’m also on the Speakers Bureau. There’s about six of us [who deliver] presentations to service clubs like Rotary or Kiwanis; senior citizen homes; [any organization] that wants a program [about Mote or marine science]. Whether it’s a luncheon or an evening. So I do that.

[6:14 - 6:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: And you currently do that?

[6:17 - 6:25]
**MR. MATHIS**: I do that currently. Yes. In fact, I’ve got one coming up on Aquaculture the end of this month at the Rotary club in Sarasota Bay.

[6:25 - 6:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you get the word out to other organizations about Mote.

[6:30 - 6:43]
**MR. MATHIS**: Exactly. About Mote. Yeah. And I wrote some of these. I wrote the original - this is a new one - and I also wrote the one that’s an overview of Mote, which also has been updated since then. So that’s basically what I do.

[6:43 - 6:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Wow. Quite a bit of contribution, that’s for sure.

[6:48 - 7:14]
**MR. MATHIS**: Well, it is. But it’s fun. As I was telling some of our guests this morning, we got to talking and I said - I was trying to recruit [a guest] to come on and be a volunteer - and I said, “You know. I look forward to every Monday morning.” Because it’s the morning that I come and I do the guide work. I look forward to all the work I do at Mote, but particularly the work that I do as a docent because I enjoy talking to people.

[7:14 - 7:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: Are Monday's the only days you are here?

[7:17 - 7:34]
**MR. MATHIS**: Monday is the day. I am the day-chair for the Monday morning crew. Yeah. [That] means I'm in charge or responsible for the docents that work in the fish and invertebrate aquarium. There's [also] a docent or a volunteer that is the day-chair for the mammal center as well.

[7:34 - 7:51]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that describes what you do. And on your typical workday, you work out in the aquarium. Do you shift from departments or do you stick to the touch tank?

[7:51 - 8:09]
**MR. MATHIS**: No. We change our position every half hour. We rotate. We're on a rotation schedule. That gets us around all of the... open tanks as well as some of the rooms.

[8:09 - 8:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Obviously when we met a little bit ago you were working at the touch tank, so you do handle the live animals. Are the live animals just in the touch tank or do you handle any others?

[8:26 - 9:13]
**MR. MATHIS**: No. There's another touch tank that has stingrays in it. Those are the only two. And the guides typically do not handle the animals anymore. Up until probably, I would say eight or nine years ago, we did. And we allowed the customers to come in and handle them. Now, we ask them to just use a two-finger touch. And the reason is that the animals, we found that all this handling that they got was stressing them and it was shortening their lifespan. So most of the aquariums around the country have gone to what we refer to as a two-finger touch. Which it actually is designed so that if you're using two-fingers you can't use that firm first one or third one to pick something up.

[9:13 - 9:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: So it's the same protocol with the stingrays. Two-finger touch with them just as with the... well, what is in the touch tank... that you were working in?

[9:28 - 10:12]
**MR. MATHIS**: The one where you saw me was all invertebrates; animals without backbones. And just a variety of them. There's sea-stars in there, urchins, horseshoe crabs, sea cucumbers. Basically those would be the main ones. There [also] are some live mollusks in there. There's a Lightning whelk that was crawling around in there [this morning], which is a mollusk. So there's a number of animals, and they're very vibrant. Of course, in the stingray tank, there are actually four different species of stingrays in there that people can touch.

[10:12 - 10:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. I haven't checked out the stingray tank yet. I've walked passed it, but I haven't touched the stingrays. I will do that during my stint here. So you work with the public who come

through the aquarium, and you educate them about the animals that are up there. And what has been your general experience with the public?

[10:36 - 10:53]
**MR. MATHIS**: Very positive. Most everybody that comes here is having a [good time]. One of the things that makes it such a joy to work here is that people who come here are here to have a good time. And so they're positive. Once in awhile you get a grouchy one, but most of the time it's a very pleasant experience.

[10:53 - 11:02]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Have there been unusual circumstances during your time involving the public? Any hangups or…?

[11:02 - 12:27]
**MR. MATHIS**: Not really hangups. I had… One of your questions that you were asking about interesting experiences… I think one of the most interesting experiences I had - they're all interesting - but one that I really enjoyed was, we had a little girl came in here from England, and she was in a wheelchair, and turned out she was blind. And I had her over at the touch tank, and this was back in the days when you could pick things up. So I got her up so that she could get close to the tank, and I picked things up for her and laid them in her hand like a sea-star or an urchin, and we talked about it. And even though she couldn't see, I was able to describe what this animal was and how it was reacting to her. She could feel it crawling on her fingers, and I explained to her how it crawled and she was just fascinated. She finally left after about a half hour of this - most people don't spend that long in a spot - and went elsewhere. Next thing I turned around and she was back again. And she was... ready for more. So that was probably one of the most joyful, most satisfying thing for me to help this little blind girl. She was, I would say, probably... anywhere around 11-12 years old. It was a really wonderful experience.

[12:27 - 12:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Very nice. But you wouldn't be able to do that again today because there's...

[12:30 - 12:58]
**MR. MATHIS**: No. But I would find a way to help her. There's an edge - you'll see it on the touch tank at the end, it's a round [tray]. That was built for people in wheelchairs, so that they can be in their wheelchair and they can reach in and touch things. And we always try to have some animals up there. And, yeah, you could do that. I could still describe to them what they're touching, and what the animals like…

[12:58 - 13:08]
**MR. HARRIS**: But as far as picking them up out of the tank and handling them out of the tank, that's disallowed now that we know more about these organisms.

[13:08 - 13:11]
**MR. MATHIS**: Yeah. The Aquarists don't like us to do that.

[13:11 - 13:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. Well you could... yeah [laughs]. I guess you have to, you know, do what you're told to do sometimes. So in addition to your volunteer activities do you participate in ongoing training or educational conferences?

[13:27 - 14:21]
**MR. MATHIS**: Yes. I do. I do some writing for the organization. I'm on the Board. I'm the Research Liaison to the Volunteer Board of Directors. I'm a past President of the Board. And then when I got off the Board, they keep the past President on for a year so that they ease us out. But then somebody asked me if I would be the man who introduced me originally to doing laboratory work. I had when I was the President of the Board, I'd ask him whether he'd be the Liaison to the Board of DIrectors because I felt there was a disconnect between the volunteers and what was going on in the Laboratory, even though we all learn about this originally. I wanted to close that gap. So, I asked him. And then when he got to the point where he couldn't do it anymore, he asked me whether I would take over the job. So I did and I've been the Liaison ever since. So I do that.

[14:21 - 14:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Do you feel that your objective in closing the gap between the Lab and the Volunteers has been realized?

[14:30 - 15:39]
**MR. MATHIS**: Yes. I think so. At least to those who are receptive to that. I do, I do. But I'm not alone in that. There are other people, including some of the paid people, are trying to do a better job of keeping them. But I was also the... I [facilitate] the discussion of a brainstorming session [with the staff scientists and aquarists] when we first [started] what is now our current long-term Strategic Plan. I was President of the Board at that time, and the man who was then-President of Mote asked me whether I would facilitate their brain[storming] sessions, which I did. That was kind of an unusual thing because it was my job to try and bring out the paid staff what they were dreaming about; what they wanted; where they thought Mote should be in 5 years or 10 years. And since then, of course, they've had other sessions and eventually through the Trustees developed their own 5-year Strategic Plan.

[15:39 - 15:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yeah. In that sense, as a volunteer, you know, the paid staff they come up with the vision of what Mote wants to be, and then you kind of encourage it through the public and...

[15:49 - 15:56]
**MR. MATHIS**: Yes. My job was to try to elicit that dream from them. Get them to express their [visions].

[15:56 - 16:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. That really shows, you know, how much the volunteers play a part in Mote.

[16:01 - 16:10]
**MR. MATHIS**: Well, I've done some of this as a professional as well. So it wasn't entirely something new to me. But I did enjoy that opportunity.

[16:10 - 16:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: So with your science background you should know how to answer the next question, I'm sure. What do you think Mote offers that is unique and different from other aquariums.

[16:23 - 16:25]
**MR. MATHIS**: In the Aquarium or in the Laboratory?

[16:25 - 16:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: How about in the Aquarium?

[16:27 - 17:06]
**MR. MATHIS**: Okay. In the Aquarium, I think what makes us unique is that we have live, trained docents in every room. During season, particularly - usually we have offseason as well - that can talk to the public. And... I think that's one of the things that probably make us most unique. People will tell us when they come, "Oh, we love it here because you talk to us, and you can explain to us what's going on, and we know the stories of what's behind the animals; how they've been used in research; or what some of our scientists have done and why the animals are here in the first place."

[17:06 - 17:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: That's much different than walking through an aquarium elsewhere where there's really no one to talk to. You just go in, look at the fish and leave. So... And that's probably something that other institutions or other aquariums could learn from Mote too is... I know funding is always an issue for most places but...

[17:28 - 18:22]
**MR. MATHIS**: A lot of places, particularly the larger aquariums will have a canned system [a taped guide] where you can put headphones on and listen to a dialogue. But [ours] is more personal. And we can also interact with them. We can help them touch things. Our relationship with the general public is much closer than it is in a lot of places. Now, there are other institutions that have this. If you go to Ringling Museum, for example, they have trained docents that can talk to you about the art, for example, or the Circus Museum. But... I like to think we're better as well or if not better trained and treated than they are. We have over 1600 volunteers at Mote. Not all doing what I'm doing. There's probably 900 of us.

[18:22 - 18:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. I think the figure that I heard from our Volunteer Coordinator, Robert [Rogers], last week when I was in... that we're up to 1,713: one-thousand, seven-hundred thirteen volunteers.

[18:31 - 18:34]
**MR. MATHIS**: Okay. Well, he's on top of it more than I am. We keep increasing.

[18:31 - 18:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: So, that's a lot of volunteers who are instrumental in helping Mote.

[18:38 - 19:29]
**MR. MATHIS**: Yeah. And that's more than most of the other major venues here in town have collectively. Again, that's what makes Mote unique from the Aquarium side. And I think it also illustrates to [our guests], not only the animals that live in and around Florida and the way they use their environment. But it gives them an appreciation for the ecosystem that's involved. And that's what we try to do is impart to them how important they are to our environment. Because most of our scientists, even though they specialize in a particular area of science, they're all oriented towards conservation and ecology. They all have that background and are very much... when you talk to them, if you talk to them, they'll tell you that.

[19:29 - 19:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Now, it sounds from what you were saying that you've been very instrumental in getting the volunteers and the scientists together more collaboratively...

[19:40 - 20:07]
**MR. MATHIS**: Trying to, yes. Trying to get them interested not only in the scientists but in the science itself. We all get a good training program. But the science is ongoing. So I try to help keep them up to date with what's going on. We've got some post-Doctorate fellows here that are just [outstanding and] exciting; they're brilliant, young people that I like to to get them introduced to.

[20:07 - 20:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So do you think the volunteer program here at Mote has enough publicity? Are you guys appreciated enough to your standards?

[20:17 - 20:20]
**MR. MATHIS**: Oh, I think so. Oh yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. We're very well appreciated.

[20:20 - 20:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Have there been appreciation events for volunteers?

[20:23 - 20:57]
**MR. MATHIS**: Oh yes. A lot of the things Mr. Mote did when he was alive... [and] when he died, he willed money to go into a fund that would support the volunteers. And we have social events, we have a Holiday party. We have a pizza party in the summer. We have an appreciation day when we're recognized for the time we've spent, the years that we've been volunteers. So yes, we're very well treated.

[20:57 - 21:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: Good deal. Yep. So that brings me to my last question. It's just about 2:00 here. What is your... What would you say would be your fondest memory... your most fond memory at Mote?

[21:12 - 21:56]
**MR. MATHIS**: Well, probably working with the little blind girl was a fond memory. But they kind of all run together. Because everybody is different. And they all have different levels of interest. Some people are happy to come and just talk, just look at the fish. Others want to know "What do they eat?" "How do they breathe?" You know..."Are they boys or girls?" You know, it's just amazing. And that's why we started this "Oh Baby" exhibit up there to talk about reproduction in different kinds of species. I don't know if that answers your question. Because there's not really one thing. Every week there's something that comes up that's different.

[21:56 - 22:02]
**MR. HARRIS**: So when you move on from Mote, how would you describe your overall experience?

[22:02 - 22:04]
**MR. MATHIS**: Very positively.

[22:04 - 22:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: And how much... how longer do you plan on staying around? As long as possible?

[22:10 - 22:14]
**MR. MATHIS**: As long as I'm physically capable of doing it.

[22:14 - 22:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Cool. Very cool.

[22:15 - 22:21]
**MR. MATHIS**: I'm 78 years old and going on 50.

[22:21 - 22:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: [laughs] Excellent. Well, that concludes the interview. Thank you very much, Joe!

**DAVID A. BOWMAN WITH JASON HARRIS**

**AUDIO RECORDING**

**JUNE 15, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida.]

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[0:00 - 0:18]
**MR. HARRIS:** Today is June 15th, 2015. And I'm sitting in the library with Dave Bowman at Mote. And... let's get the questions out here. And, I remember you said you grew up in Puerto Rico, is it?

[0:18 - 2:14]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. Primarily. My father was with Westinghouse International, so his job was establishing or mending dealerships throughout all of Latin America. And he used Puerto Rico as his homebase, but when I was 4 he was transferred for three years to Mexico City for the dealership that had been established there which was having financial issues and to get it back on track. And then from there he went to Havana, Cuba. So I spent three years in Mexico, then a year and a half in Cuba. Then he got transferred to the main office in New York, which he totally hated, and when World War II ended he was able to get the Westinghouse Industrial franchise for Puerto Rico. He had established the Westinghouse franchise in Puerto Rico, but the man who had owned the rights was not interested in the industrial. He was happy selling refrigerators and all that sort of stuff. So, my father, in effect took away the industrial away from him, but he had not been making any attempt to do it. And that... So I was back in my original home of Puerto Rico. So I finished grade school there and went to high school there.

[2:14 - 2:17]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. So you bounced around with your parents then, when, in the early days?

[2:17 - 2:25]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. But the majority of my early years, you know, because I started in Puerto Rico and then went back to Puerto Rico, so...

[2:25 - 2:30]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. And you went through primary school, secondary school in Puerto Rico?

[2:30 - 2:31]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Primary, yeah.

[2:31 - 2:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: And then... college in Puerto Rico too or was that stateside?

[2:36 - 2:58]
**MR. BOWMAN:** No, I came to Florida. My contacts with Florida were childhood because my cousins had a grow in Homestead when Homestead was a little village way south of Miami. So I had contacts with Florida during my... sporadically during my childhood. And then I went to Rollins College in Winter Park, that's where I got my Bachelor's' degree.

[2:58 - 3:00]
**MR. HARRIS:** In history, right?

[3:00 - 3:10]
**MR. BOWMAN:** No, in... Well, Spanish Language... English major, Spanish major, English major, and Psychology.

[3:10 - 3:13]
**MR. HARRIS:** Oh my goodness. So two majors and a minor, then?

[3:13 - 3:16]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Well, actually three majors basically.

[3:16 - 3:22]
**MR. HARRIS:** My goodness. So that was at... You did your undergrad at Rollins. Did you do graduate school there too or did you go to a different...?

[3:22 - 3:48]
**MR. BOWMAN**: No, Rollins did not have any graduate school at that time. It was strictly an undergraduate. I went to University of Wisconsin-Madison for my Masters. I was entrapped there. I went there summer session for advanced intensive French Language course. And Madison, Wisconsin in the summertime is glorious, leafy, lovely place.

[3:48 - 3:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: In the winter, not so much.

[3:50 - 4:10]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Nobody told me that, well... the Humanities building, Bascom Hall, was the top of a hill. From the first snowfall to the very last thaw, the path up Bascom Hill which was longer than a football field long was glare ice.

[4:10 - 4:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Sounds like a sledding hill to me.

[4:13 - 4:23]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Nobody told me what Madison was like during the Winter months, and as a little tropical tramp. I mean, oh well, anyway.

[4:23 - 4:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: So from... when you graduated from grad school, did you get into a career right off the bat there?

[4:31 - 4:51]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Yeah, I started teaching at a small college in California. And I taught there for seven years. And I was an ABD - All But Dissertation - and well, I had exams, and I was teaching a course-load that I just couldn't manage the exams.

[4:51 - 4:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: And what were you teaching?

[4:52 - 5:30]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Spanish Language and Literature. So, with the agreement of my then-wife, I quit to take a year off to do all the written and oral exams and prepare my dissertation materials, which I did, I passed everything. But two things happened. My wife decided it was a good time for a divorce, and unfortunately that was the year where Foreign Language requirements were dropped across the board for entrance and graduation from colleges and universities across the U.S., including Ivy League.

[5:30 - 5:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Wow. Yeah. So that probably put you in a tough spot financially and...?

[5:37 - 5:58]
**MR. BOWMAN**: I was overqualified, and as far as finding any kind of a job other than teaching... I mean, I was overqualified for high school because I had too many units and experience. And that was also the year where the Aerospace Industry in California was in a recession. And PhD's were a dime a dozen.

[5:58 - 5:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yep.

[5:59 - 6:00]
**MR. BOWMAN**: And not worth the dime.

[6:00 - 6:08]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you spent the majority, or was it your full career as a teacher?

[6:08 - 6:16]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Well, it had been intended that way. I never had imagined that you could be overqualified to be a teacher.

[Jump ahead in audio]

[6:16 - 6:27]
**MR. BOWMAN**: And my parents had sold their businesses in Puerto Rico, retired to Sarasota. As an only child, since my father was needing assistance, as an only child guess who got the job?

[6:27 - 6:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. Okay.

[6:28 - 6:49]
**MR. BOWMAN**: And so I moved to Sarasota end of June of '80. And... I needed something other than taking care of my parents sort of thing. And on U.S. 41 there was at that time...

[6:49 - 6:51]
**MR. HARRIS**: The Blue Pagoda, right? Yep.

[6:51 - 8:21]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Yeah. And I went in there because that was where the County Volunteer Bureau was. And they talked about pushing wheelchairs at hospitals. That didn't appeal. I mean, I was doing that at... you know. So, and... [they said]: "Well... any interest in that... there's a new aquarium going in?" And having been brought up by the sea and spear-fished and snorkeled and I'd had aquariums, many home aquariums including saltwater. And I share with Dr. Eugenie Clark one specific thing. As a child, yes, I was in the water frequently at the beach. But that was before kids had goggles and that you could see, maybe, a fish moving underwater. And because New York was the homebase for Westinghouse, every other year my father went up there to the home office for a few weeks and also was the official paid vacation time. And there was an aquarium at Battery Park, which was a masterpiece of an aquarium at the time. And that is where Dr. Eugenie Clark first saw fish swimming. And it's where I first saw fish swimming.

[8:21 - 8:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you have, you have that in common.

[8:23 - 8:36]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Absolutely. And I told her, and I have one of her books signed by her - you know, I can't remember the word - but in memory of Battery Park Aquarium, which is long, long gone.

[8:36 - 8:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: So when you came here in 1980, or '81? You...

[8:45 - 10:31]
**MR. BOWMAN**: I started... the aquarium opened the last week of October of '80. And I started before the aquarium opened, I helped in the final stages of helping set up the tanks and water, and check the water chemistry and... some of the tanks, I was part of the crew that moved fish into the tanks from the holding tanks. And then when the aquarium opened I started as the Saturday volunteer, all day Saturday. And at that time, the total paid staff of the aquarium was the curator and a woman whose sole responsibility was the little one-counter gift shop. And the curator obviously could not work seven-day weeks, week after week after week. And by the third Saturday... a system was started where the key to the aquarium was left hidden. I'd arrive somewhere between 7:30 and 8:00 in the morning, get the key; unlock the door; turn on the lights; check the animal[s]; fix breakfast for all the animals; feed the animals; put out the money for cashier and gift shop; brief the incoming guides for the day; unlock the doors; guide and supervise as the staff person. Volunteer... I mean, the pay was the same. They haven't raised my pay one damn dime all the years I've been here! And at the end of the day, chase everybody out; lock the doors; check the animals one last time; turn out the lights; lock the back door; hide the key again and go home.

[10:31 - 10:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: So in the early days, I mean, you were doing... you were a guide in addition to...

[10:36 - 10:37]
**MR. BOWMAN**: I was the Saturday staff.

[10:37 - 10:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: And... you were the Saturday staff. And when the aquarium opened... now, you said there was one tank, and it just had a nurse shark or...?

[10:47 - 10:55]
**MR. BOWMAN**: No, no. Just the one very large room. It's two-thirds of the interior that exists now.

[10:55 - 10:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: Two-thirds of it. Okay.

[10:56 - 12:52]
**MR. BOWMAN**: And in the area where there's the... the jellyfish area... that was where the one really large tank that had the... Precious, the green turtle, and the nurse shark. And that was our largest tank. And the entryway, you came in where there's a... just passed the reef tank that has all the colorful reef fish and the two big lobsters and such... there's a door, that door was the entry door. And you came into a very small entryway. And the cashier was there, you paid the cashier and you got a Mote coin that you put into a turnstile. And [you] went through the turnstile and then you came down a hallway with... the left, the right side had basically dry tanks, the first couple, and then the last tank became the octopus tank. And on the left side were two wet tanks, and you came around the corner and there was... the first thing you saw was our mangrove tank; that was an attempt to grow mangroves inside, and it was set up where there was an actual rise of water as the tide coming in, and

then a sump would drain and the tide would, quote, “go out.” The tide was fed from the original grassflat tank, which was designed as a flow-through tank. Water was coming directly from New Pass, came in at one end and drained at the other end into the mangrove tank and from the mangrove tank drained outside.

[12:52 - 13:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So, in the... the main attraction, obviously, was the large tank with the sea turtle, Precious, and the nurse, the nurse shark. But there were a variety of tanks. And... what were in the other two tanks? The wet and drys? Were there animals or was it just...?

[13:10 - 14:20]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I mean, the first... when you came into the initial hallway, the first two tanks on the right were dry tanks. One was actually sponsored by the Sarasota Shell Club, and they would change their exhibit. They still meet... their monthly meetings are still here at Mote. And they would, every now and then change the exhibits. And because their various members had some specialty areas. And one exhibit that went on that really was... unique in a true sense of that word: they had collected albino species and natural-colored species. And the exhibit was of albino against natural-colored. And this was from species from around the world. But it was, there must... I don’t know how many they had, but of the pairs in that exhibit, there was at least 50 pairs, maybe 60 or 70. I mean, there was a lot. And that was... so it was fun to, you know, slowly [lead] visitors down and point that out.

[14:20 - 14:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. And point that out to them. Now those were... the albinos, we’re talking turtles? Or...

[14:25 - 14:26]
**MR. BOWMAN**: No, these were seashells.

[14:26 - 14:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, just the shells. Okay. I wasn’t sure if they were...

[14:29 - 15:00]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Shells of sea snails and more. Well... the whole family of snails and bivalves and things. There were albino versions and natural-colored versions. And there was a number of other exhibits of different... natures. But that was one of the ones that was most unique of all of them. The others were, you know, lovely shells but...

[15:00 - 15:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right. So I remember listening to your audio files, there was a unique instance with the albino... the shell exhibit.

[15:13 - 15:18]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Not the shell... you're talking about Precious and the nurse shark?

[15:18 - 15:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, yeah, there was that, there was that instance too... but also the instance with the shells, the albino and the original, where the woman thought that the shells came from the Fort Myers Shell Factory?

[15:30 - 16:02]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Oh, yes. Yeah. It didn't happen with me. But the volunteer it happened to gave me the details in full. She'd been talking about the shell[s] and the animals that made them. And a visitor was looking more and more puzzled and finally blurted out, "I don't understand what you're talking about [with] these animals... I've been to the Shell Factory in Fort Myers!" We've always wished that the volunteer had had a follow-up question of asking the lady who she thought put the shells out onto the beach to be collected.

[16:02 - 16:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that's one of the more remarkable circumstances that you've had with the public over the years. It could be that she was just trying to be... make a funny. No?

[16:14 - 16:51]
**MR. BOWMAN**: No. The volunteer was deadly serious. She tried to further explain that every single shell was made by an animal! I mean... they were so complicated-looking and they are! I mean, she could maybe imagine an oyster making it, a shell. I mean, if she'd eaten oysters on the half-shell. But a snail making this spiral thing? And, you know, with spines, some of them with long spines on them. Just no way could she picture an animal doing that.

[16:51 - 17:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that was... your general experience with the public over the years... were there any hangups with individuals that came through the aquarium?

[17:01 - 18:30]
**MR. BOWMAN**: A few. Most of the time when there was a real problem with a member of the public, it was a man. And it was a man who often was showing off to visitors. As far as I'm able to figure out, the one's who were showing off to visitors were old-time residents of Sarasota or that, this area - perhaps Bradenton or such - who had been in the area maybe 2 years and therefore knew all about it and were showing up. And, in fact, I instruct my volunteers: If you come up on somebody saying, pointing into a tank and saying "This is this and this is that," and they're entirely wrong, you go up quietly and make an... as if you've not heard anything, make an initial attempt to point out the correct species, and if all that gets you is a dirty look, then you as a volunteer guide you have a job. That is to station yourself upstream from - because they're always speaking very loudly: [the person] who's giving totally wrong information - upstream to block off the visitors coming in after to create a big enough gap that at least they're not going to be contaminated.

[18:30 - 18:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that was the protocol.

[18:32 - 19:30]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Yeah. The problem ones were ones who most likely had spent a lot of years in Florida. Might be in fact Florida natives and men. And their attitude was, "I've been yanking fish out of the water all my life, and you're not going to tell me I can't yank fish out of the water!" "I've been doing...," you know, whether it be from the touch tank to holding stuff out, and holding it up in the air. I mean, those are... you had to be very stern with. We are not allowed to hit the public, we're not allowed to kick the public, we're not allowed to scream in the face of the public. But you speak to them as sternly as possible and and say, "This is not behavior that we accept." And my instructions to my, everybody I've trained is if that does not stop the action then you or you send one of the other volunteers to the staffers and say, "We have a problem."

[19:30 - 19:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Now did that ever happen? Did you ever have to escort anyone out?

[19:34 - 19:36]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Yeah. I, not personally, but I...

[19:36 - 19:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Directed someone to *be* escorted out?

[19:39 - 19:40]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Yes. It has happened.

[19:40 - 19:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: But that was few and far between, I'm sure.

[19:43 - 19:58]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Few and far between but it... you know... I've never, I've never personally seen a woman do any of that really... type of idiocy.

[19:58 - 20:04]
**MR. HARRIS:** So that protocol, is that still kind of the same idea today?

[20:04 - 20:05]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah, yeah. If you see somebody doing...

[20:05 - 20:12]
**MR. HARRIS:** I mean, if someone is confrontational, you try and get them away from the stream of visitors...

[20:12 - 20:15]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Yeah, yeah. I mean, that's part of my training. Yeah...

[20:15 - 20:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Take them aside, talk to them, calm them down. Just have a quiet conversation.

[20:19 - 20:37]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Again, you cannot... If they're doing something that they should not do as opposed to completely showing off for their visitor[s]. But if they're trying to grab something or pull a tail or, you know, whatever it is, then you tell them, you know, "Please don't do that. You could scare or hurt them."

[20:37 - 20:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right.

[20:38 - 22:04]
**MR. BOWMAN**: And if they do not cease, that's... then you get a staffer because the staffer... visitor, the customer service - Ellen or Walter - their authorized to ask them to leave, you know, refund their money and ask them to leave and not come back again. Now we did have one incidence that was happening on Saturdays of a member, divorced, who was using Mote Aquarium as the dump-ground for his boy that he had on, whether Saturday only or all weekend, but you know he had custody on... whether it was for the day only or you know, I have no way of knowing and I don't care. But he would bring the kid here, sometimes he'd just sent on a bench somewhere, but give the kid free romp. And he would not listen to any instructions. He would not obey anything. And.... we had to tell [a] staffer, you know. And the father was spoken to, and it did not change things and, in fact, his membership fee was refunded and he was asked not to come again.

[22:04 - 22:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Hmm. Interesting. Yeah.

[22:05 - 22:16]
**MR. BOWMAN**: I mean, the kid was running into people and shoving people out of his way and screaming bloody murder. Just totally out of control.

[22:16 - 22:22]
**MR. HARRIS:** So those were just some of the exceptional circumstances. But over the years the experience has been generally positive, I'm sure.

[22:22 - 22:25]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Very positive. I mean, as a...

[22:25 - 22:31]
**MR. HARRIS:** People come to learn. They're inquisitive. And they typically they leave...

[22:31 - 23:35]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. When I trained... I've asked all the ones I've trained to have two things memorized. The first comes from the Papers of Incorporation, they were made up by the Vanderbilt family or their attorneys. And it was for the Papers of Incorporation of the Cape Haze Marine Laboratory, of course. And in that... those papers, there was this exact phrase: "To be a place where people can learn about the sea." Now this was the incorporation of the Cape Haze Marine Laboratory, the place that was going to be staffed by a scientist and have scientists visiting there. You would expect that it should have said: "A place where scientists can learn about the sea." But it said *people*, not scientists. It said people. And from the very beginning, Dr. Clark welcomed... there was no advertisement of it, but when the public showed up wondering, you know, "What is a Cape Haze Marine Laboratory?" She'd talk to them.

[23:35 - 23:36]
**MR. HARRIS:** Mhm.

[23:36 - 24:04]
**MR. BOWMAN:** I make the joke but it's not a true, really a joke. And you might as well take the warning also. One of the things that could happen, they might be doing a shark dissection. And you might have a bus tray placed under your arms, and have shark parts being dumped onto it. And they'd tell you exactly what all these various parts were. The warning is this: Since a shark liver can be 25% of total body weight, it's a good idea to ask how big is the shark you're dissecting. Because if it's a 400-pound shark you may get a hundred pound liver plopped down on that bus tray and you better be ready for it or... before you decide, "No, I'd rather not."

[24:04 - 24:12]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. So I remember, you were saying you were the first President of the Board of Volunteers, is it? Or was it the...?

[24:12 - 24:19]
**MR. BOWMAN:** No, I was the third. But I was the one and only that had an octopus come to visit.

[24:19 - 24:21]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. Can you elaborate further?

[24:21 - 26:00]
**MR. BOWMAN:** The original... the only meeting room for the entire facilities - laboratory and aquarium - was where there's a theatre that we're not using at the present time in... there's an entrance out in the patio area and we used to... there was a film that showed there and it stopped because the film wore out and the equipment to show it wore out, and was no longer even be made. So there's no way... even if we had a copy of the film, you know, a fresh copy made there's no way to

project it. The... that system had gone by the board. But that was the one... it was a volunteer lounge, it was the Laboratory large meeting hall, and one of my experiences during the years when that was still a meeting area, we had several different symposiums held there, and one of them... it was a, like on a Monday I think it was, there were several of the scientists that were giving talks, had slides, and I ran the slide projector for them. They had the meetings in there. It was the volunteer lounge, it was the meeting location for the volunteers, it was the classroom.

[26:00 - 26:04]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. So that's where you had basically ongoing training or instructional sessions.

[26:04 - 26:58]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And where when the Laboratory had a meeting of scientists, either their own internal get-together or visiting scientists giving presentations, and that was where the Monday night at Mote was first held. That was the lecture series during the season... every Monday night during the season for twelve, fourteen different sessions. Some were, the talks were given by local... our own staff scientists, and some were visiting scientists... from various, you know, the whole rainbow, and often Dr. Clark gave one of the talks each year.

[26:58 - 27:02]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. And it was here that the octopus decided to come pay a visit.

[27:02 - 27:47]
**MR. BOWMAN:** It was the monthly meeting, and... I was just starting the meeting and at that time the octopus tank was the last tank down that hallway. And, of course, there was a work area between it and the wall of the auditorium. And... so I was actually heading to close one door. I heard this "Fhwop fhwop fhwop" sound: "What the hell is that?" And I looked out and here comes the octopus down the hall heading for the meeting. So I claim to be the only President who has ever had an octopus try to attempt the meeting.

[27:47 - 27:52]
**MR. HARRIS:** How was that situation taken care of?

[27:52 - 27:54]
**MR. BOWMAN**: Oh, the octopus was perfectly fine.

[27:54 - 27:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: The aquarists came by and... picked him up, brought him back?

[27:58 - 28:10]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Grabbed him up and dumped him back in his tank. I don't know if they even rinsed him off before they dumped him back or not. But anyway. Yeah, it was all no harm, no foul.

[28:10 - 28:26]
**MR. HARRIS:** So... now, the volunteer I spoke with last week, he writes some of the lab guides. Now, when did that, you know, when did that start taking place?

[28:26 - 31:20]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Well... the first curator, Susan Holderman, gave the classes initially; limited classes, she didn't have a strong science background. She had a lot of experience working fish pet stores, you know, large ones that were specializing in fish. So she had a lot of experience in maintaining aquariums and maintaining fish and health and all that. And she had, you know, she had taken Biology and stuff and things like that. But she was not a scientist. But she gave the classes just for volunteers. And I was basically, initially I was on every single committee and in fact several of the committees I was one of the founding members. The committee that set up a public Speaker's Bureau for Mote, which was at the time made up of volunteers, I was one of the three that set that up, and was... went out as a public speaker for Mote. The committee that set up the lab tours for members, I was on that committee. And, yeah. And we had sort of, just as volunteers we discussed... that unlike Selby Gardens which had a very intensive set of classes available for volunteers - which also for the public - but members and volunteers at Selby got special discounts and such. And we had nothing for our members at all. And, so we had discussed, you know, shouldn't we have something for that? And a young woman, well young even then to me - I at the time I was in my 50s, and she was probably in her early 30s - and she had advanced degrees in science and very intelligent. So we got permission to do a summer class for volunteers. And it worked but unfortunately we had as our head of publicity at that time, had no idea why we would even want to do such a thing. And did not in any way publicize it to our members.

[31:20 - 31:22]
**MR. HARRIS:** Yeah. Really. Yep. And what year, what year was that?

[31:22 - 31:30]
**MR. BOWMAN:** That would've been about '85, '86. Somewhere in there.

[31:30 - 31:35]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. So after the aquarium had been running for a good four or five years.

[31:35 - 33:17]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah, yeah. And at that time the classes - Sue Holderman was still the curator - but the classes, the number of volunteers and the classes and the work that needed to be done in the aquarium was starting to grow a little bit. And it was growing in the sense that it was in the planning stages for the shark tank and all that. So there's a lot more... she couldn't do it, and then so for three years I taught all the volunteer classes. The whole set which... and I did something that has not been done since. Because we did have volunteers who were members of the working public. The classes were taught for six weeks, twice a week, 2 hour sessions. But for three Sundays I taught 4 hour sessions for the working types, and... so they could get the classes in. And we've not done that since. I mean, so the working... when we have a volunteer who's in the working public, there's no way they

can take the classes. Now, the classes are taped and they can take out the tapes and get it that way. But that's not the same thing as... and I'm proud of the fact that, without being a science major, I had PhD biologists take my classes and approve the work I was doing.

[33:17 - 33:25]
**MR. HARRIS:** So there was more ongoing training and educational conferences back then than there is now, then?

[33:25 - 33:46]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. I never had taken Biology either. I had taken Chemistry, Advanced Chemistry, and Physics. But I was the squeamish type... a youngster who'd never taken Biology. So I had to self-teach myself the entire field of Biology. And I did well enough that, yes, I had PhD biologists saying I did a good job.

[33:46 - 34:00]
**MR. HARRIS:** Very good. Coming to... So let's see here. So how long did it take... I mean, you were doing this well before there was any much publicity for the Volunteer Program here, or much appreciation for the volunteers.

[34:00 - 34:57]
**MR. BOWMAN:** We did a lot of recruiting on the floor, actually. When somebody showed any interest at all we often... I can't speak for every day, but I know all the Saturday's I trained, all my Saturday people, you know, a few years somebody expressing, you know... number one they express strong interest, push membership, and number two if they show interest in what we are doing, talk, becoming a volunteer. And I recruited a number of people off the floor that way. Some will say, "Oh, but I... don't know anything about fishes." And I answer that with, "As long as you know that when our menu says 'Catch of the Day' that that's probably in seafood, I can train you the rest of the way."

[34:57 - 34:58]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right.

[34:58 - 35:02]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And I've trained some very good volunteers starting at that point.

[35:02 - 35:09]
**MR. HARRIS:** So what do you think Mote offers that is unique and different from other aquariums in the country?

[35:09 - 35:34]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Based... what I still get from the public. Aquarium junkies are people who love to go to aquariums. They're identifiable on the floor because they love to tell you about when they went to the Shedd, when they went to the National, when they went to the New Orleans, when they went to the Tennessee, when they went to the... you know...

[35:34 - 35:35]
**MR. HARRIS:** This, that, and the other.

[35:35 - 36:38]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And even when we're just this one little room. And at that time the attendance was so low that we would just form up a little party at the entrance and, however many it was, a single volunteer guide would take that party all the way through. And time and time again, even at that stage, as we got to the end and prepared for them to exit, time and time again, I'd have the aquarium junkies say "You know, you're nowhere near..." - even today - "You're not as big and as fancy as..." - you know, they'll usually name one or two, again, and they'll say - "But I enjoyed the experience here so much more because here I learned." And that, that is the differentiating factor and that's something I'm scared of us losing.

[36:38 - 36:48]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. The one thing is the trained docents who get to talk with the public. You make an impression that way.

[36:48 - 37:57]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And as many as we can find to put on the floor. There are some day-chairs who think that it's possible to have too many guides. To me that is impossible. I've got on the... on my rotation setup, I've got 13 spots in the rotation. But if I had 26, I'd have no trouble... the entry I list as one spot, but two people could work the entry with no problem at all because if you're talking about the... one side of the Moray Eel, let's say, you're not talking about the Kili's and the stuff over on the other side. I've got two positions for the next room, the grassflat and grass periphery. But the grassflat could have two people working on it. Grass periphery, I mean, if you're over by the Triggerfish, you're not talking about the wave tank, you're not talking about the reef fish. I mean, you're not talking about the jellyfish. I mean, four people in that room besides...

[37:57 - 38:01]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. You could almost have one volunteer for each species of plant, you know, or animal... yeah.

[38:01 - 38:15]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Or for each wall. I mean, there's four walls, you could have four volunteers working the walls. And the fifth one rotating to wherever the people are thickest. So, and I... there's no way we could have too many.

[38:15 - 38:21]
**MR. HARRIS:** So how long did you volunteer here? It was from '80 to...?

[38:21 - 38:51]
**MR. BOWMAN:** To now. Well, actually... let's start before the aquarium actually opened to the public

in 1980. And I did all day Saturdays. I did all day Saturdays until around 10... well, about 9 years ago I guess I finally gave up. Because I found that I'd reached a point in my life and health that all day Saturday was not causing me to only lose Sunday, I was starting to lose Mondays.

[38:51 - 39:02]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. So you went from basically 1980 to 2003-2004 thereabouts. So, a very long time of seeing Mote grow from a...

[39:02 - 39:04]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Oh, I've seen every... the whole thing.

[39:04 - 39:05]
**MR. HARRIS:** The whole thing basically.

[39:05 - 39:13]
**MR. BOWMAN:** I mean, our first touch tank was about the size of half of this table. Just a little...

[39:13 - 39:14]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. Little square.

[39:14 - 39:30]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Little square, open-top tank. And, you know, very limited in what we could even have. It didn't have that big a filtration system. No heating/chilling system. So, the only animals could go into it had to be very hardy.

[39:30 - 39:37]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. And you had to, I recall, you caught them during the season and then had to release them come Fall because you didn't have the filtration.

[39:37 - 40:21]
**MR. BOWMAN:** On some... in case... in the first, in the second touch tank which faced the shark tank, it went the opposite direction of the tank, the contact cove - what we call the contact cove now - and it was a two-level thing, and that's where we attempted the, to see whether we could have rays and whether the public enjoyed touching rays. And, but that tank... the chilling system was not, or the heating system was not such that we could keep rays in that tank through the Winter months. So, for two years we got new rays from the beginning...

[40:21 - 40:25]
**MR. HARRIS:** It needed to be at least seventy degrees, otherwise they'd start to perish, right?

[40:25 - 41:55]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. It would be, by the time they'd go in, the water temperature in the touch tank would be getting up to the mid-70s or high-70s. And they could tolerate... we did have a chiller on

there that could keep the maximum to about 82 degrees I think it was. But we could not warm it up to the minimum degree that was tolerable for the rays. And that original touch tank was, the end nearest the shark tank was deeper than the other one. It sort of stepped up to create a deeper tank, and that was, it was the deeper portion where we had the rays. And in that tank section there was only one spot where the rays could get almost out of touch. A tall adult or a spry youngster who could climb up onto the tank, could still reach them. And it was there that I realized fairly quickly that if the ray went into that tank it was going to that tank to go behind the couch, what I call "behind the couch." For your loving pet, cat or dog, it could be under the bed or in the closet but... whatever. And that if I actively protected them by, you know - "Do not climb on the tank." "Do not try to reach in." "Do not try to pet them" - that they would stay in that area a limited time, usually less than 10 minutes, but if they got touched in that area they would stay until they had at least...

[41:55 - 42:07]
**MR. HARRIS:** So it was too much... I mean this was back before the two-finger touch thing and... they went back there just to take a time-out and de-stress.

[42:07 - 42:40]
**MR. BOWMAN:** It just, even with two fingers. I mean, yeah. Enough is enough is enough. I mean, your loving pet may sit on your lap for hours to the point where, "Don't you want to get off? If you don't, I'm going to have to shove you off!" But, you know, they reach a point where you know, "I've had enough attention." And that's the way our rays are. If you ever watch that ray tank... when the rays go behind the couch, even the ones that bury themselves in the sand, the little Yellow ray and the Butterfly ray who can be hard to find.

[42:40 - 42:41]
**MR. HARRIS:** Yep. I saw them this morning.

[42:41 - 42:46]
**MR. BOWMAN:** If you look, they are facing outward. They can see how big an audience they have available.

[42:46 - 42:52]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right, right. They have vision around, almost 360, right?

[42:52 - 43:06]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And, yeah. Well, not three-hundred and sixty. They're always facing out towards where the public is. So they can judge when they have an audience. If they don't, "Hey, I met as well stay out another five minutes until somebody shows up to pet me."

[43:06 - 43:17]
**MR. HARRIS:** So in all your years here what has been you'd say your fondest memory of Mote? I mean, I'm sure there's a lot that run together and there's been a few but...

[43:17 - 44:18]
**MR. BOWMAN:** I'd have to put it... the entire experience of being a volunteer at Mote, the friendships I've had, the respect I've had. And respect is something that feels good. To everybody. And I have a lot of respect, a lot of admiration. And that feels good. I mean, that feels good. And also the friendships, and people caring about me. Because I have no family whatsoever. My parents are dead, ex-wives don't count, and the only relation I had in the U.S. was a cousin 10 and a half years older than I am, and she, I call her cousin, but her mother's mother's mother was sister to my father's mother's mother.

[44:18 - 44:19]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. Yep.

[44:18 - 45:04]
**MR. BOWMAN:** So that's like a third cousin three times removed or something, you know. I mean, there's a relationship but that's, you know. Otherwise my cousin who's my uncle's son in Scotland. He's older than I am, and he's passed. And he had a son and a daughter who I only met once, and that was just for an hour or two. And to them I'm basically some sort of an American relative who they met briefly once, so I have no idea what they are up to or what they're doing or...

[45:04 - 45:06]
**MR. HARRIS:** So Mote, basically, this is your family base here.

[45:06 - 45:07]
**MR. BOWMAN:** This is my family.

[45:07 - 45:23]
**MR. HARRIS:** Yep. And over the years you've seen Mote grow from a tiny lab and aquarium to a much larger institution. Did you ever expect it to get as big as it is? Has it exceeded your expectations at all?

[45:23 - 46:10]
**MR. BOWMAN:** It hasn't exceeded my expectations. The growth has been incremental. I mean, the one thing I will say about Mote that has stood in good stead. For the building of the whale hospital area and ending in increased size. You know, it went from two tanks to three and... the whole building is devoted to that. To the full turtle program. The original turtle program was two staffers, two of the tiniest women on the payroll, one of them I think was 4'11'' and the other was a giant at 5 foot.

[46:10 - 46:11]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. Yep.

[46:11 - 46:22]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And both were wispy - not skinny but, I mean, lean types - and to picture them going out and tagging 300-pound loggerheads and stuff...

[46:22 - 46:24]
**MR. HARRIS:** You just couldn't wrap it around your head.

[46:24 - 46:38]
**MR. BOWMAN:** But anyway. But that's how the turtle program started, on a very, you know... and then they got into turtle hospital with two tanks, and... very limited and you know. I mean, it's grown incrementally. But what Mote has basically held to all the way along is... they don't build until the money's in place.

[46:38 - 46:39]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right.

[46:39 - 47:57]
**MR. BOWMAN:** And they don't borrow to build. The only exception that I directly know of for a borrow was when the two manatees arrived, this was in '96... the Manatee hospitals in Florida - which were Lowry Park, Sea World, and there's a third one... can't remember where it is, I think it's up toward Jacksonville or on the East Coast somewhere - anyway, there were so many sick manatees coming in that they were all loaded up. And Hugh and Buffett were captive-born in Miami, and were at Lowry Park as permanent residents. But they were totally healthy manatees. And Lowry Park needed that tank as another hospital tank. So they were sent to us, and we were keeping them in a, one of our whale hospital tanks. That's all we had. And the agreement was that the State and Lowry Park would cover all costs, and they were to go back to Lowry Park. That was in the contract. We had them about two months. We got a sweet letter from the State informing us that as the end of the month all fronts cease and they were now our sole responsibility.

[47:57 - 47:58]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. Yep.

[47:58 - 48:28]
**MR. BOWMAN:** We sort of went, "But we don't have a place for them. Where we're keeping them now... We don't have the permits to keep manatees." [They said]: "You can get them. We'll expedite it." The problem with using the whale hospital tank for manatees: Whales are carnivores. Manatees are herbivores. Waste products from herbivores... if you've ever been to a farm or, you know, to a county fair or...

[48:28 - 48:33]
**MR. HARRIS:** Short story, the manatees could potentially become on the menu.

[48:33 - 48:48]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Well, no. The problem was that the waste... the filtration system running full tilt could not handle the waste of the manatees. Which meant we had to do water changes daily, and the costs were very, very high.

[48:48 - 48:49]
**MR. HARRIS:** Yep. Astronomical.

[48:49 - 51:36]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Now, at that time, the whale lagoon was in the process of being built. And a local resident, a woman had given a very large donation to finish that project. But the project was not at the stage where those monies were needed for the project. And they approached this woman and asked her if they could use those funds for a manatee tank with absolute signed agreement that, starting immediately, Mote would be having a major drive to replace those funds into the whale lagoon. And, the whale lagoon was not intended ever to be a permanent home for anybody. The reason it has the plastic on it was that... the idea was it was a rehab tank where they would get used - and when I say whale, I mean everything from a bottlenose dolphin to any whale that fits into our tank. And they used it as a rehab, and they'd go from the hospital tank to there for a few weeks of rehab, and they would start off by feeding them by hand the way they'd be doing in the hospital tank. But then as they build up strength and enough larger area to be able to move, they would start by making them move. By tossing a fish down to that end, now up to this end. Dead fish. Frozen. Dead-frozen. The last stage, they would actually put live fish in, where they actually had to chase them in, down and catch them and get their meal. And the reason it's plastic, it's plastic against dirt. Now, at the one end of the tank you've got concrete steps. And there was always one really thinking-type of fish, who maybe started out accidently by the steps. The thing is: echolocation. The echo off the concrete steps is a hard echo, which the, they can't distinguish the fish right up... against, a fish against the plastic against dirt is a soft echo and they can distinguish clearly the fish... and hunt the fish. So that's why the tank has the plastic over dirt, is to produce the soft echo so they can use the echolocation.

[51:36 - 51:37]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. Very interesting. Yeah.

[51:37 - 51:56]
**MR. BOWMAN:** This, I mean, the place has been planned well. You know, the shape of the shark tank was to get away from the oval or round tank where large animals would fall into a pattern swing, one direction only, and they found they would get distorted backbones.

[51:56 - 51:58]
**MR. HARRIS:** Oh really. Yep.

[51:58 - 52:38]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. And so the dumbbell shape, the idea was that it would encourage directional change, which in fact it has. So that, it worked. When that was built... it was almost as large as the largest rounded oval tanks. Which are now gone from a 135,000 gallon like that tank to your million plus gallons. I mean, they are inside oceans! And so the issue of their outish form is, you know, insignificant. I mean, even if they fell in a pattern of one-way only, it's such a shallow drift they're not going to get distortion.

[52:38 - 52:39]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right.

[52:39 - 53:09]
**MR. BOWMAN:** But anyway. The policy of not building until the money's in place. But, there's this. Sarasota is a very unusual place. We have a quality symphony orchestra in the black. We have a quality opera program in the black. We have a quality ballet...

[53:09 - 53:13]
**MR. HARRIS:** That's the Van Wezel or...

[53:13 - 53:54]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Well, the ballet... some are at Van Wezel, some are at the Opera House. But it's quality, it's getting an international reputation. It's in the black. We have Asolo Theatre, in the black. We have Florida Theatre. In the black. I mean, New York City is having troubles financing the opera and the ballet. And Chicago Symphony has been on the verge of going bankrupt. San Francisco. The St. Louis. I mean, these are huge cities!

[53:54 - 53:58]
**MR. HARRIS:** Yeah. Yep. And yet we're managing it quite well, aren't we?

[53:58 - 54:20]
**MR. BOWMAN:** Yeah. It is a very unusual place. And the money for the manatee tank. Yes, that initial borrowing of a donation in effect, got the funding to pay architects and designers and all that.

[54:20 - 54:25]
**MR. HARRIS:** For the modern-day Manatee Research Center that we have now, right?

[54:25 - 54:54]
**MR. BOWMAN:** But that manatee tank went from, "Oh my God, they're here, and we got to do something about it now, because they're not going back to Lowry" to the money raised in construction in less than a year. And that was a big project. To have it designed, built, and done... and payed for.

[54:54 - 54:55]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. Right.

**VIRGINIA SANDERS WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JUNE 16, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the home of Virginia Sanders in Longboat Key, Florida.]

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[0:00 - 0:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: Today… today is June 16th, 2015, and I'm talking with Virginia Sanders at her beautiful home out on Longboat Key. And Virginia, I was interested in how did you become involved with Mote initially?

[0:17 - 1:12]
**MS. SANDERS**: Well, I have to go back a little bit further. I was lucky enough to find a second, wonderful person to marry. And we were both starting out together. My husband was a physician and he was going to, not just retire to Florida, but work here first. And he asked me - over the phone by the way - he was already in Florida and he called me on New Year's Eve, he said, "How would you like to live in Florida?" [I] said, "Never thought about it."

[1:12 - 1:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Where were you living before that? Or before Florida?

[1:16 - 1:26]
**MS. SANDERS**: Illinois. It was in Illinois, full of snow and ice. More than the Arctic. So I said, "Sure."

[1:26 - 1:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: So he started... So he started up a…?

[1:30 - 3:41]
**MS. SANDERS**: Well, first I told him, "Wait and call me back tomorrow when you're sober." But anyway... Then I was thinking to myself, "What are we [going] to do in Florida with all those old people?" You know. So, first person I thought about was mentioned in the *Longboat Observer* and talked about a Turtle Watch, and people looking out to help bring up the numbers of sea turtles being born and surviving and all that kind of stuff, and if you're interested call this number. So I called that number immediately and met a lady who's no longer with us now, but she started the Turtle Watch with a half a dozen people and her own interest in trying to help out and do helpful things. And so I joined the group and we learned what turtles do; how they come up on the beach and the whole process. But no one was managing it. It was just reporting on what they found. So we flew by the seat of our pants and... did some good, and made other friends from different islands. And... so once Mote decided to have their own department on sea turtles and [help them]... we joined, we made our group part of their group.

[3:41 - 3:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. It became co-opted.

[3:43 - 3:49]
**MS. SANDERS**: Right. And it's been most successful. Still goes on.

[3:49 - 4:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you were down here working with the Sea Turtle Program before Mote even was established in Sarasota.

[4:01 - 4:11]
**MS. SANDERS**: Right. Exactly. Well, before Mote was established in sea turtle watching. The... Mote was an entity that Dr. [William H.] Taft... [Doorbell rings and an editor from the *Longboat Observer* joins the remainder of the session. The editor was on assignment to interview Virginia about her experiences living through World War II]

[4:11 - 5:41]
**MS. SANDERS**: I was first introduced to a... Dr. Taft from one of the Florida Universities, [he] was the head of Mote and he was retiring. And then... and they were looking for a substitute. They found one gentleman and [he] didn't work out, and they said, "Why don't we look amongst our scientists?" And... because I don't know how many people know that Kumar Mahadevan was first a research scientist at Mote and... with tremendous management ability. And, once he got started with the volunteers, they blossomed like those flowers [Virginia points to a bouquet of flowers on her coffee table]. Because one of the things he did in the over 25 years that he was the Head was he never missed a meeting of volunteer[s] and he always said, "Thank you." And he meant it. And we knew he meant it. So...

[5:41 - 5:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: So, when you came to Mote, were you... did you come as a volunteer originally?

[5:49 - 6:25]
**MS. SANDERS**: Yes, yes. I... so having been part of the Longboat Key Turtle Watch and writing columns for the *Observer* - you're all tied into one - I... when they were reorganizing with Kumar at the Head, I said, you know, "How can I help?" Because right then I was just with the Turtle Watch.

[6:25 - 6:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[6:26 - 7:00]
**MS. SANDERS**: I said, "I have certain talents and maybe you can use them at Mote. What I can do, I can write a little bit, and I can draw with pen and ink. That's my favorite. I drew a few little cartoon

aspects too... those drawings. Do you want me?" So they said, "Yeah. Sure." They didn't know what they were doing either.

[7:00 - 7:18]
**MR. HARRIS**: So after the... after coming to Mote for the turtle conservation or volunteering for the Turtle Program, you came on board as an editor and an illustrator for Mote and for the publication?

[7:18 - 8:12]
**MS. SANDERS**: Right. And we put out a newsletter for the volunteers. And the writer of the newsletter - you'll probably interview her too - and they would hand me the printed copy and I would add in the spaces that she left little pen and ink drawing[s]. And then they would run it off on the copier. And that, that was the... the volunteer newsletter then at that time. And it was good. But of course it became more professional. We got professional help. I mean, it just ballooned.

[8:12 - 8:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you worked behind the scenes on the newsletter, and that was before the publications like *The Marine Scene*. And, so you didn't... you probably didn't work... other than the turtles you didn't work with any of the animals in the aquarium?

[8:34 - 9:23]
**MS. SANDERS**: No, the Sea Turtle Program was the one where I have had a direct connection and [was] always ready to help out [with] other stuff. But, then they said - at our monthly meetings - they said, you know, "We should have a program that enhances our knowledge. And we need someone to plan those programs. Do you think you could do that?" I said, "Sure!" In those days, you know, we could do anything. It was appreciated and wonderful.

[9:23 - 9:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: Did you go out to the public and promote Mote at all through those programs or...?

[9:31 - 9:58]
**MS. SANDERS**: I didn't do that, no. The programs that I planned were for the benefit of the volunteers so they expand their knowledge. And my job was to find something that would enhance their knowledge of what's going on in the, in the waters around... and spread the word.

[9:58 - 10:03]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Did you ever get a chance to meet Dr. Clark?

[10:03 - 11:24]
**MS. SANDERS**: I never met her personally. I've been in big meetings where she is the star, of course. But never... [I] always felt I was just a kid by comparison with all these other people. Suddenly I wasn't a kid anymore. The woman that turned me on to turtles was Kit Fernald. And she was a grand person that lived on Longboat Key and had people to do all kinds of things that were good for the environment. But the turtles interested her and a few active people at that time. And, so we kind of

made our own rules. When we knew there was a nest about to hatch, we all sat there and we... all evening, all... sometimes in the rain, didn't matter, and watched.

[11:24 - 11:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Now that was... yeah... that was before you...?

[11:28 - 11:40]
**MS. SANDERS**: All right. So I'll show you some pictures I have on the wall of baby turtles running to the sea. Running to the Gulf of Mexico here.

[11:40 - 11:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: Now when you were sitting and waiting for the turtles to hatch, was that part of the conservation? Or were you sitting to get a first peek at them for illustrating them, drawing them, and...?

[11:56 - 12:07]
**MS. SANDERS**: No, no, no. We were doing it to help out and chart how many and try to be professional.

[12:07 - 12:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And what... that was in...

[12:15 - 13:01]
**MS. SANDERS**: And Kit became mayor, one of the best mayors of Longboat Key, and one of my best friends. I still... I correspond with her daughter who lives in Pennsylvania. And, her granddaughter published a book... a different kind of book that I did. And she became a publisher and published it. I did an ABC book for young children and all kinds of animals were drawn; lesser-known animals.

[13:01 - 13:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Did you ever come across any new species or... whether turtles or something else on the beaches when...?

[13:13 - 13:20]
**MS. SANDERS**: No. But one time when Kit was going to be away... You can turn on that lamp if you like.

[13:20 - 13:22]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Oh, it's okay. It's not dark in here.

[13:22 - 13:23]
**MS. SANDERS**: Can you see?

[13:23 - 13:24]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Yeah.

[13:24 - 13:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Kit... What was her name? Kit? Or the mayor?

[13:29 - 14:52]
**MS. SANDERS**: Oh, she was gone on vacation at one time and asked me if I would sit with a certain number of turtle nests, and tell the Police Department if a turtle was sighted laying a nest, "Would you please dial my number." And sure enough one evening, [the] police called me and said, "There's a big turtle on the beach, and it looks like she's digging a hole." I came right over. I never had seen that happen before. It's quite a process, if you've never seen it. Not many people do because they wait for the dark of night. You know. So that was a real thrill to watch this huge animal dig with her flippers that hole. And it goes about twelve inches [to] a foot deep. That's not easy. So you have to give the turtles credit.

[14:52 - 15:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: So... what were some of the things you were trying to find out factually or scientifically about turtles and their nesting behaviors? Was there anything specific that you were trying to find out when you were going out to the beaches back then? Anything that wasn't known that we know today about the species of sea turtle?

[15:16 - 16:34]
**MS. SANDERS**: I didn't feel that I was equipped to act as a scientific engineer of any kind. Or... but just to help out and learn about what they do. There's... we became acquainted with a feller named Archie Carr. And if you haven't heard about him... Yeah, he did a scholarly book on all of the turtles. But what I can do is show you a couple of pictures. When I first came here my big interest was in fitting my talents into - such as the little book, the article[s] I wrote for the *Observer* - and I was a schoolteacher and taught Mathematics. So there wasn't much science in that. Let me show you...

[16:34 - 16:51]
**MS. SANDERS**: Have you heard of - my memory's not the greatest at this point - but this is Clyde Butcher.

[16:51 - 16:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Uh-huh?

[16:52 - 16:53]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Oh wow.

[16:53 - 16:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: No, I haven't.

[16:55 - 16:57]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: He's a… isn't he a Longboat…?

[16:57 - 16:58]
**MS. SANDERS**: Have you seen his work?

[16:58 - 17:01]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Yeah. He's a Longboater, isn't he? He lives on Longboat too, I think.

[17:01 - 17:02]
**MS. SANDERS**: Yeah.

[17:02 - 17:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: This is his photography?

[17:05 - 17:07]
**MS. SANDERS**: Yes. He has black and white.

[17:07 - 17:10]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Does he live on Longboat?

[17:10 - 17:11]
**MS. SANDERS**: What's that?

[17:11 - 17:13]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Doesn't he live on Longboat?

[17:13 - 17:14]
**MS. SANDERS**: Say again?

[17:14 - 17:16]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: He lives here on Longboat?

[17:16 - 18:00]
**MS. SANDERS**: He lives… no, not on Longboat. No. No. He lives next to the Everglades. So he does… he'll take a little boat that his wife runs for him, and they both wear hip boots. And… it's really something to see. But they're black and white photography that he does. He could fill those whole space with his pictures, they're so perfect. That's one I bought. That's all I could afford. Over there.

[18:00 - 18:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Beautiful. So these are kind of broad questions and they're going to be probably hard to rack your brain and come up with a single example, but… how many, how many years were you volunteering at Mote? Was it a long time or…?

[18:20 - 18:21]
**MS. SANDERS**: It's over thirty.

[18:21 - 18:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Over thirty. Okay. So it would be, probably would be difficult then to try and comb through thirty years and come up with one memory that you would say would be your fondest during your time at Mote. Right?

[18:39 - 18:40]
**MS. SANDERS**: Well...

[18:40 - 18:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: They all run together. There's probably a lot of interesting memories.

[18:48 - 19:53]
**MS. SANDERS**: I've been planning the programs for the Volunteer meeting for the last ten years I guess. And [it's] been very, very enlightening because I reach out to - from the Everglades, Clyde Butcher - wonderful people. Very talented people in the area in general. And they come and lend their expertise to spreading the word that we have to be more respectful of all the wildlife that lives in the waters. By the way... do you know who Snooty is?

[19:53 - 19:54]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Mhm.

[19:54 - 19:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: No. Haven't...

[19:55 - 19:59]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: The manatee, Snooty? I'm not even a Floridian and I know Snooty.

[19:59 - 20:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh!... Well I've only been down a few weeks. Is she at... is that a manatee at Mote right now?

[20:05 - 20:11]
**MS. SANDERS**: Yeah. Been there for years. A permanent resident.

[20:11 - 20:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. What is their life... what is their...?

[20:14 - 20:18]
**MS. SANDERS**: Snooty. I think it's his 64th... is it his 65th birthday?

[20:18 - 20:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Wow.

[20:19 - 20:25]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: I think he's at the... I think he's at the Bradenton... maybe it's not Snooty, but...

[20:25 - 20:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, here's a good one to ask you, Virginia. What do you think other institutions or the scientific community at large could learn from Mote? Probably something along the lines of bringing in volunteers and having them have an instrumental part.

[20:47 - 21:42]
**MS. SANDERS**: Probably... yes. They have a roster of more volunteers, I would say, than any other institution. When you talk to them from someplace, some other entity, they [say], "How many volunteers do you have?" And we tell them, their jaw drops because nobody else can rival that. And a lot of the credit to people there in general. But Kumar Mahadevan was topmost. He's always reachable; his door was always open; and he [answers] questions. Just walk right in.

[21:42 - 21:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you've seen, I mean, you've been at Mote and have seen it grow for, you know, the whole time. It's whole life span...

[21:54 - 22:40]
**MS. SANDERS**: The aquarium was just a little... almost laughable when you think about it now, you know. But Mr. Mote himself... we would have a project that needed to make some money to make it happen. And then they would say, "Well, we've reached half of our goal. And [an] anonymous benefactor did the other half." Well, that anonymous benefactor was more than likely... Mr. Mote.

[22:40 - 22:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: Mr. Mote. Yep... So did... has Mote exceeded your expectations in the way it's grown and how many volunteers it's taken on over the years? Did you ever think it would become what it is today?

[Unexplained audio skipping for rest of interview]

[22:56 - 23:33]
**MS. SANDERS**: I never thought it would become world-renowned. And that's the truth. I'm not saying that because I want to say nice things. [It's] world-renowned. It gets featured in... the National Geographic book. [When] Eugenie Clark died, she went on some of those trips... those animals. But everywhere we go we've touched a foot, we've touched a...

[23:33 - 23:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right. Very hands on. Very interested in getting people to learn.

[23:40 - 24:09]
**MS. SANDERS**: Exactly. And that's how Dwight Davis came by. He had a program - used to be side program - but he takes planned-out programs and talks about them to various organizations.

[24:09 - 24:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Those are programs that he takes out into the community and gets the word out about Mote? That's what Dwight does?

[24:23 - 25:27]
**MS. SANDERS**: Yeah. And he... you can go further too. Because people that are interested in marine life are interested in bird life as well. So we work in harmony with a lot of Audobon people. One of the things... well, this has nothing to do with Mote, but if you look across outside there... the boats go by. That's the Intracoastal. On the other side of the Intracoastal is a set of islands called Sister Keys. And a number of years ago, Sister Keys [sold]... and they were going to put an airport there and have... and you could reach it only by boat.

[25:27 - 25:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Really.

[25:28 - 26:12]
**MS. SANDERS**: And... [they'd] build I guess some condos there. Well, once we got word that that was up for sale, we set up a program to raise money so the town of Longboat Key, in three years, between the town and the volunteers. We made enough money to buy those islands. And the Audubon promised to be the watchdog so that no one will ever build on those islands. They'll remain...

[26:12 - 26:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Cool.

[26:13 - 26:20]
**MS. SANDERS**: A feller named Rusty Chinnis - do you know the name? - Rusty Chinnis. Do you know Rusty?

[26:20 - 26:23]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: Wait, what's his last name? Rusty what?

[26:23 - 27:00]
**MS. SANDERS**: Rusty Chinnis. He was a building contractor and his hobby was photography. And he's the head of scallops. The scallop brigade is his. He keeps that clean and has people come out. That's how it all works here. If you're interested in something, there will be a group there that will help.

[27:00 - 27:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Is there access out there by road or is that just boat access to Sister Islands? How… is there access to Sister Islands?

[27:10 - 27:12]
**MS. SANDERS**: Only by boat. Only by boat.

[27:12 - 27:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Only by boat. Okay. And that's right across the way?

[27:14 - 27:35]
**MS. SANDERS**: Yeah. And… so their mission: keep it that way. Keep it clean. You know, used to be... I guess about twice a year they do that. Volunteers come out and fill bags with...

[27:35 - 27:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Junk. Yep. That drifts out.

[27:39 - 27:42]
**MS. SANDERS**: I'm going to turn a light on because…

[27:42 - 27:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Well, I don't want to keep you all afternoon. Or you all afternoon.

[27:48 - 27:49]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: It's all right.

[27:49 - 27:55]
**MS. SANDERS**: Oh, there's the sunshine. Thank you. I don't have to put the light on now.

[27:55 - 27:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Was there anything else you wanted to talk about?

[27:57 - 28:10]
**MS. SANDERS**: Well, the little rinky-dink aquarium once [it] existed, of course, got rebuilt, bigger, better, twice.

[28:10 - 28:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. I remember… We were talking, I was talking with Dave Bowman yesterday and the main attraction was…

[28:19 - 28:53]
**MS. SANDERS**: … works hand-in-hand with the scientists there. A lot of them form the programs that I

plan out for the volunteers now. Well, some of our own people tune into more things than we know about now. So... I just had a... you were at the program. Were you at the program?

[28:53 - 28:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: At the auditorium? Or the brown...

[28:56 - 29:02]
**MS. SANDERS**: The last volunteer meeting talking about the conch and the...

[29:02 - 29:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: No, I missed that unfortunately. Yep. I missed that one.

[29:06 - 29:15]
**MS. SANDERS**: Now, she does... Martha's Vineyard, but she came...

[29:15 - 29:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Do you normally go to the programs? How often are there...?

[29:23 - 29:40]
**MS. SANDERS**: We do a program once a month, then we have a couple of party events, and then we take off. We're off now from July, August, and September.

[29:40 - 29:46]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, great. So I'm not going to have the opportunity to get to one.

[29:46 - 29:47]
**MS. SANDERS**: I'm sorry.

[29:47 - 29:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: So this would be what you call offseason then, right?

[29:52 - 29:57]
***Longboat Observer* Editor**: It's pretty, it's pretty quiet here in the summertime.

[29:57 - 30:02]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. People go north.

**CATHY MARINE WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JUNE 23, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. The transcript was edited by request of Ms. Marine.]

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[0:00 - 0:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Today is... what do we have?... Today is Tuesday, June 23rd, and I'm in Mote Marine Lab's library talking to Cathy Marine, the volunteer librarian for the Volunteer's library. And, let's see, this is my only copy. So...

[0:16 - 0:17]
**MS. MARINE**: Oh, got it.

[0:17 - 0:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: I'm sorry. We can both take a look at that. Cathy, I was interested in how you became involved with Mote initially?

[0:25 - 1:38]
**MS. MARINE**: My parents moved to Sarasota in 1985... so I had visited Mote numerous times when I came to visit them. And when I retired in 2005, I knew that that was an area that I... a place I would like to volunteer so... But I knew I didn't want to be a docent. So I sent in my professional resume to the Volunteer Coordinator, and then went in and interviewed with then-Lisa [Cathy later recalled it was Andrea Davis, not "Lisa"], and she directed me at several areas that she thought I might be interested in. [I] started out, actually, in the dolphin and whale hospital and working with Kasey [Gaylord-Opalewski] and Jason [Robertshaw] on distance learning because I had a background in cable television and distance learning. [I] discovered that really what Kasey and Jason needed was a professional. They needed someone who was there 5 days a week, and I was not that person. But I learned a lot from them and got updated on their equipment, and in the meantime was going through the training for the dolphin and whale hospital. And there were patients there all the time in 2005, and so [I was] very involved with that.

[1:38 - 1:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Now the Kasey and Jason Program was... that was a broadcast that went out... came out of Miami? Or was it... it came out of here?

[1:48 - 2:03]
**MS. MARINE**: No, no. This came out of Mote. And it was a... I can't remember what the technology

was at that point, it's changed so much. But it was uploaded and then downloaded at a school in Illinois or Texas or New York.

[2:03 - 2:04]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, anywhere across the board. Okay.

[2:04 - 2:14]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. And they set up times for individual classes, and it was two-way video/two-way audio so that they could actually interact with the students.

[2:14 - 2:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: So they were... Mote was looking for at the time in '85 when you came here... '85?

[2:19 - 2:21]
**MS. MARINE**: No, no. 2005. My parents came in '85.

[2:21 - 2:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, 2005. Okay, I'm sorry.

[2:22 - 2:26]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. Not a lot of distance learning in 1985.

[2:26 - 2:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So your parents came and you put in a...

[2:32 - 2:35]
**MS. MARINE**: Then I followed them twenty years later.

[2:35 - 2:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: You followed them. Okay. So they originally were involved in the Kasey and Jason program?

[2:38 - 2:43]
**MS. MARINE**: Oh, no. No. My parents have nothing to do with marine biology. They're...

[2:43 - 2:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, they have nothing to do with it. Okay. Okay. I was under the impression that that program was older in years. But I guess...

[2:49 - 3:02]
**MS. MARINE**: Oh it is. Oh It is. But I didn't work as a volunteer with them until 2006, actually. I moved here in 2005 [and] started working at Mote in 2006.

[3:02 - 3:11]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that was... did your educational and career background... I mean, it did have something to do then with your coming to Mote?

[3:11 - 3:52]
**MS. MARINE**: Well, I was a librarian - the story's way too long for your tape but - we had professional development money in the school district that I worked with. So I asked for funding for a Marine Biology class and got a call from the Personnel Director saying, "But... you're a Librarian, what does this have to do...?" And I said, "Well Tim, I teach the science classes. When they come in, I need to know what resources are available." [He said:] "Oh, of course. We'll fund it." So I had an interest in Marine Biology, but in 2006 when I started at Mote I obviously learned a lot more.

[3:52 - 4:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. So... let's see... were you involved in any other volunteer activities before coming to Mote?

[4:01 - 4:19]
**MS. MARINE**: I've always volunteered. Not here in Sarasota. I mean, when I moved to Sarasota, Mote was my focus. In Illinois and Iowa and Michigan, I volunteered with Girl Scouts; I volunteered with Church functions. Yeah. I always volunteered for something.

[4:19 - 4:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Cool. And then... we were talking about the Volunteers library. What is your typical workday routine like?

[4:29 - 5:31]
**MS. MARINE**: As far as the Volunteer library... That was fairly intense when I took it over, and I was recataloging everything. At this point, I try and go down once a week and reorganize all the books that have been put in the wrong places. If there's a book that's been out for quite a long time - I have a phone number - I'll call the person and just remind them that maybe they would want to return the book to the library. Once a year, I will do an inventory just to make sure what's still here. And if people recommend books for [the library], I first suggest that maybe they'd want to [donate] it for the library. Then... if that's not an option, why, I go to the Board with a list of books once a year that have been recommended. Most of my volunteer time at this point is with the dolphin program. I go out with [Dr.] Randy Wells staff to do surveys of the dolphins in Sarasota Bay. And that's, that's really...

[5:31 - 5:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: That takes up more time than the Volunteers library?

[5:34 - 5:45]
**MS. MARINE**: Yes. It's an eight-to-ten hour day when we go out. And even though I only go two or three times a month, average, why that's... it's a great way to stay involved.

[5:45 - 5:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: And what do you do with the dolphin program when you go out? Is it just tracking and...

[5:50 - 6:08]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. There's a population of 180 resident dolphins, and the staff is amazing at their

ability to recognize all of them with two or three second sighting of the dorsal fin. And so volunteers record data. There are five dolphins that I can identify. I'm proud of that.

[6:08 - 6:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: By tag or just by sight?

[6:12 - 6:21]
**MS. MARINE**: Oh, no. By sight. All you get is the dorsal. And some, like "Rip Torn," is really easy because his dorsal fin is chopped in three pieces.

[6:21 - 6:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, yeah. They get bent and contorted in different shapes.

[6:24 - 6:35]
**MS. MARINE**: Yep. So... it's sighting dolphins, recording data, taking water samples. So... it's fun, and it's a great team of people.

[6:35 - 6:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Cool. So you work with dolphins. I mean, do you...

[6:44 - 7:53]
**MS. MARINE**: The other thing I've done is I've written two books now about scientists or... [who] work at Mote. The first was *No Dead Fish For Ginger: The Story of a Sarasota Bay Dolphin*, and it's a dolphin that was rescued [and] rehabilitated and is now back in Sarasota Bay. And since Dr. Wells' team had all the family information on Ginger, it was fun to write a book for middle school students about, you know, "How does rehabilitation take place?" because it's something that very few people know about. And the book that should come out this Fall is *Wings in the Water* about Spotted eagle rays. Kim Bassos-Hull is doing research on Spotted eagle rays, basically in the Gulf area off Sarasota. And so she has allowed me to go out on the boat with her and talk with some of the scientists she's working with in California and in Mexico. And so I've put together a book, this time [for] middle school and high school that talks about, "How does one do research on a species that no one has done research on before?"

[7:53 - 7:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. You put together the books or the book as author or just a editor or co-editor?

[7:59 - 8:00]
**MS. MARINE**: I'm author.

[8:00 - 8:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Author.

[8:00 - 8:07]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. And it's... we're getting final permissions at this point so it should be published this Fall.

[8:07 - 8:18]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay. I'll look for it. So do you, I mean, you do work with the public, some of the high schools and go periodically to...

[8:18 - 8:52]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. I've done that more in Michigan because I know the librarians up there, and so I can get invited to schools. Sarasota has some very tough regulations as far as who goes into the schools. And, you know, I understand it, that's... we want to keep our kids safe. But I don't have a history here in Sarasota as far as work with the schools. So it's been a little more difficult to do speaking at schools. I've done it more with public groups: Kiwanis, Rotary, Girl Scouts.

[8:52 - 8:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Through the... are you involved with the Speakers Bureau or is that...?

[8:55 - 8:57]
**MS. MARINE**: Yes. I am part of the Speakers Bureau.

[8:57 - 9:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yep. Most of the volunteers that I'm talking to, I'm finding out that they are on the Speakers Bureau. So... and we'll have to talk about that, I'm from Michigan. So I know some of the librarians up there too.

[9:12 - 9:13]
**MS. MARINE**: Hey. That's cool.

[9:13 - 9:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: So, getting in... I mean, getting into the high schools is a bit of a difficulty. But you do, through the Speakers Bureau, you talk to folks... community groups. Has that been a rewarding experience with the public for you? How long have you done that on the Speakers Bureau?

[9:37 - 10:21]
**MS. MARINE**: I've only been on Speakers Bureau about a year and a half. But I've been talking to people regardless. I had my powerpoint on dolphins that I put together when I wrote the book on Ginger. And had done speaking with my old schools in Michigan long before I wrote the book. So... I do enjoy it. I love the kids reactions and I am always amazed, as are their parents I'm sure, at how much students [and] children know... fifth graders who can differentiate between types of sharks than... you know, it's exciting.

[10:21 - 10:42]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So obviously, it sounds like you do participate in ongoing training and educational programs outside of Mote and within Mote. You're very involved here with the Speakers Bureau. Also probably the monthly program. Do you... you probably go to the monthly programs?

[10:42 - 10:57]
**MS. MARINE**: I try. The problem is the Board meeting and the Volunteer meeting are the first two

weeks of the month. And dolphin surveys are also the first ten days of the month. And, frankly, I prefer dolphin surveys to meetings.

[10:57 - 11:07]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, I can't blame you. Going back to the dolphin surveys, and when you're out on the boats with Mr. Wells is it?

[11:07 - 11:09]
**MS. MARINE**: It's his staff.

[11:09 - 11:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: Or his staff. Okay. Have there been any interesting episodes with the dolphins out on the water? Or anything that you can think of that is worth a story?

[11:24 - 11:27]
**MS. MARINE**: Oh. Lots. Yeah.

[11:27 - 11:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Lots. One or two maybe.

[11:28 - 12:35]
**MS. MARINE**: There are people stories. Then there are dolphin stories. And there are... dealing with the public stories. I got to be part of what was called the Beggar Project, where [Dr.] Katie McHugh was the staff member who was in charge, and we... there was a dolphin named Beggar who was always found between the Blackburn Point Bridge and the Albee Bridge. And so during season, we did four days a week - Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday - where we actually monitored Beggar's behavior for those four days. Because Beggar was known to beg. And so... you know, Katie's got the statistics. I hate to throw out numbers. But I'm thinking that we were recording up to 200 boats in a 2 hour period that would interact with this dolphin. And they started out with, I think, four people on the Mote Boat, and we got up to five and six because we were having so much recording that nobody could keep up.

[12:35 - 12:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: Wow. So... I know one of the rule of thumbs for - you know, I don't go boating as much as I'd like - but I know you're told to not feed the wildlife.

[12:45 - 12:48]
**MS. MARINE**: Absolutely. Absolutely. That was considered harassment.

[12:48 - 13:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. So you had to check and see... I mean, there was probably a... the concern that, not only was Beggar getting overfed, but maybe getting fed things that were detrimental to a dolphins diet. And... how did you manage to steer him or her away from that happening?

[13:10 - 13:45]
**MS. MARINE**: Cheetos, beer... Well, the goal was basically documentational [Cathy wished to note

that the work routine was documentational; the ultimate goal of the project, however, was to change the behavior of Beggar and boat-goers]. We did I believe it was four weeks. And then we had the Coast Guard there for a weekend to document changes in boater behavior. Not the dolphin's behavior. The dolphin didn't change. The dolphin doesn't recognize the Coast Guard at all. And then to document boater behavior after the Coast Guard was no longer there. And bottom line, I believe - I mean, you'd have to ask Katie - but it did not appear that the boater behavior changed much other than the weekend that the Coast Guard was actually there.

[13:45 - 13:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. That's one of those... I mean, the only way to change that is just to keep going with the public education and try and get people to...

[13:52 - 14:12]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. And there was one rental agency that put a tag on their boat keys, so that when they rented a boat and gave the renter the key, it said do not pet him: "WARNING. This dolphin bites!" And [it] had a picture of Beggar. And I mean, that... I have to think that was helpful in some ways.

[14:12 - 14:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. I'm sure. By and large people are good. I'm sure it curtailed the behavior of a lot of folks who... Well, you'd like to think so.

[14:22 - 14:23]
**MS. MARINE**: It helped.

[14:23 - 14:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you've been here for the last...

[14:29 - 14:30]
**MS. MARINE**: Nine years.

[14:30 - 14:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: Nine years. Going on ten years. And in that time you've done... Has it been the dolphin program and the volunteers lounge on the side? Or has there been anything else? And the Speakers Bureau.

[14:43 - 15:40]
**MS. MARINE**: Well, the volunteers lounge is new. That's just been the last... just over a year I think. [I] started out with the dolphin hospital. I worked as [Dr.] Genie Clark's assistant for five years. I worked with [Dr.] Jose Castro for a couple years. I worked with [Dr.] John Reynolds for a couple years. John was funny because at the point where I started working for him, we were reorganizing his files. And one of the things that another volunteer and I had approached him with the fact that a lot of what was in his files was available online and would be much easier to find. And it took about a year and a half, and John came to me and said, "You know, I don't think you need to do that anymore. I think I've

figured out that it's easier to go online and find this than it is to leaf through my drawers. So thank you, but I think you're done."

[15:40 - 15:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: So, I'm still learning the names. Were those scientists or... ?

[15:45 - 16:22]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. [Dr.] Jose Castro put together the huge book on North American sharks: *[The] Sharks of North America*. And... I don't know how many years Jose worked at Mote. Now he's at *NOAA*, up in St. Petersburg. [Dr.] John Reynolds is... I don't know if... he was in charge of marine mammals for, I can't remember if it was the United Nations or North America or... and he doesn't have that role anymore, but he's in charge of the Marine Mammal Program at Mote. And basically his focus is the manatees.

[16:22 - 16:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And obviously I'm familiar with Dr. Clark. And you were an assistant with her for five years. So you got to work hand-in-hand with her. How would you... I mean, how would you describe Dr. Clark?

[16:40 - 17:16]
**MS. MARINE**: Crazy! Just an amazing woman. I mean, I'm sorry I didn't know her much earlier on, because at the point where I started working for her, you know, she was in her mid-80s and her energy level I'm sure was less than what it had been even twenty years prior. Although it was crazy how much she was still doing. She did not like computers. I did the email. I did the powerpoints. I did... and that's, you know... I understand that completely! She had no interest in computers.

[17:16 - 17:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. She'd rather be out diving and swimming and working with the animals.

[17:20 - 17:43]
**MS. MARINE**: Absolutely. But it was... I learned so much from her. I mean, her brain was working until the end. And just coming up with the questions that needed to be asked and what we needed to learn in order to monitor a species; preserve a species; find out about species interaction. She was just...

[17:43 - 17:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Brilliant.

[17:44 - 17:49]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. Just incredible. And to get to go diving with her was a real privilege.

[17:49 - 17:51]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Where did you go diving?

[17:51 - 18:26]
**MS. MARINE**: As her assistant, I went to Indonesia twice. To Baja California, Mexico. Once to the Solomon Islands. I was sorry I missed the Papua New Guinea trip. I had only been working for her for a

couple months, and somebody cancelled on that trip and she said, “Do you want to go?” And, stupid me, I looked at the money and said, “[gasp].” You know... looking back I would’ve borrowed, you know, whatever. I should have gone on that trip. But I didn’t, so [I] missed that one.

[18:26 - 18:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Well, it sounds like you’ve had... you know, ignoring that one dive, you’ve had a lot of dives and a lot of wonderful, really fun experiences. And with Dr. Clark no less.

[18:38 - 19:06]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. When I was her assistant I was also her roommate. And she knows no... she knew no time boundaries. And so multiple nights she would sit over on her bed or on a chair in the room reading as I tried to sleep. And then she’d sleep through the day, and I’d be out diving. So, you know, when she was interested in something, she didn’t quit until she was finished.

[19:06 - 19:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: So as an assistant for Dr. Clark... I mean, you both... you were her I guess you could say technical/clerical assistant. But you also did...

[19:20 - 19:31]
**MS. MARINE**: Well, and she was not driving at that point. So I’d pick her up at her condominium and drive her to Mote. And we’d, you know, work, have lunch, work, and then I’d drive her home in the evening.

[19:31 - 19:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Which... did you have a favorite among the dives? Was... one stand out better than another?

[19:39 - 20:37]
**MS. MARINE**: Oh, Indonesia is fabulous. Indonesia is absolutely fabulous. And we had set up two grids off Sangeang Island, which was just a little remote island that happened to have two colonies of *Trichonotus*, which was the fish we were studying at that point. And one of the colonies was near the village, and the villagers had cows. And so she was interested in the nitrogen phosphorus. You know, all the cow waste in the water, and how that might be impacting the fish and the other colony group. [The] grid that we laid was about a quarter mile away. So not so much human-and-animal interaction. But we did a tour of the village, and it wasn’t like a touristy thing because nobody goes there. But it was a lot of fun.

[20:37 - 20:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Did you come across any... I mean, you knew what you were looking for and diving for. [But] did you come across any pathfinding science or any new species or anything like that on any of the dives?

[20:52 - 21:35]
**MS. MARINE**: Not that I was aware of. I think there [were] some behaviors that Genie was very interested in. Certainly we documented... we gathered eggs that had been laid, and we documented

the courting behavior of the... the males had harems. And [we were] trying to figure out how they selected because they only seemed to mate with one female per day. And we weren't sophisticated enough to be able to differentiate between females to see if it was the same harem every day. [We] certainly couldn't tell if it was the same female everyday. But [we] just tried to document numbers and locations and behaviors.

[21:35 - 21:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Cool. What do you think Mote offers that is unique and different from other aquariums? Other aquariums in the country?

[21:47 - 22:55]
**MS. MARINE**: See, I've never worked at any other aquariums. So from that perspective... I just know that the scientists here are so willing to share what they're doing. I mean, they want you to know what they're doing. They want you to understand what they're doing. And, you know, I had this vision when I came of the scientists being very protective of their information. And maybe they are and I'm just too naive to know it. But it seems like they're very willing [to share] and very appreciative of what the volunteers are doing. I have a friend who was Head of a museum in Haines, Alaska, and she came down here and was very impressed with the displays themselves as far as [being] user-friendly and people-friendly as far as you don't have to read. You know, there's material available that you can read. [But] you don't have to read everything to know what's in the exhibit. It's... she felt that it was very... Mote was arranged very friendly... in a very friendly way.

[22:55 - 23:35]
**MR. HARRIS**: Because of the volunteers and... Right. That's what I've been getting from the other volunteers that I've been interviewing is that the one thing, the one unique feature here is just the volume of volunteers, and how instrumental they are to Mote as an institution. And the training that they have; the extensive training that they have; the ongoing training and... you know, the lab guides, the lab tours, all that. You know, it's very collaborative. And it just can't... you know, that can't be rivaled in other aquariums because I don't see volunteers in other aquariums that I go to. You know, maybe one or two. But not... not the volume. So...

[23:35 - 23:36]
**MS. MARINE**: Not the volume. Yeah, exactly.

[23:36 - 23:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: And, I guess, bouncing off of that question. I mean, you mentioned that you don't have experience in other aquariums, so you might not... it might be the same answer. But what do you think other institutions or the scientific community at large could learn from Mote and from our institution?

[23:59 - 24:31]
**MS. MARINE**: Without knowing details on a lot of the research... I mean, it seems to me like some of the research going on is unique. You know, the Coral research in Summerland Key; the Benthic

research that [Dr.] Jim Culter is doing; the research that Jim's involved in on bay scallops. And I know nothing about it. I just know that it seems to be... unique.

[24:31 - 24:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Mhm. Okay... You know, ten years of experience it will probably be hard to come up with one example. But what would you say would be your fondest memory so far from your volunteering at Mote? Probably the dives?

[24:58 - 26:32]
**MS. MARINE**: Just the dives with Genie. I mean, Indonesia with Genie was just a phenomenal experience. And part of that is the people that she attracted. I... there wasn't a person on the boat that didn't have fantastic stories. Not just with Genie, but their own dive stories. You know, and I could go through names that would make no sense to you. But there are people... Anne and David Doubilet: photographers. Stan Waterman, another photographer who was great friends with Genie. Ruthie Petzold, another photographer. Maya - and I can't remember Maya's last name except it begins with an M. [Moltzer] - and she's a princess! She's a princess in Spain! [Cathy noted that she chose the word "princess" to describe Maya. Maya is not actually a National Princess of Spain.] And she came diving with Genie. And she's absolutely gorgeous - I mean, she's in her 70s now - and has gorgeous blonde hair. And she was always the subject of photographs because when she put on her royal blue dive-skin... she looked like a mermaid! And Maya had stories of diving with Genie back in the days. You know. In fact, we looked at Maya's equipment, and... none of us were willing to dive with anything that primitive. It was sort of not only beyond the computer but beyond...

[26:32 - 26:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yep, I gotcha.

[26:34 - 26:51]
**MS. MARINE**: So... just stories people tell of what they did on those early trips and the risks they took. I mean, things we don't even think about today because no one would do that!

[26:51 - 27:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Right. Yep, I was reading... I picked out Dr. Clark's book from the gift shop a couple weeks ago: *[The] Lady and the Sharks*. And I've been reading through that and...

[27:00 - 27:04]
**MS. MARINE**: Getting caught under the ledge in Warm Water Springs.

[27:04 - 27:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: The ledge. Warm Water Springs. Just the deep sea... or the, you know, the deep pressure dives. That's what I found to be most interesting in the book.

[27:13 - 27:19]
**MS. MARINE**: I mean, the fact that she lived to be 92 is just... unbelievable!

[27:19 - 27:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. With the “nitrogen narcosis” and...

[27:25 - 27:59]
**MS. MARINE**: Even the trip in Baja California. She was at that point still diving basically alone, and someone realized that she was going down. And she couldn’t work the BC [buoyancy compensator]. But she didn’t care. But the dive-master really did! And so he launched after her and brought her back up. But she was well beyond 130 feet. I mean, that was just nothing. She and John Pohle used to joke about feeling so good at 200 feet, they’d just like to stay there. And that’s because she was narked at that!

[27:59 - 28:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Well, yeah. That’s something I’ve not experienced but... if you’re good at it, more power to you, right? So you’ve been... I mean, you’ve been volunteering here for ten years, but you’ve been somewhat familiar... you’ve been familiar in acquaintance with Mote before that... as a visitor in the mid-80s. And so you’ve seen...

[28:23 - 28:26]
**MS. MARINE**: We used to play in the old shark tanks down at the end of Siesta Key.

[28:26 - 28:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. With the sharks in them?

[28:29 - 28:33]
**MS. MARINE**: No, no. They were empty at that point. Mote had moved them here, so...

[28:33 - 28:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. That’s good! So you’ve seen Mote grow as an institution. Practically since it... you know, four years after it had started. At least the aquarium side of things.

[28:44 - 28:45]
**MS. MARINE**: Here?

[28:45 - 28:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: Here. Here at... City Island. Did you ever...?

[28:50 - 28:53]
**MS. MARINE**: Four years before it actually started, I was born.

[28:53 - 29:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh. Okay. Okay. So did you ever expect it to get this large? Has Mote exceeded your expectations at all?

[29:05 - 29:20]
**MS. MARINE**: Yeah. I mean, I didn’t realize how well-known it was. To me it was just the Sarasota

tourist attraction until I started working here. I mean, the Volunteer Coordinator asked if I'd be interested in working with [Dr.] Genie Clark, and I said, "Who?"

[29:20 - 29:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[29:21 - 29:51]
**MS. MARINE**: I didn't know [Dr.] Genie Clark from a hole in the wall. And I'd already... you know... I was like, "Okay..." But yeah. Oh, far exceed my expectations as far as what is going on here, and what amazing things that the scientists are involved in. And the whole health of the oceans. I mean, I was somewhat aware. But until you get up here and you get involved with the science, you just have no idea. I mean, I couldn't even have told you that the ocean was 70 percent of the... You know, why do we call it Earth? It's water.

[29:51 - 30:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yeah. And without it we can't breathe. That sort of thing. When you move on from Mote many years from now, I'm sure, right? How would you describe your overall experience being here? Just... in a word or two. You know, fascinating or...?

[30:20 - 30:32]
**MS. MARINE**: Just amazing. You know, that's... I can't think of another... It seems like you either have to talk for an hour or you have to do one word. And the one word would be amazing.

**DWIGHT DAVIS WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JUNE 29, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. The words in italics are from a prepared paper that Mr. Davis read for his interview.]

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[0:00 - 0:10]
**MR. DAVIS**: Okay. I'm Dwight F. Davis, and this is my interview on June 29, 2015.

[0:10 - 0:11]
**MR. HARRIS**: June 29th. Yes.

[0:11 - 1:12]
**MR. DAVIS**: First question: "How did you become involved with Mote?" - *I spent most of my early years in Florida and discovered marine life from the beginning. As a small boy in Tampa I caught blue crabs in the bay and I watched the fish from the pier on Egmont Key. Later, when my family moved on to the east coast at Hollywood Beach, I became an avid fisherman and beachcomber and ate most of what I caught - grunts, groupers, triggerfish, squirrel fishes, conches, spiny lobsters, even tiny shrimps and other creatures living in the sargassum weed. When the war broke out, the U.S. Navy opened a school nearby for new ensigns. My father, in a patriotic gesture, allowed them and their commander to live in apartments he owned paying only their small rental allowance. I was invited, age 15 or 16, to attend classes in Survival Intelligence…* - That's how to live on a barren coast and get food and stay alive.

[1:12 - 1:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh really? Okay.

[1:13 - 1:32]
**MR. DAVIS**: *… In the Army in the Philippines I met many new kinds of marine creatures*. - In fact, I even pulled a net one day with some Filipinos - a very long net - and they gave me squid as my reward for helping them. And that was the first time in my life I ever ate squid. I took it back and cooked it up.

[1:32 - 1:33]
**MR. HARRIS**: How did that taste?

[1:33 - 1:36]
**MR. DAVIS**: It was very good. It was excellent. Yeah, I got to like it very much.

[1:33 - 1:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[1:36 - 1:45]
**MR. DAVIS**: *As for my education, [it] had no role in my interest in the sea*. - My education had nothing to do with it.

[1:45 - 1:46]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[1:46 - 2:24]
**MR. DAVIS**: *I was not a volunteer before coming to Mote in the fall of 1986. I had retired from 35 years in advertising and needed an interest that was not golf. One of my neighbors on Siesta Key suggested I look into becoming an aquarium guide and later on another neighbor, a friend of Genie Clark, gave me an introduction of this lovely lady who, I believe, boosted me onto the Volunteer Board as the V.P. and then later as President of the Volunteers.* - So that's... now if there's anything [that] occurs to you that I may have skipped or thought.

[2:24 - 2:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Sure. So you wound up coming to this area through family, through your father, and through the Navy? [Mr. Davis notes that Florida was "home" to him and he was in the Army, not the Navy]

[2:30 - 3:09]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well basically, you know, I came from Florida. I spent most of my youth in Florida and I wanted to come back. Now my wife was none too keen on this because she looked at Florida as a backwater. And she was certainly not going to go to Miami which was overcrowded or to any of the Pork Chop areas. So Sarasota was a compromise. We had visited here before, and I'd been fishing down here on vacation from time to time. So that's basically, yeah... And then I had a long-term interest in fish and fisheries. So that's basically the answer to question number one. Does that do it for you?

[3:09 - 3:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. That's excellent. That's very good. Now when did you initially come here? What year was that? As a volunteer at Mote.

[3:19 - 3:20]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh, as a volunteer. 1986.

[3:20 - 3:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: 1986. A few years... probably five years after...

[3:24 - 3:25]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yeah, in the Fall of '86.

[3:25 - 3:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: And you mentioned that, was it Dr. Clark, who you had met with initially...?

[3:31 - 3:51]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yes. She was actually a friend of Jane Wilcox who was a neighbor [of mine]. And Jane was a long-time resident of Sarasota and a delightful woman. Anyway, she sort of set me up with Genie, and Genie must have been helpful behind the scenes a little bit.

[3:51 - 3:59]
**MR. HARRIS:** Right. So when you started in '86, what position... or what did...?

[3:59 - 4:02]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh, I was a guide. I was just an aquarium guide.

[4:02 - 4:11]
**MR. HARRIS**: You were just a guide? Okay. So did you... that was strictly your workday routine or did you handle any of the animals or...?

[4:11 - 4:40]
**MR. DAVIS**: That's really pretty much all that was done. Yes, I got to... as an aquarium guide we got to meet the scientists. This is something that happened early on. We got to know the scientists, little by little, one by one. They talked to us. They were pretty open with us. It was a very small operation. You know, there were only about 80 some odd... people on staff, I think. And then just about the same number of volunteers. So we were few in number and we pretty much got to know each other.

[4:40 - 4:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So as a guide you worked with the public pretty frequently.

[4:48 - 5:08]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yes, yes. In those days we gave people individual tours because we didn't have that many visitors. And we would very frequently... As you know, later on as the crowds increased, we had to do what we call stations, where you simply handle people from a station and move around.

[5:08 - 5:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: And shift them over to another station. Yep.

[5:10 - 5:11]
**MR. DAVIS**: Exactly.

[5:11 - 5:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[5:12 - 5:18]
**MR. DAVIS**: Okay. Shall I get into another... [the] second question?

[5:18 - 5:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep.

[5:19 - 6:06]
**MR. DAVIS**: "What's your typical workday routine like?": *Every Tuesday* - and that was my day - *Tuesday in the morning I joined the volunteers working in the Fish and Invertebrate Aquarium. In the past I worked at various times in the Mote Marine Mammal Center, but my knowledge of this facility and its creatures [was] not as great as it was...* - I knew more about fish and invertebrates than I did about manatees and dolphins. - "[Do you] handle live animals in the Aquarium?" That was another question, I think. - *In the Aquarium Touch Tank and so-called ray tray that holds Cownose rays, and Atlantic sting ray, and other ray species.* - Basically we don't handle the animals, the aquarists do. But those are exceptions.

[6:06 - 6:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Now I remember in the early years though you could handle them? You could even take them out of the tank and... Was that a possibility?

[6:14 - 6:59]
***MR. DAVIS****:* That's not something we… That may have been so, but it's not something I recall during my… We didn't do that very much. - *All Mote guides work with the public and the secret to good guiding is engage, engage, engage. Of course, you have to first assess the visitor's level of interest and provide more facts to those who are receptive. Some visitors are just there for amusement and you just let them look at the exhibits and enjoy it. The public response has been strongly positive and we have been praised many times by visitors who feel we guides made their Mote experience memorable.* - And there's been a lot of that [praise] over the years.

[6:59 - 7:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[7:00 - 7:23]
**MR. DAVIS**: *Twice a year, Mote offers training for new volunteers, some 13 or more different courses of marine science. I have long taught the course on shark biology, an overview of what makes a shark a shark and how they live. Dr. Carl Luer follows my illustrated talk with a brilliant review of shark reproduction.*

[7:23 - 7:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[7:24 - 7:41]
**MR. DAVIS**: That's gone on for quite a long time. - *As past chairman of Mote's Speakers Bureau (I recently resigned the post but I am still a Speaker), I worked to educate the public and build support for Mote's mission. We address social and business organizations in a wide area in west central Florida.*

[7:41 - 7:42]
**MR. HARRIS:** Okay.

[7:42 - 8:04]
**MR. DAVIS**: *And I'm a Mote donor via a Charitable Remainder Unitrust, a gift that will be delivered after my death. Perhaps because of this, I have also been a ghost writer telling what motivated other donors. These articles were published in Mote periodicals.* - And that's pretty much that. Anything occur to you there?

[8:04 - 8:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Which articles were you referring to? The articles that have been published? Those have to deal with the shark...

[8:10 - 8:32]
**MR. DAVIS**: No. These articles... These were ghost-written articles. People that wanted their name in print or didn't mind. I would interview them, try to get a good headline out of it and a good twist, and tell their story. And the whole purpose of this of course when published was to motivate other donors.

[8:32 - 8:33]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yep.

[8:33 - 8:38]
**MR. DAVIS**: And I think that went on for awhile, and it may still be doing. But I haven't done any recently.

[8:38 - 8:53]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that brings us into question three. That was your "ongoing training or educational programs." So you're involved with Speakers Bureau. You were a past President.

[8:53 - 9:07]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yeah. And the Speakers Bureau is... an educational function. It has more than just that. It has the other dimension of helping fundraising.

[9:07 - 9:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Well, since we were talking about published articles and - this isn't on the protocol but I'm sure you'd be willing to talk about it anyways - I went out and spoke with Virginia Miller or... Virginia Sanders - sorry - a couple weeks ago and she talked to me about *The Marine Scene*, and you and her working together writing columns for the *Sarasota Observer* [The *Longboat Observer*, rather.] How did you become involved with that?

[9:39 - 10:57]
**MR. DAVIS**: Let me explain that. For about fourteen years, I wrote a monthly column for the *Longboat Observer*, and she illustrated. Virginia illustrated that. And they were very whimsical drawings and very nice and well-received. And it went along for a long time. And then during the big recession basically, it all collapsed because they by and large stopped publishing a lot of stuff. In any event... I don't know... I think it was Kumar that suggested that we could make... select some of these articles and make a book out of them. And I set about to do that with Virginia, selecting things that we

thought were right [or] suitable. And then I rewrote them. I shouldn't say rewrote. I edited them. I brought them up to date, and then I passed them through the scientists once again to be sure they were accurate [and] inclusive of the important facts. After which... Mote underwrote the publication. And that's the way it's been. And we had... I think we published 5,000. Which... and then they sold. They sold kind of slowly. But they sold. And I think they're sold out now... I'll have to check on that.

[10:57 - 11:08]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Virginia was telling me that, you know, the books were in the gift shop for the longest time but now they're not there anymore. They sold out. She's wanting to find another publisher.

[11:08 - 11:09]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well, I'm supposed to check that this morning.

[11:09 - 11:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, this morning? Okay.

[11:10 - 11:11]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yeah.

[11:11 - 11:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: I have a copy on loan to me. In my backpack. I'll have to show it to you. I mean, you know exactly what it is. But... she mentioned that there was several... I mean, there was a number of series or there was a number of books published. It wasn't just one. It was...?

[11:31 - 11:34]
**MR. DAVIS**: There were other books that Mote published, yes.

[11:34 - 11:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: For *The Marine Scene*? There was more than...?

[11:37 - 11:40]
**MR. DAVIS**: There were 5,000.

[11:40 - 11:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, 5000 copies. But there were different... volumes I guess you could say, right? Or was it just one?

[11:47 - 11:50]
**MR. DAVIS**: No. Just one. Just one. Yeah.

[11:50 - 11:53]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay. I had just... So it was just a selection of the best over the years?

[11:53 - 11:56]
**MR. DAVIS**: That's right. Well, suitable ones let's say.

[11:56 - 11:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. I must have misunderstood.

[11:59 - 12:02]
**MR. DAVIS**: And the other thing we wanted, obviously, we wanted to cover a lot of different areas.

[12:02 - 12:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right. Okay.

[Regarding *The Marine Scene*, Mr. Davis notes that Kumar Mahadevan authorized the printing of the 5,000 copies. Whether those copies came all at one time or in tranches, Mr. Davis could not recall. But he was assured that Serbin Printing in Sarasota had more copies which could be sent to the Gift Shop at Mote.]

[12:05 - 12:09]
**MR. DAVIS**: Now, let's see, is there anything else we need?

[12:09 - 12:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you've been here since 1986. That's going on twenty years... No. Thirty years, right?

[12:23 - 12:24]
**MR. DAVIS**: 29 this Fall.

[12:24 - 12:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: And... so you've seen Mote grow as an institution.

[12:28 - 13:03]
**MR. DAVIS**: Right. I'm very satisfied with it. I think it's been well-directed. Mr. Mote himself was very good although he had his likes and dislikes. He was sensible enough not to put a heavy hand on the scientists. So that... he didn't really interfere with them very much. And that was good guidance and I think it helped the growth. The point that I make to about... Let me... I think there's a number three in there... Let me read on on this thing.

[13:03 - 13:04]
**MR. HARRIS**: Certainly. Yep.

[13:04 - 13:46]
**MR. DAVIS**: *An important contribution volunteers make is not asked for in this particular interview but it should be, and that's the dollar value of volunteer labor. This has been an important, even a vital factor, in the growth of Mote Marine Laboratory. It's free labor and, as an example, it has allowed Mote to underbid other organizations competing for marine research projects. Sarasota has many retirees who are well to do, educated, and available for volunteer work. Our 1,600 volunteers are testimony to this advantage not enjoyed to the same extent elsewhere.*

[13:46 - 13:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[13:47 - 13:49]
**MR. DAVIS**: So I think that's an important addition.

[13:49 - 14:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: That makes sense. Right. Do you think... you mentioned Sarasota being a place for retirees. Do you think [an] institution like Mote could exist elsewhere in another city?

[14:05 - 14:17]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh, I think they could. But I don't think they'd have quite as much support. Both monetary and in terms of moral support and volunteers.

[14:17 - 14:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that's... I mean, the volume of volunteers here and the vital role that they play in making Mote not just a Lab, but an Aquarium and Marine Center open to the public. That's probably one of the things... or the main thing that is unique and different from other aquariums you'd say.

[14:38 - 14:40]
**MR. DAVIS**: I'd say so, yes. I think that's...

[14:40 - 14:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: Is there anything else about Mote that you'd say is unique and different?

[14:45 - 15:48]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well, I want to make a point here. - *Mote cannot compete with some aquariums in some respects -- bigger holding tanks, for example; spectacular exhibits and more exotic/and or harder to keep animals. It's a matter of money and available ground space at the facility* - But we are somewhat constrained for ground space. - *You think of the Monterey Aquarium, the Tampa Aquarium, the Shedd Aquarium and a few other big ones* - They are better financed than we are, and they can do better things or other things*.* - *But we equal or surpass most aquariums in the number of creatures displayed* - Because we have over 200 fish and invertebrates in the Aquarium - *and the excellent engagement of our volunteer guides with the public. We have another advantage not shared by other aquariums -- Mote Research. There are now 24 different projects across a broad spectrum of marine science and some are tied to our Aquarium exhibits.* - This is something that the guides can draw the public's attention to.

[15:48 - 15:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[15:49 - 16:12]
**MR. DAVIS**: *Other aquariums could learn from Mote the commitment of our volunteers that from the earliest days of the Aquarium on City Island was enhanced by an "open door policy."* - I mentioned this earlier. - *That is to say Mote scientists have always welcomed the volunteers and shared their knowledge freely with the. We are part of the Mote family.* - So this has been very important.

[16:12 - 16:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[16:13 - 16:47]
**MR. DAVIS**: For my fondest memory, which I think is your last question: *It's hard to say because I have enjoyed many wonderful experiences at Mote, social as well as scientific. Perhaps my friendships with fellow volunteers and staff: Past President and CEO Kumar Mahadevan, Mike Henry, Bob Hueter, Rich Pierce, Ernie Estevez, Lisa Kinsella and many others. When I move from Mote, it will be to assisted living if I'm not fully functional or to a long wooden box if I'm not functional at all. I intend to stay as long as possible because I like it.*

[16:47 - 17:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh boy! That's great. So that's a very good overview of your history here. When it comes to some of your fondest memories or... Well, how about since you're a guide... That's what you've been doing basically all these years in addition to your role on the Speakers Bureau and educating and writing columns...

[17:13 - 17:18]
**MR. DAVIS**: And I do the lab tours too. I didn't even mention that.

[17:18 - 17:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, you do the lab tours? Okay. Do you write some of the lab guides?

[17:21 - 17:22]
**MR. DAVIS**: No.

[17:22 - 17:35]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Those are separate roles... Okay. And you mentioned that over the years your experience with the public has been generally well-received.

[17:35 - 17:36]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yes.

[17:36 - 17:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Is there any unique episodes either dealing with the animals or the public? Or anything that's worth a story while we have a little bit of time?

[17:47 - 19:11]
**MR. DAVIS**: There's a couple of things. Long ago when they weren't so worried about insurance and liabilities from injury or that sort of thing, I was invited to go out on the boat, on a Mote boat, where they were catching Spanish Mackerel. And the study was whether [there was] mortality in catch-and-release. So, of course, you had to catch them. Then you had to fit them with a device that would ping. And we had hydrophones to pick up those pings, and we could track those fish after they were released. And we'd see how long... We'd track them for two hours, and the thinking was that if they survived two hours they probably survived. If they stopped moving, even though the pings might

continue, but if they were not moving anymore we presumed they were dead. So this is what we were doing. Well, it worked alright until I hooked into one that didn't come in right away. In fact, it was about 20-25 minutes to bring it in. And it was 33-pound Cobia, which... we weren't aiming for that! But we brought this thing aboard, and when we got in, Mote laid claim, not to the meat, but all the rest of the carcass. They were particularly interested in the head and the ear bones and that sort of thing, which they would study. But we...

[19:11 - 19:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Now, a Cobia for - Oh, sorry to cut you short - a Cobia for those who aren't knowledgeable, what is... that's just a larger fish? Or is that a...?

[19:20 - 20:01]
**MR. DAVIS**: No, it's a particular... it's a species of fish and [it's] pretty much in its own Family. It doesn't have many cousins the way others do. Some people think it's distantly related to the Jacks, but I'm not sure. Anyways, it's one of the best eating fish in the Gulf. It's absolutely delicious. And you can occasionally buy it here in Sarasota now. Particularly [at] the Saturday market. But in any event, this thing provided tremendous filets of meat which we all enjoyed. And some of it was two/two-and-a-half inches thick. It was just beautiful, and we put that up on the grill and it was just wonderful.

[20:01 - 20:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that was... You made kind of a festival out of that catch.

[20:06 - 20:07]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yeah, we certainly did.

[20:07 - 20:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: On the grounds here at Mote?

[20:09 - 20:14]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh, no. We didn't cook it. I took it home. Oh, everybody took a chunk of it.

[20:14 - 20:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Everybody took a chunk home and then...

[20:16 - 20:17]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh sure.

[20:17 - 20:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you mentioned you were good friends with Kumar Mahadevan.

[20:27 - 20:31]
**MR. DAVIS**: Yes. Well, I had a great admiration for him and I still do.

[20:31 - 20:35]
**MR. HARRIS**: He's still around so you still are good friends with Kumar.

[20:35 - 20:36]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh yes. Yes.

[20:36 - 20:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: And did you have much interaction with Dr. Clark or was it just through getting in through the door?

[20:44 - 20:46]
**MR. DAVIS**: Not a great deal. But some. Some. Yes.

[20:46 - 20:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: How would you describe Dr. Clark through your interactions with her?

[20:50 - 21:08]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well, I thought she was very, very open. And there was no pretense in the woman. She was just lovely. And, you know, when you have somebody who is an acknowledged expert and they're open and easy to deal with. It's a pleasure. It's a pleasure.

[21:08 - 21:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Certainly, yes. Well, we went through the questions pretty quick. Sometimes it varies...

[21:16 - 21:17]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well, you don't have to use every bit.

[21:17 - 21:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: That's true. But we do have nine minutes of running time if there's anything else you can think of that you'd like to offer.

[21:27 - 21:33]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well, I can't think of anything.

[21:33 - 21:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: You said you are a Florida native?

[21:34 - 22:47]
**MR. DAVIS**: Well, sort of. I was born in New York, and my family brought me to Florida - to Tampa - when I was three years old. My first memories [were] watching the little crabs along on Davis Island on the steps down to the water. Davis Island. I must have been three or four years old at that time. So we stayed in Tampa for awhile. And I did catch crabs in the Bay. One day I was out there and I was starting to fish when a colored man came along, and he had a gunny-sack and he said, "Son, do you have a nickel?" And I said, "I don't know." So I put my hand in my pocket and sure enough I had a nickel. He said, "You give me the nickel and I'll give you this bag of crabs." So I said, "Okay." And so I

grabbed the bag and I took my stuff and I threw the bag over my shoulder, and it sort of hung down where the lump of crabs [were]. It wasn't full but there were quite a few in there. [They] were down around my rear end, and as I walked home one of them bit me right in the behind! I couldn't get that thing loose.

[22:47 - 22:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh geez. Now did you have a nickel in your pocket just by pure chance, or did he slip one in there through smoke and mirrors?

[22:54 - 22:56]
**MR. DAVIS**: No, by poor pure chance.

[22:56 - 22:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[22:57 - 23:48]
**MR. DAVIS**: The other thing we used to do... We used to, on Sundays, we'd go out to Egmont Key with George Warner, who was the radio operator that called for the pilots. He put the pilots aboard incoming ships bEcause you couldn't enter Tampa Bay without a pilot. The ships might run aground. They had to follow certain channels so... We would go out there as his guests and spend the day in Egmont Key. And it's interesting. That Key, of course, was loaded with rattlesnakes. So we were... my sister and I were told not to walk through the woods back there. And the pier at Egmont Key was... you walk out on that pier [and] you could look down into clear water and see fish all the way to the bottom. There [was] enormous numbers of fish.

[23:48 - 24:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that makes me think of another item. Has the ecology of the bays and the environment changed at all in your...?

[24:01 - 24:03]
**MR. DAVIS**: It has been degraded over time.

[24:03 - 24:04]
**MR. HARRIS**: Has it been degraded?

[24:04 - 24:26]
**MR. DAVIS**: Oh sure. The fishing pressure is pretty heavy along this coast. Both commercial and sport. So this has resulted in restrictions on catches that have been implemented in recent years, and that is a result of heavy fishing.

[24:26 - 24:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[24:27 - 25:01]
**MR. DAVIS**: No question about it. I mean, we've had... historically I think the United States has had very poor management of fisheries. But they've improved recently. But one of the problems we still face is too many agencies of government are involved. It should be amalgamated [and] brought down to fewer agencies with more power and more science and less commercial interest. I'm not against the commercial thing because people make their money doing that. But it does have to be brought under control or we [will] destroy the reef source.

**TOMMY VAUGHAN-BIRCH WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JUNE 30, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. The transcript was edited by request of Ms. Vaughan-Birch]

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[0:00 - 0:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: Today is June 30th, 2015, and I'm in Mote Marine Library's... or Mote Marine Lab's Library and Archives talking with Tommy Vaughan-Birch.

[0:09 - 0:10]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Mhm.

[0:10 - 0:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep? And... Tommy, I was interested in how you became involved with Mote initially? You were saying [in] 1990 you came along?

[0:20 - 0:55]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: In 1990. Well, I've always been a volunteer. I was in Junior League where they teach you how to be trained volunteers, and most of my volunteering centered around my children. When they started to grow up, and I [could] volunteer and do what I wanted to do, I reverted back to a childhood dream of mine, which was to become an Ichthyologist. Because I had read Eugenie Clark's very first book [*Lady with a Spear*], and I was trying to think when that was - sometime in the 1950s - and I wanted to be an Ichthyologist, which most girls didn't want to be.

[0:55 - 0:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. And it was a hard profession to come by too at the time.

[0:58 - 1:20]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: So, as it ended up, I... when we came to Sarasota - because I grew up in Florida (always loved Sarasota best) - and we came here. When I found out the Lab that she had started was here and I could volunteer, that was just like the best thing! After I finished my Junior League career and went out to be a trained volunteer, this is where I wanted to volunteer. It was that or the Ringling Museum.

[1:20 - 1:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Ooh. Tough choice.

[1:22 - 1:24]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Not for me it wasn't.

[1:24 - 1:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, if you wanted to be an Ichthyologist then...

[1:26 - 1:27]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: This was...

[1:27 - 1:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: This was by far and above.

[1:29 - 1:30]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH:** Yes.

[1:30 - 1:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So did your family, educational or career background have anything to do with coming here?

[1:40 - 2:30]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, I grew up in Florida and we've always been very water-oriented. Much more so the coast and the west coast. I've just loved [it]. I've always been one who wanted to protect and conserve Florida. Because my family background... my grandfather had orange groves. We [did] a lot of development work, and people didn't know back in the '50s that if you just wrecked up all the mangroves and dig, dredge and fill, they didn't know what the consequences were. These unintended consequences. So to me it was important to come and work with an organization whose goal was conservation and preservation of our ocean resources. So it was just sort of ingrained in me throughout my life.

[2:30 - 2:33]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that was your father, you said...?

[2:33 - 2:48]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: My grandfather. My grandfather had groves. I mean, I'm like third-generation... They lived in Ohio. They had things in Ohio and here. But my dad grew up in Florida and my grandparents had property in Florida.

[2:48 - 2:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So yeah. That was just a natural translation from conservation through your family background with the grove and then your interest in...

[2:57 - 3:02]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: And we just... we realized that you can't continue to do some of the things that we didn't realize would be harmful.

[3:02 - 3:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay. So you came here [in] 1990 after retiring? Or...

[3:10 - 3:37]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, after I'd quit... I'm a Physical Fitness teacher. My original career was... I was a social worker. I was the Child Welfare Supervisor in Sarasota-Manatee County. And then when our little girl was two, I quit and I became a professional - what I call a "professional volunteer." Then in 1990, when I [got] to choose more of what I wanted to do, I became a volunteer here.

[3:37 - 3:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Excellent. And were you involved in other volunteer activities before coming here?

[3:41 - 4:14]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yes. I was in the Sarasota Junior League which is a women's organization that... its emphasis is volunteering. I work with the Girls Scouts; the Boy Scouts; [I'm] on PTA. And I still do other volunteer things as well. But this is my main thing. I'm President of Neighborhood Association. And I also am on the Advisory Council for the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. So I volunteer with that.

[4:14 - 4:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Very nice. Yeah. Lots of organizations, then.

[4:17 - 4:22]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yes. Yep. Yeah. And... but the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and Mote are very...

[4:22 - 4:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Very interlinked. Yeah.

[4:23 - 4:24]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Very interlinked.

[4:24 - 4:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, I bet they are. So you said you're in the Fish and Invertebrate Aquarium? And...

[4:34 - 4:54]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Mhm. Yeah. I'm a guide on Wednesday afternoon, and I've been a guide. That was my original thing and I still do that. But I've also worked with the Sea Turtle Research and

Conservation Program. I did that for 18 years. It's first thing Friday morning, at dawn, on the beach, looking for turtle crawls.

[4:54 - 4:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. Probably no different than... I've talked to some interns who are in the program. In the Sea Turtle Conservation.

[4:59 - 5:01]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: You mean the ones with the big, dark circles [under] their eyes [because] they don't sleep?

[5:01 - 5:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Those are the ones. The ones who get up [at] 4:30-5:00 in the morning if not earlier and...

[5:06 - 5:09]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Unless they're tagging, and then they're up all night long.

[5:09 - 5:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. So...

[5:10 - 5:29]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yeah. But I also work on the Speakers Bureau which is *really* fun. Because you have to really be well-versed in all the different research programs, and you get to meet and get to know the scientists which is just really, really neat to try to stay abreast of what we're doing here.

[5:29 - 5:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: I've found that most of the volunteers that I've been interviewing are on the Speakers Bureau and so... most of you are... Is there a process, I mean, can you just become a member of the Speakers Bureau by choice or is there...?

[5:43 - 6:08]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: It's more an invitational thing. You have to have sort of a background for it. When I started, you actually had to give a presentation in front of the Head of Research and the Executive Director's Secretary who was way harder to [impress]. Her questions were... Rich Pierce was head of Research at the time. He was very complimentary and everything, and Linda Franklin's going, "Well, if you got a question like this, how would you handle it?"

[6:08 - 6:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So...

[6:13 - 6:15]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Oh, and I do lab tours too.

[6:15 - 6:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. You do the lab tours. Great. Yep. I've heard some stories about the lab touring. But before we get to that. What is your... In the Fish and Invertebrate Aquarium, what is your typical workday like when you come in nowadays?

[6:30 - 7:00]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, nowadays we come in and have a briefing at 1:00pm. They tell us [about] anything going on; any changes in the Aquarium; anything we have to be currently aware of. Then you get to go out on the floor and interact with the general public. And my day is made if I can get someone to say, "Wow!" That's what I like to [do]. To make somebody really engage and feel and learn something.

[7:00 - 7:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. And a lot of them probably say "Wow!" involuntary already. So... But you mean by educating them. [Having them] saying "Wow!" by learning something new.

[7:10 - 7:17]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Right. By learning something new and to get them to ask more questions and to become involved and engaged.

[7:17 - 7:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: Which is, you'd say, I mean, that's probably the primary mission of being a docent. To "engage, engage, engage," as Dwight [Davis] put it yesterday.

[7:26 - 7:41]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, and... but you really have to observe. They want to have a good time, and you can't use the same approach on everybody. You have to make sure it's of interest of them. You'd be surprised how many people really don't care about Benthic worms.

[7:41 - 7:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right!

[7:44 - 7:46]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: They're fascinating!

[7:46 - 8:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: So I've been learning... ongoing here I've been learning about... you know, it's usually the aquarists who handle the live animals. Unless you're working... I know that today you rotate. You're on a rotation schedule in the Aquarium and you have different stations. So unless you're at the touch tank or the ray tray, those are the only places that you handle the live animals. So... do you work the touch tank or the ray tray or does that....?

[8:19 - 8:31]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Of course, of course. Yeah. Yeah, we rotate to everything. There's a hierarchy... depending on how many guides we have, we always have somebody at the touch tank. We always have somebody at the ray tray. Even if there's only two of us.

[8:31 - 8:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you do handle the live animals. You work with the public. What has been your general experience with the public?

[8:41 - 9:18]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: It's fascinating. You learn a lot from the public too. That's the other thing that's great. It's not just us giving information. They give us information. Some of the information they give us maybe is somewhat questionable, and [it's] always fun to see whether they're right or not. And... how to maybe correct very gently some of the misconceptions that people have about some of the animals in the marine environment itself. But that's... it's fun because it's always a learning experience. I love it when I learn new words.

[9:18 - 9:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh yeah.

[9:19 - 9:48]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I had worked here for almost twenty-two years before I found out there is a way that you can tell the difference between male and female spiny lobsters. We were at a reception for science teachers through the Education Department (I've worked at the Education Department too). And this is a marine biology teacher from, you know... and he didn't know that either. And he's, I mean, he's been lobster seasoned [fishing] and everything else. You know how do you do it?

[9:48 - 9:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: What's the primary difference?

[9:49 - 10:11]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Okay. On the back they [have], you know, five legs. On the back legs of the females, they've got little pincers. She uses those to kind of search. She carries her eggs on her stomach, and she uses those to kind of sort around and do whatever things. And the males, they're all pointy. They're just like the first four on the female. So if you can see her legs if she doesn't have them in the sand, you can tell.

[10:11 - 10:18]
**MR. HARRIS**: So they must be incredibly small, then. Because if people haven't noticed it for so long, then...

[10:18 - 10:19]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: They never put it together. Well...

[10:19 - 10:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: They never put it together. They never put two and two [together]

[10:21 - 10:33]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Oh, no. I mean, people... It's been known. It's just that a lot of people didn't know, and I had just found out two years ago. It wasn't that it was just discovered two years ago. It was my discovery two years ago. But a lot of people...

[10:33 - 10:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: It's something... It was one of those facts that the scientists knew about, but it wasn't translated to the volunteers. You know, it was just one of those...

[10:41 - 10:48]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yeah. Yeah. It was just one of those things. I mean, a lot of animals you can't turn upside down and tell boy or girl.

[10:48 - 11:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. So I've... this might be more of a hairy aspect, but, you know, sometimes you get people through the Aquarium who think they are instant experts on all things Floridian. And sometimes they get perhaps a little confrontational if you try and correct them. Have you experienced any hangups with the public?

[11:16 - 11:32]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, that's just a judgement call you have to make with the person. I mean, you're never going to get a hundred percent. You're never going to convince everybody that the world wasn't created 6,000 years ago. And when you're good with that, you just go with, "You may be right" and a nod and a smile and on to the next.

[11:32 - 11:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay. So, I mean, we talked about the lab guides and being on the Speakers Bureau and all that. So you do participate in ongoing training and educational programs quite frequently.

[11:48 - 13:01]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, I took the whole course again last year. But I've taught the Coastal Ecology and Marine Habitat section for years and years and years, and it's been fun. When I started teaching the Coastal Ecology and Marine Habitats, the technology that we had was an overhead projector... okay? So however long ago that was. And then, when we got into the digital age and everything, I do powerpoint now. I change it every time and the Volunteer office just - they know I'm never going to do the same thing. They say, "Okay, Tommy. Do you have your new outline?" But it changes and you want to have your emphasis. Because I just... I added a couple years ago a section on ocean acidification. But this wasn't really on the radar until about maybe 10 years ago. And now we

have our own ocean acidification Head scientist and program. So it changes, and that's the thing that I love about it; that it's always new and fresh for me because there's always new things happening.

[13:01 - 13:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Now, what is the... the ongoing training, those are the... Who orchestrates the sessions; the educational sessions?

[13:19 - 14:02]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, it's sort of evolved. But right now it's all coordinated by the Volunteer office under the auspices of Aly Busse who is the Head of the Education Department. Vice President, Head of Education. And so it's... she's the Head of that, and then volunteers come under that. And then... and so they have some of their staff. We have some staff teach. Dwight and I both do - he does sharks and I do coastal ecology - and I used to with another volunteer teach an interpretation class and that was fun, fun, fun! because we would have them do exercises.

[14:02 - 14:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. The reason I asked was [because] I was interested in where you get... I mean, does the information that you teach come straight from the scientists here or is there a curriculum or something that you...?

[14:15 - 14:48]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I had, well, I had... I've created my own presentation myself. I mean, what I talk about is like Oceanography. I mean, you could do several courses - college courses - on this. And what I do, I pick out the things that I think would be most interesting to people. And [I] just explain some things like the tides here are very different than they are in other places. Just to get an idea of how that works, the physical processes: winds, tides, [etc.]. Then when you leave my class, you know how to identify all the seagrasses that are local here - the important ones - and all the mangroves.

[14:48 - 14:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. Okay. So, I mean, you mostly get that information through...

[14:57 - 14:58]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: My own research.

[14:58 - 15:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Your own research. Yep. I mean, you get a little...

[15:00 - 15:18]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Nobody's... and it's always been checked by [the] scientists. It's not like I just do everything on my own. But... someone always looks at those.

[15:18 - 15:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: That was a question I hadn't asked yet. So I was just curious to see how those classes or training sessions were built.

[15:28 - 16:16]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I don't change it a whole lot. But as you go on... But a lot of them are taken up by the scientists now. Sea turtles are by scientists; mammals are by scientists. Dwight co-teaches with Robert Hueter on the sharks. And... I've pretty much been left on my own. But, I'm always asking people. I mean, when I first did it, I got a lot of help. Anybody I ever asked was just... they always, if they can, sit down [and] give you time. I did run it by a lot of things because I wanted to understand about it, so I would ask them about these different things. I would say that the scientists were my main resource to check things against, particularly if I didn't understand it.

[16:16 - 16:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you're timeline here, you've been here 25 years?

[16:21 - 16:23]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Almost. This Fall, 25 years.

[16:23 - 16:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: And then you started out doing Sea Turtle research and conservation?

[16:27 - 16:35]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: No, I started out as a guide in the Aquarium. And then a friend of mine did the Sea Turtle Program, so I added that on. I never...

[16:35 - 16:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you've been a guide all along, but then you took on...

[16:40 - 16:42]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yes. I've always been a guide.

[16:42 - 16:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: So do you still do sea turtle conservation sometimes?

[16:44 - 17:06]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I had to give it up last... I had a back problem. I can't walk that far anymore. Anyway... That was a very sad thing. Because I miss my... I mean, I had... that was my part of the beach on Friday mornings. You see the same people who walk and it was really hard to give it up.

[17:06 - 17:07]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, I bet. Yep.

[17:07 - 17:15]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: But I still do the sea turtle presentations like on Speakers Bureau. [If] somebody wants to hear about sea turtle research and everything, I'm one of the one's that does that.

[17:15 - 17:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So what do you think - since you've been here for going on 25 years, and have seen a lot of changes here, I'm sure - what do you think that Mote offers that is unique and different from other aquariums in the country? The general consensus is the immense volunteer program that we have.

[17:44 - 18:12]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: In other aquariums... Well, in other aquariums... people come here, and we're smaller than a lot of the ones that they have [experienced]. But because we have trained volunteers that all have an enthusiasm for this, I think many people leave coming back [home] with a better experience than just walking through and looking at fish and tanks. I've had people tell me that. That... I was up at the shark tank this... a few weeks ago, and this guy said, "I love aquariums. I've been to other ones." [But] he loved this place. He was just so enthused.

[18:12 - 18:18]
**MR. HARRIS**: Mostly because of the personal contact and the amicable nature that goes on here.

[18:18 - 19:09]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yes. And another thing about the volunteer program: Here again, I've done volunteering at a lot of different organizations. We have a longevity here because there is so much feeling of giving back and appreciation from the staff and the hierarchy around here, which you don't necessarily get [elsewhere]. And we all seem to get along really well. Now, my Wednesday afternoon shift is the best shift. We have more fun and... Now, everyone will tell you that their shift is best. However, ours is just a little better. We're going out to lunch tomorrow. We're all meeting for lunch at the Dry Dock [Waterfront Grill]. And [we're] very supportive of one another.

[19:09 - 19:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Goes to show you that the friendships you make here are long-term. So you'd say that, I mean, not only is it, you know, the education, but it's, you know, the volume. [The] volunteers we have here is different than elsewhere. If it weren't for the volunteers, then this would be just another aquarium where folks walked through and looked at, you know, canned systems and...

[19:39 - 19:43]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: And read the signs. Which most people don't anyway...

[19:43 - 19:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: And read the signs and looked at the fish and left... But here they learn. So that would

be the... those two items then would probably be the main things for answering that question about what is unique and different here.

[19:57 - 20:01]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: It's the volunteers. I mean, it really is.

[20:01 - 20:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. And it shows how instrumental the volunteers are. And bouncing off that question, what do you think other institutions or the scientific community at large could learn from Mote? It's kind of a loaded question but...

[20:16 - 20:35]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I don't think... I don't think I really could answer that. Because that's just a tough... I'm not that much schooled on what they need to know, and what they do and don't do. My perspective is all from here. So, I'm really not sure I could answer that.

[20:35 - 20:42]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. It's kind of not a fair question. A lot of the volunteers have... you know, without having the background it's hard to tell what...

[20:42 - 21:11]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: And we're so different and unique in that our funding source is really different than a lot of other places. So many other places are State, Federal, or private. Like the big aquarium out in California. Hewlett-Packard underwrites all that stuff. And it's... being a private institution, we're just really, really different. We're very unique in that.

[21:11 - 21:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Now the volunteer program is... mainly it's just funded through a donation that Mr. Mote set up himself, right?

[21:22 - 22:04]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, Mr. Mote... the foundation sponsors a Christmas party. And he... I knew Mr. Mote. He was just always really very approachable and really, really appreciated. When I started, our Christmas party, we used to have a potluck. And we would have it... this was when the aquarium was just really tiny. Then when Mr. Mote was getting on in years, he decided to fund a Christmas party catered by Michael's. It's very nice. Very nice recognition.

[22:04 - 22:08]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that brought in a lot of funds to keep the volunteer program going.

[22:08 - 22:10]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: That was very nice. I mean, he funded that.

[22:10 - 22:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So it's things like that that keep the volunteer program running. I'm sure there [are] other things. Maybe I'm not at liberty to ask about the financial structure of it...

[22:22 - 22:32]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well... Yeah. I really don't know. The final structure is for the volunteers. But when I started our Volunteer Coordinator was a volunteer.

[22:32 - 22:33]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[22:33 - 23:04]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: But the program was a lot smaller. We didn't have the Marine Mammal Center. We didn't have the Fruitville... the aquaculture park. That's all new. That's all [come] in. The... everything! It was just here. Then when we got the Summerland Key which, actually it was a different part on the Keys. A hurricane wiped that out, then we went to Summerland Key. And they used to call themselves when they started out... This was main Mote and they were re-Mote.

[23:04 - 23:11]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay. That was nice. Yeah. That's cute.

[23:11 - 23:13]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I've always liked that.

[23:13 - 23:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you mentioned meeting... you mentioned knowing Mr. Mote. And now, another one of the questions that... It's not on the protocol, but it's one that I've been asking volunteers. Or I've thought to ask volunteers with the passing of Dr. Clark this year, did you get a chance to meet Dr. Clark?

[23:37 - 24:32]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yes, I sat with her during an oceanic evening... and I can remember one of the first times I ever approached her. Somebody who had just walked in and wanted to know if she was here [and] if she would speak to him. So she had said, "Yeah, sure." And I brought [him] up to her office, and she was just so always very free with her time answering questions. That first book I read of hers in the '50s, the *Lady with a Spear*... which set me on my feeling for the marine environment and wanting to be an Ichthyologist. Well, I turned out to be a social worker, and I have a degree in Journalism. So you know how things like that go. But she's exactly how... she speaks just like she writes. Or spoke just like she wrote. And she was really an amazing [woman]...

[24:32 - 24:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: I bet. Yeah. I picked out her second book, *Lady and the Sharks*, and I'm just I'm finishing that up. So it's just a fantastic...

[24:39 - 24:48]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: But isn't that an easy read? I just... It just makes you feel like you're part of it. Yeah. I mean, she had a...

[24:48 - 25:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Like you're in Warm Water Springs two-hundred feet below. So it's... Yep, I definitely got that feeling. And... So you just had passing experiences with Dr. Clark then, mainly?

[25:05 - 25:06]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Right, yeah.

[25:06 - 25:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: So what is... you've been here [for] 25 years like we said, and in that timeframe I'm sure you've had a lot of unique experiences. A lot of fun experiences. And, you know, more... you could write a book on them, I'm sure, if you sat down...

[25:26 - 26:50]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: I wish I'd kept notes. When the kids were home and... they were still at home... I would come home and tell them what the most exciting thing was, or the funniest thing was, or what was going on in the Aquarium that day. We would all come and share. But on Wednesdays it was always that. Both of my children are fully qualified to work as a guide in the Aquarium. They all know everything. In fact, my oldest one... One time we were really short-staffed. I gave her a shirt, and she was home for Christmas holiday, so she did the touch tanks. We needed... we really needed help. But she... they're... My son got to go up on a manatee count on an airplane and [flew] around doing an aerial manatee count. Both kids had worked with - this was before you had to do a trained thing - they both worked with marine mammals that were in care. Jill was with a [dolphin]. Cody was with a dolphin. And I remember that when the dolphin started feeling better and the dolphin started being aggressive toward males - he wasn't aggressive toward females - but that was when Cody didn't get in the water with him. This was when we used the shallow end of the shark tank. And my husband is on the Advisory Council, and has been longer than I have been a volunteer at Mote. So we're all kind of involved at Mote.

[26:50 - 27:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. I didn't think of that being something that you could, an aerial count of [manatees]. I mean, can you really notice them from a top-down perspective?

[27:05 - 27:39]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Every year they do a count. When it gets cold - because they'll all go into warm areas - and then they do the counts then. But they do it every year, and this is a state thing. But this was... Jessica Koelsch used to work here and she was... she was coaching my son's rowing team. She knew Cody, and so she asked him if he wanted to go. So he got out of... I let him get out of school and

go count manatees. Which it's good if you don't get air-sick because they go in circles. A lot of people get air-sick.

[27:39 - 27:42]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you have a better vantage point on them from the skies, then?

[27:42 - 27:50]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, and they take photographs and then they count them. It's like seagrass surveys. They do the same thing for seagrasses.

[27:50 - 28:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: I just thought it might be difficult to spot them. Because I... just last week I saw my first wild manatees just off the bridge on the Ringling Parkway here coming out of [Ken Thompson Parkway]. Not the drawbridge but the other one when you're driving out to St. Armands Circle. I couldn't see them until, you know, I didn't see them until they...

[28:10 - 28:17]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Oh, the little bridge that... because they hang out in Pansey Bayou a lot. In fact, you can't go in there. Motorboats can't go in there because the manatees hang out in there.

[28:17 - 28:18]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Is that the bayou that's...

[28:18 - 28:26]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, if you go over the little humpback bridge from St. Armands Circle coming this way, on the left is Pansey. That's the Pansey Bayou, and they do hang out there a lot.

[28:26 - 28:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. They were on the Bay side and they swam into the bayou. Now what's the bayou called again?

[28:34 - 28:35]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Pansey. Like a little flower.

[28:35 - 28:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So, yeah. And I couldn't spot them until they came up to surface.

[28:40 - 28:46]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, I mean, how can you? But you can from the air if the water is clear.

[28:46 - 29:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So I don't think I even got to ask you. I was getting to the point where I was going to ask you what your fondest memory has been here. But with 25 years...

[29:00 - 29:59]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Oh gosh. It would just, I mean, it would just be off the top of my head. One time I got to go to... on a sea turtle [dive]. We went down, spent the night, went out, and they were trying to capture sea turtles. And I was out doing that. Another time I was out with Randy Wells, and I was escorting some people from the Chicago Zoological Society. Working with people in the Aquarium all the time is always fun. It was just... Okay, one of the most amazing experiences is where... I would never go to the beach at dawn. Who would do that? Unless you gotta go work for turtles. We [walked] out on Siesta Beach. A full moon [was] setting. The sun [was] not quite up over the horizon. There was nobody on the beach but my husband and myself. A shuttle went off from Cape Canaveral, and you could see the trail of it and hear. I mean, that was probably one of the most amazing experiences. It was like, I wouldn't have been there if not for this.

[29:59 - 30:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. It's hard to take in, isn't it?

[30:01 - 30:12]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Yeah, no. I mean it's just... it's just fun to be able to do the different things. Getting to know the scientists. And they're always so good about answering questions.

[30:12 - 30:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[30:13 - 30:21]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: And the aquarists. The aquarium staff. The aquarists. I don't know how we get such good people there either, but they're amazing.

[30:21 - 30:34]
**MR. HARRIS**: So when you move on from Mote, many years from now, I'm sure. How would you describe, I mean, it's a foregone conclusion, but how would you describe your overall experience?

[30:34 - 31:16]
**MS. VAUGHAN-BIRCH**: Well, I hope I'm on my deathbed when I leave because I don't plan on leaving. I mean, I think you can give back. I know some people do retire and I... But I just... I hope they can keep on doing the things that they do because it's a constant education program. And working with the Sarasota Bay Estuary program, we need to be able to keep educating people on why the marine environment is so important. That's... just being able to be a part of it has been extremely rewarding.

**B.J. PETERS WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JULY 2, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida.]

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[0:00 - 0:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Today is July 2nd. Thursday, July 2nd, 2015, and we're in Mote Marine Lab's Library, and I'm talking with B. J. Peters. Correct?

[0:10 - 0:11]
**MS. PETERS**: Right.

[0:11 - 0:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: And we were going to talk a little bit about the history of Mote, right?

[0:16 - 0:17]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes.

[0:17 - 0:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: And maybe a little bit about some of your experiences if you want to later. But primarily the history.

[0:22 - 0:23]
**MS. PETERS**: Okay.

[0:23 - 0:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: So did you want to go off of my protocol or off of something that you came up with?

[0:31 - 0:35]
**MR. PETERS**: Well, I can respond to the first questions.

[0:35 - 0:42]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Alright, I'll ask you the first one then. B.J., How did you become involved with Mote initially?

[0:42 - 2:28]
**MS. PETERS**: In the Fall of 1980, there were recruitment ads in the newspapers. This is when Mote opened their marine science building. It was not called an Aquarium at that time. There were about... there were three women who had served as volunteers who conducted tours. Very limited tours. They could see some of, not [all], of the Lab Building, which at that time had some indoor and some outdoor possibilities. And they were Molly Moffatt, Judy Silverman, and Fran [Wells], whose son

became world famous as the man who has been monitoring the dolphins in Sarasota Bay for years. At that time, they had a Dedication Day, and people who were interested could sign their names and talk to either Susan Holderman - who was in charge of the marine science program - or volunteer, Marge Gilbert, who was the person who really got all of the volunteers together. [She] had great ideas; kept a list of them; formed many different committees. And her title, then, she was really doing the job that Robert [Rogers] is doing today.

[2:28 - 2:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. The Volunteer Coordinator.

[2:29 - 2:36]
**MS. PETERS**: Volunteer Coordinator. [I] don't think she had quite that fancy a title. But we all knew that Marge was the one.

[2:36 - 2:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: But that's what she did.

[2:37 - 2:43]
**MS. PETERS**: She kept track of who came, who went, which days needed more people to help them.

[2:43 - 2:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Was she married to, who was it, John Gilbert? [Perry Gilbert was who I meant].

[2:49 - 2:52]
**MS. PETERS**: No, she was married to another Gilbert. Not...

[2:52 - 2:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Just curious. I know he was one of the main scientists...

[2:55 - 2:56]
**MS. PETERS**: And he also was a volunteer here.

[2:56 - 2:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay.

[2:57 - 3:01]
**MS. PETERS**: I'll have to think of his first name. We had a nickname, but...

[3:01 - 3:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you came here initially as a volunteer and... after retiring? Or was this...?

[3:10 - 3:20]
**MS. PETERS**: Oh yes. It was 1980. My husband and I retired two years before that. And we moved down to Longboat, and it seemed like a natural [transition].

[3:20 - 3:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So coming here, did your educational or career background have anything to do with volunteering at a Marine Science Lab?

[3:32 - 3:39]
**MS. PETERS**: Not really. I taught in the elementary schools ending up doing 25 years altogether. 12 years in Kindergarten.

[3:39 - 3:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[3:40 - 4:24]
**MS. PETERS**: Okay? It was interesting just to see the building. [Of] course, remember now, we're talking about the very small space that surrounds where the large display case is. And that's all there was. Alright, so that's about what? A quarter of what's available now for viewing. If that much. And the displays were rather interesting. They, of course, they had glass aquariums. You could see different things and they had labels. They weren't quite finished with the pictures and the labels. But they had them. They were trying to have trees indoors also... which attracted spiders, which was very interesting.

[4:24 - 4:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: Those were the mangrove tanks, was it? They tried to grow mangroves inside. And I hear that didn't work real well from Dave Bowman. He said that the plumbing was kind of a problem in the beginning.

[4:38 - 4:39]
**MS. PETERS**: Right, right.

[4:39 - 4:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[4:40 - 5:24]
**MS. PETERS**: Well there were many things, naturally. Any new startup that was trying to do what this was trying to do would have many different times of frustrations. Without a doubt. So we started out. There were three of us per shift, per day. [That] was the goal of Marge Gilbert. And she pretty much got that. When we first opened up, no one knew very much about Mote Marine. In fact, the realtor who showed us around when we were looking for a house, pointed down the road and said, "Someplace down there, they're doing something with fish." And that's sort of how it was known.

[5:24 - 5:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: So no one knew about Mote? It was just a startup that, I mean...

[5:31 - 5:45]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, that... it's probably not true. But unless they had followed the progress of how it

moved from one place to another before it got here, and the stories about Eugenie Clark, the majority of people, including the real estate agent...

[5:45 - 5:53]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Well, folks in the area probably had heard about Mote but they thought it was still in Cape Haze, right? Or something like that. Or Placida or wherever it was.

[5:53 - 5:54]
**MS. PETERS**: Right. Exactly.

[5:54 - 5:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[5:56 - 6:08]
**MS. PETERS**: So, let's go on with this... Yes, I've done other volunteer activities but not related to the sea.

[6:08 - 6:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And when you came here what was your initial role as a volunteer?

[6:15 - 6:19]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, they didn't call us docents then. They just called us...

[6:19 - 6:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Guides?

[6:20 - 6:21]
**MS. PETERS**: Guides.

[6:21 - 6:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you would just bring in small groups. And those were in the early days, so you didn't have as large [of a] volume of public as you do now.

[6:31 - 7:03]
**MS. PETERS**: That's true. And in the beginning days, the three of us sitting there would fight to see who got the next person who walked in the door. Now, did we all know a lot about this? No, we didn't. We were given some handouts, and Sue Holderman began conducting some classes. And gradually we all became involved. Myself, I knew what I had seen in [a] lot of snorkeling activities. Otherwise, I only knew what I... the fish I saw on the plate.

[7:03 - 7:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So you worked with the public. Did you do any handling of the live animals back then?

[7:13 - 7:25]
**MS. PETERS**: No, I did not handle live animals. But I did become one of those that they sent out to talk to various groups. Schools... you name it.

[7:25 - 7:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay. So you were on... was that the Speakers Bureau involvement then?

[7:29 - 7:31]
**MS. PETERS**: What evolved to become the Speakers Bureau.

[7:31 - 7:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: What evolved? Okay. Yep.

[7:32 - 8:03]
**MS. PETERS**: And for that we volunteers created a program of slides - now we're talking about 1980, okay? - that gave history background and introduced a few of the important faces that people should recognize. And a small view of what the marine aquarium... the Marine Science Building looked like. It became much more popular.

[8:03 - 8:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that was basically an introduction for incoming volunteers. An orientation? It was meant to be an orientation to get them knowledgeable of the main players and the grounds.

[8:17 - 8:36]
**MS. PETERS**: Right. We got taken on tours to see what the grounds looked like. And fortunately Sue began conducting the classes, Sue Holderman. And then she would invite various research staff members to make presentations.

[8:36 - 8:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[8:37 - 9:19]
**MS. PETERS**: As the aquarium... as the Marine Science Center grew and the attendance grew, it became overwhelming for one person to do that. So because of my background she asked me would I help establish the classes. So mainly I would be the Liaison and go and talk to someone [in] research, [and ask], "Would you talk to new members about this period of time?" And then I would print up material that explained what the class was going to be about. And that's sort of what I did for the rest of my working life here. Okay?

[9:19 - 9:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: So the Speakers Bureau was pretty much... it was organized by the volunteers. But through Susan Holderman, she would get sort of the instructional materials from the scientists. And that would give you a background on what to teach, right?

[9:38 - 9:39]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes.

[9:39 - 9:53]
**MR. HARRIS**: And at that point... I mean, was it kind of like a curriculum or something that the scientists... Did you have to go by a certain... by the book or something with teaching it? Or did they give you something to research?

[9:53 - 11:10]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, because they're rather busy people, they gave us outlines. And then when they came to talk, they would fill in details. And so whatever information was given there, we would collect and add it to our list of "This is information you should have." Now, there was a place for us to gather - not as big as what we have now - and we started keeping records of everything that we heard, and everything that we produced. Because it became evident, around 1983 I would think, that we needed a specific Volunteer Education Committee to make sure that all new people knew where the information was, got the information, [etc.]. Our Volunteer Library was established. And we began a few years later to make copies of various presentations that we could keep and could be used in that volunteer room. That was all part of the Committee's job. We also gave vocabulary lessons.

[11:10 - 11:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yep. There's a lot of that in marine science.

[11:14 - 11:28]
**MS. PETERS**: Because in the process, many people made themselves familiar with the animal and could read what it's name was and mispronounce it. So we made sure we all said the same thing. That was very important.

[11:28 - 11:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: Did you go by the common name or the scientific name?

[11:31 - 11:43]
**MS. PETERS**: Mainly the common name. It would be printed with the scientific name. And some people were very good at remembering that and others were not.

[11:43 - 11:46]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Well, the common name is much easier to remember and pronounce.

[11:46 - 11:51]
**MS. PETERS**: Of course. And those who were visiting would keep the common name in mind.

[11:51 - 11:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So...

[11:55 - 12:37]
**MS. PETERS**: Now in doing this process, we were overviewed by some of the staff members who would walk around while we were doing... having people into our small area to talk about all the

things that were there, to make sure we weren't making too many mistakes. And they would report that to Sue, and then we would work on specific items, either mispronunciation or misinformation. That probably is still in existence today because it's very difficult to grasp all of the information and keep it in mind.

[12:37 - 12:53]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay. That's the first time I've - I mean, I think you're the seventh volunteer I've spoken to on record, and I think that's the first time I've heard of that - But, yeah, it would be interesting to see if that... it probably is still in existence then.

[12:53 - 12:57]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, let's see. Ernie has retired from here. He was one who did it.

[12:57 - 12:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Ernie Estevez?

[12:58 - 13:11]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes. I think maybe Sue would tell me who was coming through. And the idea was not to get anybody all upset and excited. And I think it worked that way.

[13:11 - 13:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you knew when to expect it?

[13:13 - 13:25]
**MS. PETERS**: Yeah, but Rich [Pierce] would come through or Kumar [Mahadevan] would come through. He wasn't Director at that time. And this was not on a weekly basis. It was as they had time to do this.

[13:25 - 13:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. It was kind of like a fire drill, then, in some ways.

[13:32 - 13:51]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, only a few of us knew who was coming. So... and we didn't really tell them, the rest [of the volunteers]. Well, the popularity certainly necessitated that we needed this program. And we needed volunteers who were as up-to-date as possible.

[13:51 - 13:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[13:52 - 14:12]
**MS. PETERS**: So long about the middle of maybe 1985, we came up with the Handbook, which gave very basic information. And perhaps you have seen it so you know what I'm talking about. If not, there are copies in Robert's office.

[14:12 - 14:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. I'll have to take... I've seen the cover [but] I'll have to peruse it.

[14:15 - 14:50]
**MS. PETERS**: And then we expanded and it grew and it grew. The number of people coming in... Of course visitors, but also the number of volunteers we had. And life became a little easier than in terms of we could have somebody come and cover. But it became necessary to have more specific information than the Handbook covered. The Handbook was the routines of the day; some background, [etc.]. You can see what that's like. So then...

[14:50 - 14:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: Sure. And that hasn't changed much over the years? The Handbook?

[14:54 - 15:13]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, it's been updated. Which it would have to be because we keep adding buildings and we keep adding research work and we keep adding displays. Yes, so I think maybe... I'm not sure now, but I think it was done two years ago. Maybe [20]14, I'm not sure...

[15:13 - 15:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[15:14 - 16:22]
**MS. PETERS**: But anyway, before the end of the 1990s, it became very obvious that what we really needed was a big, thick book. So I became the Chair of the Committee to develop this. It is called the *Volunteer Reference Book*, and it's got hundreds of pages. And I asked volunteers to help prepare it. And so they were assigned specific topics, and they went and researched it. They brought it back to the Committee. The Committee talked about it. Then they would take that to the specific scientist who would then review page-by-page what they had written. Now that's a big, thick book. And it took us about three and a half years to get it published. So it was 2001. It has been updated slightly only once since then and most of us who worked on that have retired. For the second time in our lives.

[16:22 - 16:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: It was too much for you. After three years of that, you had to retire again.

[16:25 - 16:28]
**MS. PETERS**: Right.

[16:28 - 16:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[16:29 - 17:47]
**MS. PETERS**: The interaction with the staff has always been fantastic. If we needed it, it would take them time to do it, but they did it. And they were always friendly, and someone like myself who's only here infrequently, they still remember [me], and we talk [and] I get a catch-up on what's been happening. And the camaraderie of the volunteers was very obvious. And that was because the

people were really interested in what they had come to do. And they were being fed information regularly. The minute anything was new, the committee made sure that we had a worksheet out that explained what that was all about. And that was available to each volunteer, either through their their day chairperson or putting it in pockets, which were on the wall of the volunteer conference room. So that was a real blessing. And this is all before everybody got involved in the update way of communicating.

[17:47 - 17:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: The email, and email conversation. And...

[17:50 - 17:57]
**MS. PETERS**: And... Yeah, the hand-held device that... Or the laptop device.

[17:57 - 18:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. Personal computers and anything on the go.

[18:00 - 18:28]
**MS. PETERS**: So that you knew that if something brand new had come, and you were coming in on a regular - let's say a Wednesday basis - if there was something new there, the information would be there. And the aquarists were a big help because they had a chalkboard on which they would write, "so-and-so is here/so-and-so is gone." Okay? So we'd know when we went to a particular place [in the aquarium], "Oh that one's no longer here. Okay."

[18:28 - 18:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And that's how you really kept records throughout the day, and then you maybe copied that [information]. Or that wasn't... that, you know, workflow and figuring out who was there and who wasn't there anymore probably wasn't too necessary to keep long term as far as record-keeping, but...

[18:50 - 19:32]
**MS. PETERS**: No, that was done... Someone was hired to be with the Volunteer Coordinator - I forgot what [the] title is - and kept records. Who... we had attendance sheets, right? And they were kept. They knew who was in and out [and] not going to be around for this, that, and the next time. And it was really a very responsive group of people who worked here. In the years that I was very active, I was very pleased with that. And with the fact that they got the information hot off the press. Which is very hard to do even though we have all these electronic devices.

[19:32 - 19:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, yeah, back in the '90s, having it as readily available as it sounds like they did. Sounds like they were on top of things.

[19:43 - 20:04]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes, they were. I'm talking about the volunteers and... mainly. Because we would have new people who would volunteer to do something; to do this; make a record of that. More and more

“explorers” as I would call them, [meant] to find out what’s going on behind the scenes so that we knew what was going on.

[20:04 - 20:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Journeymen, right?

[20:05 - 20:11]
**MS. PETERS**: Right. And the working relationship was good.

[20:11 - 20:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So in addition... Well, you probably do participate in ongoing training or educational programs. Or you did while you were here. Whether that was the...

[20:28 - 20:52]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, we had all these classes that we had established. And we tried using as many scientists as we could. And then recruiting some of the volunteers - who were exceptionally good at that kind of thing - to give the classes. So I think we’re up to fourteen classes each session, which is an overwhelming number.

[20:52 - 20:53]
**MR. HARRIS**: That sounds about right. Yeah.

[20:53 - 21:02]
**MR. PETERS**: Yeah. Basically, it was between 10 and 12 for years. Of course when...

[21:02 - 21:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: And how often are those classes held? Or how often were they?

[21:05 - 21:06]
**MS. PETERS**: Twice a year.

[21:06 - 21:07]
**MR. HARRIS**: Twice a year.

[21:07 - 21:11]
**MS. PETERS**: Let’s say Spring and Fall. [But] those are not necessarily the dates.

[21:11 - 21:19]
**MR. HARRIS**: So those would be in the form of kind of a larger symposium that was probably held in a theatre or the auditorium?

[21:19 - 21:20]
**MS. PETERS**: Upstairs.

[21:20 - 21:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, upstairs in the...?

[21:21 - 21:22]
**MS. PETERS**: In the larger of the meeting rooms.

[21:22 - 21:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: In the Buchanan room probably?

[21:24 - 21:40]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes, right. And there are still, I think, three or four volunteers who do it. And then there are staff members who give the classes. But you can get a copy of the latest classes from Robert's office also.

[21:40 - 21:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Was the auditorium here... when did that come in?

[21:45 - 21:49]
**MS. PETERS**: I'm not good on those kind of dates.

[21:49 - 21:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay.

[21:50 - 22:29]
**MS. PETERS**: Let's see... Well, when we made the connection. You see, the Research Building and the Marine Science Aquarium [were] separate buildings. And this is the interim that connected the two of them. We're sitting in it. Okay. So then they had the ability when they put in above-level... First thing: the Marine Science Building was a one-story job. So then they got the first big meeting room. That's above... well, it's above the Lobby and above the Aquarium, as we call it now. And then they put in...

[22:29 - 22:33]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. The first big meeting room above the Aquarium over that way? [Mr. Harris points towards the Administrative wing.]

[22:33 - 22:34]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes, yes.

[22:34 - 22:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. I don't think I've seen that yet.

[22:36 - 22:44]
**MS. PETERS**: Oh, well... You just go out this door, walk aways, [and] hang a right before you get to the stairs. It's three doorways down.

[22:44 - 22:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Okay. So I can't miss it.

[22:47 - 22:50]
**MS. PETERS**: Right, yeah.

[22:50 - 23:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Alright. But the Auditorium wasn't here in the beginning, right?. That was added later, probably after the change... after the connection between these two [buildings]?

[23:01 - 24:03]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, then they expanded the research areas. They added on that whole huge Auditorium. That section is all new, and the offices that are close to it. And that, of course, offered another opportunity both for what they... the Monday Night at Mote classes, and for classes for kids coming, school groups coming through, and for the adults who were here as volunteers. And I do amusingly recall that when they first installed ways that we could maneuver or respond by touching little screens. We had a bunch of volunteers in there. Maybe they were 12 or 15 of us, and they had students in there [as well]: kids. And the kids were "[enthusiastically using the touchscreens]," and the rest of us were [using] one finger [trying their best to figure it out]. It was amusing to see.

[24:03 - 24:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. The difference between [the] generational gap there with how to interact with [technology].

[24:09 - 24:16]
**MS. PETERS**: You're right. I'm sure we all do better at it now because we're forced to. But to keep up with the kids...

[24:16 - 24:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: So those... touchscreens are in the Aquarium?

[24:23 - 24:30]
**MS. PETERS**: No, the touchscreens [were] in the big Auditorium. They're not there any longer.

[24:30 - 24:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, in the Auditorium? Okay. Oh, they were removed? Okay, I was trying to make the... I've been into the Auditorium but I, yeah, I [do not] remember seeing...

[24:37 - 24:38]
**MS. PETERS**: Yeah, but they were there for awhile.

[24:38 - 24:39]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Interesting.

[24:39 - 25:01]
**MS. PETERS**: Now, in the open area near the shark displays, there was the one room which is still in existence that showed [a] constant photo... constant movie[s] about sharks. That's no longer there. That was a big draw. People liked that.

[25:01 - 25:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Why was... Do you know why it had to be removed? Just...

[25:06 - 25:17]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, I think what they originally sort of... [it] got old. And I don't know.

[25:17 - 25:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. It was a taped system probably? The tape...

[25:20 - 25:22]
**MS. PETERS**: Yeah, that's right.

[25:22 - 25:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So the tape ran out and...

[25:23 - 25:32]
**MS. PETERS**: You can ask Virginia [Miller]. She will know exactly. She's very good at dates, and pieces of information.

[25:32 - 25:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So we're still going off of my protocol, right? Or is there anything else you wanted to add from yours?

[25:41 - 25:46]
**MS. PETERS**: No, I think I...

[25:46 - 25:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Then, if not, then how about question #4. What do you think Mote offers that is unique and different from other aquariums in the country?

[25:56 - 27:15]
**MS. PETERS**: Well-trained volunteers. And you can hear that from many different sources. One of them - a lot of us have done "Aquariums across the US" [trips] - and we've met some that are really spiffy and up-to-date and their docents are very good. And we've met some that don't match what's here. Now, unfortunately, what we need here is oversight of each group that does the volunteering. Because you never know when somebody's going to go off the page to something that is not necessarily true. But that has to happen. And the previous Volunteer Coordinator, "Andie" [Andrea] Davis, would go to meetings regularly with other people who were the Coordinators of many places like the Van Wezel and Selby Gardens, and they would all say, "You are so lucky! You have volunteers who do this and do that and do the next thing." So that's how we know that it was working.

[27:15 - 27:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So... one of the big things here is that there's a draw for... You know, Mote has always been attractive to volunteers. Not so much other institutions. [They] can't seem to reel them in? I mean, what's the main difference? Because there's...

[27:32 - 28:02]
**MS. PETERS**: Well... some of it is whoever's in charge at the moment. I mean, my experience has shown that some years the "overseer" worked well with volunteers, and then it changed, and it didn't

work well. A lot of disgruntled volunteers. And then some have restrictions. For instance, you cannot volunteer at Ringling Museum unless you are a year-round resident.

[28:02 - 28:03]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[28:03 - 28:10]
**MS. PETERS**: Yeah. So that's a restriction. We have volunteers who are here for 4-6 months, and we know that they're going to leave.

[28:10 - 28:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Right. And they... Ringling probably, they need... they probably have a certain interview process. You need certain qualifications to be a museum docent?

[28:21 - 28:29]
**MS. PETERS**: You don't have to recognize what the paintings are because they'll give you a course and do that. But you can't be there unless you are here 6 months of the year.

[28:29 - 28:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So the main difference here is that...

[28:32 - 28:37]
**MS. PETERS**: Available 12 months. But they do let you take time off for a vacation.

[28:37 - 29:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So Mote is just more flexible then in training volunteers on the spot. You know, there's not as many requirements for volunteers to come in here and start working. As long as you have the interest and show the initiative, you can be a volunteer at Mote. So...

[29:00 - 29:38]
**MS. PETERS**: Yes. Right. Now, there is a self-test that they do after they have gotten a hold of the Handbook for awhile. And they're supposed to take the test and either give it back to their... the person who is their mentor, or hand it in to the Volunteer Coordinator so that we have some understanding of where they're at. But, of course, what you really need is somebody on your shift who listens to you and say, "Ooh! Just a minute now." Not in public, of course. That's one of the thing's that's in the Handbook. You never embarrass a fellow [volunteer].

[29:38 - 30:05]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, yes. Yep. That's a good thing to do. To *not* embarrass that is. So... we have about... we should be wrapping it up in a few minutes here. We're past a half an hour. What do you think - real quick - what do you think other institutions or the scientific community could learn from Mote?

[30:05 - 30:23]
**MS. PETERS**: Well, the training program. But I don't know what others do because I haven't

volunteered elsewhere out of here. So I wouldn't really know that. But I think that if we can keep our training program up, we'll still have the best one.

[30:23 - 30:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yeah, I'm finding that's... that particularly question is a little bit more difficult for volunteers who haven't had a background in marine science or in aquarium work. So that one might not have been very fair but... And in your 25 years here, right?

[30:44 - 30:48]
**MS. PETERS**: No, thirty-three or four. I can't remember.

[30:48 - 30:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Well, you've...

[30:50 - 31:01]
**MS. PETERS**: Honestly, the last pin I got was 2001. So, you go five... no, I got... it doesn't matter. I started in 1980.

[31:01 - 31:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, in any case, you've seen Mote develop here from the very beginning. And has Mote exceeded your expectations at all in how it's developed over the years? Did you ever think it would...

[31:15 - 31:24]
**MS. PETERS**: For the most part, yes. In some ways there's less communication between various parts.

[31:24 - 31:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Which probably is something that, you know, inevitably will happen as an institution grows. But, you know, [they are] problems that have to be fixed as an institution grows.

[31:37 - 32:42]
**MS. PETERS**: Right. Well, most recently... I worked with... I was invited to join a committee to help review and set up a program for training new staff members. Because a lot of staff members wouldn't know where this, that, and the next thing was. Or the history of [Mote] and where you would find this, that, or the next thing. That was a very interesting procedure. I think it's being used by staff, okay? It was developed by a committee of staff *and* volunteers. And then we were... We have had [the] opportunity to develop a review of training our own volunteers. And we're... Robert hasn't had many months here yet, and it's one of the things that has to be looked over carefully because it hasn't occurred.

[32:42 - 32:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay, yep. Well, we'll get there, right? Hopefully.

[32:47 - 32:52]
**MS. PETERS**: Hopefully we'll get there. Still the camaraderie is here.

**VIRGINIA MILLER WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JULY 9, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. The interview was edited by request of Ms. Miller.]

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[0:00 - 0:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Today is July 9th - right? - 2015, and we're in Mote Marine Lab's Library and Archives, and I'm talking with Virginia Miller. A volunteer of twenty-five [years]?

[0:15 - 0:16]
**MS. MILLER**: No. Almost nineteen.

[0:16 - 0:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: Nineteen years. Okay. And we were going to discuss the history of the Volunteer organization since you've come here in the... Let's see, if you've been here [for] nineteen years that would be, what, 1990 thereabout?

[0:36 - 0:37]
**MS. MILLER**: '96.

[0:37 - 0:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: Or '96? Okay. So from '96 on, how was... how did the Volunteer organization function? And how did you become involved initially getting in as a volunteer?

[0:54 - 1:22]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, I initially got involved as a volunteer at Mote through a community outreach program. They had a Community Appreciation Day in the Aquarium. And for $2 you could visit the Aquarium, and I liked what I saw, and at that point I became a member and signed up to be a volunteer. And within a week I was assigned a mentor and was on the floor following an interview with the Volunteer Coordinator.

[1:22 - 1:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And that was Andrea Davis then?

[1:25 - 1:37]
**MS. MILLER**: Andrea Davis was the Volunteer Coordinator at that point. My parents had lived in the area for many years. I enjoyed the ocean, and I was hoping to learn more about the sea and the environment around here.

[1:37 - 1:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[1:38 - 2:50]
**MS. MILLER**: At the time that I interviewed, the process was that I would be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator to find out about my educational and volunteer experience. And she would screen to determine whether she thought I was an appropriate fit for the organization. Understand that they were selective enough that only about half of the applicants were really considered appropriate for volunteer placement here. And those that weren't were referred to other organizations. The volunteer process... or the training process at that point was... [Andrea] established what shift I was needed on. But it turned out that the shift that had a mentor was different than the one that I would be assigned to. Because my assigned shift was so short they didn't have a mentor available. So I trained on Friday afternoon with a mentor who was like a personal tutor whose goal was to make me familiar with the animals in the Aquarium and the research that we were doing. The goal was that I should be able to explain to the public what was there, and at the same time not give misinformation.

[2:50 - 2:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Now the mentor was another... it wasn't another volunteer? It was actually...?

[2:54 - 3:02]
**MS. MILLER**: The mentor was another volunteer who was experienced and who had been screened so that... I mean, it's an honor to be a mentor.

[3:02 - 3:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And we had talked about the process of becoming a volunteer. That you had to do an entrance exam by referring to the Volunteer Reference Handbook?

[3:15 - 3:43]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, once the training with the mentor had been completed, and I had done a walkthrough with the mentor in the Aquarium, at that point I was provided with a written exam that was an open book exam. And the goal was to show me the weaknesses that I might have so that I could read up on it more thoroughly, and also to be sure that I knew how to use the Reference Manual appropriately.

[3:43 - 3:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[3:44 - 4:29]
**MS. MILLER**: Subsequently, I became in charge of guide training, and one of the beauties of Mote at that point was the fact that it was a very personal organization where the Volunteer Coordinator and the guide training person collaborated on where this would be... who would be the best mentor for a potential volunteer. My goal, then, was to come in and do a one-on-one orientation of the volunteer; familiarizing them with the volunteer lounge; the time-cards, etc. Introduce them to the Day Chair on their shift; introduce them to their mentor; and then turn them over to their mentor.

[4:29 - 4:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[4:30 - 4:52]
**MS. MILLER**: As a guide training person, then, once the person had... the trainee had completed their training, I would provide them with the open book test at the end and they would be assigned. Again, it was a very personal kind of experience, and it was a very family kind of... You felt like you were included.

[4:52 - 4:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. And now they're moving to a group sort of interview process?

[4:58 - 5:11]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, I don't know what's going to happen with the process. But for the last seven or eight years, there's been very little carry-over of the training process that was in place at the time that I was Guide Training Coordinator.

[5:11 - 5:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[5:12 - 5:27]
**MS. MILLER**: But we've had a lot more turnover. We haven't had the long-term commitment [compared to] the volunteers that we had back in the time when they were screened closely, trained carefully, and felt included.

[5:27 - 6:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay, so... Well, another thing we were looking at - and not everyone may be aware of it - but there is a History of Mote on the Mote [website] that was written by Dr. Mahadevan. And you had just introduced that to me today. So that's basically probably a primer that was written by Dr. Mahadevan to get folks acquainted with the basic history of Mote, and the fact that it didn't always... it wasn't always here at City Island. It started at Cape Haze, and... Did you have anything you wanted to add about the paper?

[6:15 - 6:48]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, it was written in or published in November of 2010 on the occasion of the 55th Anniversary of Mote. And one of the things in there that I thought was very telling was that... the quote that, "Mr. Mote and I were committed to encouraging and fostering the excellent team spirit, camaraderie, and family-type atmosphere that existed among staff, trustees, and volunteers." And that was an accurate statement when I started in 1996. But I don't think it's an accurate statement now.

[6:48 - 7:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Did you want to move on from that question? Or should we explore the... maybe

the reasons why the family-type atmosphere no longer exists? It can be deleted if you want. We're getting through all the nitty-gritty stuff to begin with.

[7:16 - 8:48]
**MS. MILLER**: Right. Sure, I understand. I think part of the reason that there have been changes in both Mote's atmosphere and the volunteer program is... there's several things. First of all, the volunteer program has had at least six different temporary or full-time Coordinators since 2007 when Andrea Davis, the first Volunteer Coordinator, retired. And each [Coordinator] came with a varying length of tenure. "Tenure" perhaps is not the correct term. But how long they lasted in the program... in some cases it was a week. And so you didn't have a continuity of programming, of focus on training, and you didn't have a... along the way there were volunteers who were not respected because they felt threatened because they were "old-timers." So institutional knowledge is important. I think that you need to have good communications and include volunteers in discussions. Case in point would be the membership desks that they have built on a couple of occasions. And they didn't work the first time, and they didn't work the second time. But, you know, if there'd been some discussion perhaps someone could have reminded them that that was not a successful thing.

[8:48 - 8:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yep. Well, possibly they will work at some point in the future. We can hope. If it's there, then...

[8:55 - 9:06]
**MS. MILLER**: But I think that constructive criticism is necessary for any organization. I recognize organizations change. Not all change is necessarily for the better.

[9:06 - 9:25]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay. Well, how about we move on to something a little easier to talk about, perhaps. And that's your primary job in the Fish and Invertebrate Aquarium. What is your typical day like in the department?

[9:25 - 9:45]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, I'm a Fish and Invertebrate Guide. And what that means is that I greet the public as they come through the Aquarium and attempt to answer questions that they might have to encourage them to look more closely at the specimens, and to kind of tease them to want to know more.

[9:45 - 9:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Mhm. And through the extensive training and education that you receive as a volunteer, that's... you're well equipped to tease them to learn more.

[9:57 - 10:10]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, the training program includes not only working with the mentor in the Aquarium, but there's a series of marine science classes that we're required to take in order to become Aquarium guides.

[10:10 - 10:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Now those required ones - I may be off base here not knowing the history - but there's about a dozen of those, right?

[10:22 - 10:23]
**MS. MILLER**: Approximately, yes.

[10:23 - 10:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: Approximately.

[10:24 - 10:38]
**MS. MILLER**: And each one is about a three-hour class. The series is offered in the Fall and then in the early Winter. So that way you can capture the snowbirds that are also wanting to volunteer.

[10:38 - 10:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. And those are required courses. Now...

[10:40 - 10:45]
**MS. MILLER**: If you're going to be an Aquarium guide in Fishes and Invertebrates or Mammal Center, these are required courses.

[10:45 - 10:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: Now that's twelve or so approximately per year. It's an ongoing thing or...?

[10:49 - 10:55]
**MS. MILLER**: You take it once. You're welcome to come back any time as a refresher. But it's mandatory once.

[10:55 - 11:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So it's the same material taught over and over again every year. Maybe with some variation, but it's mostly what you've already gone through [with] your basic training.

[11:10 - 11:20]
**MS. MILLER**: An example of a modification would be if, for example, your manatee folks are doing a presentation. They'll give you the most recent research that they've been doing.

[11:20 - 11:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay. And then there's always the monthly programs and the *Monday Night at Mote*. Well, *Monday Night at Mote* [is] no more, right?

[11:31 - 11:53]
**MS. MILLER**: It doesn't exist anymore. But that was a major draw for the community. And from my perspective this was a really important outreach because you got people who were interested, and you had people who were able to potentially support your research. People want to know what's going on. But the communication is not very good now.

[11:53 - 12:01]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. How long ago... How long has that been gone? The *Monday Night at Mote*?

[12:01 - 12:04]
**MS. MILLER**: I would... it's going to be a guess on my part. About eight years?

[12:04 - 12:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, it's been awhile then? Okay.

[12:06 - 12:28]
**MS. MILLER**: And it used to be every Monday from [the] first of early January through early April. And it would be a different scientist at Mote usually, explaining what they were doing. [It was] about a forty-five minute lecture followed by a Q&A. And it was standing-room only. In fact, it was so popular that they started doing a matinee.

[12:28 - 12:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay. Did we talk about the Volunteer-led education? Or the classes that you've taught and how frequent that is?

[12:47 - 13:15]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, no we didn't. And as far as the marine science classes, I only taught one class once and that was as a substitute. But volunteers had been involved with the teaching of the classes. Well, I take that back. I did the orientation for several years because as President of the volunteer organization that was one of the duties... was to teach the orientation class.

[13:15 - 14:02]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that gets us to, I think, the Volunteer Board [and] your participation on the Board. You mentioned you did the guide training. You served as Secretary from 2002-2004; Vice President from 2004-2006; and then President from '06 to '08. And a lot of visitors to the Aquarium and to Mote here will see your donor plaques around the institution. Did you want to talk about what aspects you've, you know, you've... or what you've donated to? Or before?

[14:02 - 15:39]
**MS. MILLER**: Sure. Some of the activities... because of information that was gained through the *Monday Night at Mote* lecture series, I learned of lectures that the scientists have done for the volunteers. I was able to learn of different areas of need here at Mote, and then step up and help pay for it. So I was the sponsor of Contact Cove; the big touch tank on the patio area. I've helped underwrite Biomedical research; satellite tags; office [and] beach supplies run for the turtle things for the Turtle Conservation Program; various materials for the staff library; computer programs; books; office supplies. I've helped sponsor intern activities and intern scholarships. I've funded several intern scholarships. I was fortunate to be considered part of the Squid Squad with Debi Ingrao who's no longer at Mote. [She] was very interested in squid, [and] she had several volunteers that she included with that. But I was able to help underwrite squid research. I've paved ways for staff to go to

conferences. Both nationally and internationally. And to participate in coral research programs in the Caribbean.

[15:39 - 15:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: Wow. Quite a bit of contribution.

[15:43 - 15:57]
**MS. MILLER**: It's been interesting because you knew that you were helping. But I'm not going to give to a black hole. And I'm not getting the communication now, so the money is going to other organizations.

[15:57 - 16:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Okay. So the Volunteer Education Committee... let's see... you served on that from 2004 to 2013. Is that...?

[16:09 - 16:10]
**MS. MILLER**: Yep, basically.

[16:10 - 16:35]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And you were mentioning that all sorts of people from all sorts of backgrounds become, you know, a part of the Volunteer Education Committee. What during that timeframe... did you just want to talk about what you did on the committee and what your contributions there were?

[16:35 - 18:27]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, the Volunteer Education Committee was comprised of retired educators, and of the five people who were on the Committee when we dissolved, two of them had PhD's; two of them had Master's (plus hours over); and one had a Bachelor's. And [we had] experience from kindergarten through graduate school and special needs. So we pretty well covered the gamut. We did things like updating the Volunteer Manual which had been created and written by volunteers many years ago. We created informational handouts that were available to the Aquarium guides regarding new exhibits. And all of this was vetted by the staff who were the experts. We created and edited training videos for volunteer briefings. These would be videos of scientists and aquarists explaining the work that they were doing so that during our briefing part, each shift, we could show them and they could see behind the scenes without interrupting the staff. We videotaped the volunteer training classes so that volunteers who [were] still working and [were] not available weekdays to attend classes could still get the training. Although it was not as desirable as participating in person. We created materials for, organized, conducted orientation for the summer high school volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator came to us and said, "This is a program we're considering. What do you think of it? Can you come up with a program for us? Can you do the training?" We stepped up and did the job. So... we've done a variety of different things, but the Administration decided that they didn't need our services.

[18:27 - 18:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. But there still is an Education Committee? I mean, it's...

[18:37 - 18:40]
**MS. MILLER**: It's my understanding that there's one being started now.

[18:40 - 18:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So there...

[18:41 - 18:47]
**MS. MILLER**: Anybody who wants to volunteer. But the ones who were on the old committee have said, "No."

[18:47 - 18:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So it's going to have to be built from the ground up again, then, if it ever...?

[18:52 - 18:56]
**MS. MILLER**: And I don't know what their qualifications are other than willingness to be on the committee.

[18:56 - 18:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[18:57 - 18:59]
**MS. MILLER**: And I don't know what they'll be charged with doing.

[18:59 - 19:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: That's interesting. I guess I was under the impression that there still was an Education Committee in some form. Maybe not as... maybe not as good as it was. But I guess it no longer exists whatsoever, then?

[19:15 - 19:31]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, let's just say, one individual was charged with changing the handouts and putting them up. But they evidently weren't vetted because one of them had you reference somebody if you had a question, and this was somebody who was deceased for many years.

[19:31 - 19:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yeah, that... that's a dead letter isn't it? Okay, well... It seems though that you had, I mean, you had a good structure.

[19:45 - 19:46]
**MS. MILLER**: Oh, we did.

[19:46 - 19:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: I mean, you had an excellent structure and it's something that should have continued. But I guess...

[19:49 - 19:55]
**MS. MILLER**: But the difference is you have different Volunteer Coordinators who did not feel that that was important.

[19:55 - 20:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right. It went by the wayside because of an Administrative decision.

[20:00 - 20:01]
**MS. MILLER**: Correct.

[20:01 - 20:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, that's too bad. Another thing you've done is some of the lab tours for special guests. Did you want to talk about that point a little bit?

[20:15 - 20:57]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, the behind-the-scenes lab tours are designed to familiarize people with what we're doing here at Mote without disturbing the scientists. And this would be political people. It could be scientists from other organizations. It could be potential employees. It could be individuals who have charitable ideas. And so it would be a matter of finding out what the individual was particularly interested in; giving them an overview of the Laboratory facilities; and then focusing on their particular area of interest.

[20:57 - 21:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yep. So that leads us to the last page here as far as your outline, which has more to do about I guess some of your more interesting experiences on different projects here at Mote over the years. One was the Mote Mobile Unit. What was that all about?

[21:24 - 21:48]
**MS. MILLER**: The Mote Mobile is a large trailer that's towed behind a heavy-duty truck. [It] includes an aquarium on-site plus touch tank and dry exhibits. And this goes out to various schools regionally. But it also goes as far north as Tallahassee and as far south as the Keys where, of course, Mote has facilities.

[21:48 - 21:50]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Up on Summerland Key?

[21:50 - 21:57]
**MS. MILLER**: Summerland Key. But also they've gone on down to Key West because at one point we had a conch baby farm in Key West.

[21:57 - 21:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh really? Okay.

[21:58 - 22:15]
**MS. MILLER**: And so the Mobile is a public outreach, and it gives an opportunity, for kids particularly,

but the public in general to be aware of Mote, be aware of the Sea. And it's amazing how many kids have never seen the ocean.

[22:15 - 22:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Even in Florida. Just because of the economic, you know, the wealth gap and so forth. People who can't afford to make the trip. And the Mote Mobile is still in operation? How often does that go out?

[22:30 - 22:35]
**MS. MILLER**: It is. It varies. There are times when it's just about every other… They may do two events in one day.

[22:35 - 22:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Depends on appointments and what they can set up.

[22:37 - 22:38]
**MS. MILLER**: It is. Right.

[22:38 - 22:45]
**MR. HARRIS**: And the other thing you've done is the Squid Squad. And I have not heard about the Squid Squad yet?

[22:45 - 23:17]
**MS. MILLER**: The Squid Squad was an interesting group of people that was for a scientist who has not been at Mote now since 2007. But Debi Ingrao was a Senior Biologist who was particularly interested in squid, and she's the person who is responsible for Mote getting "Molly," the giant squid that was here that went out on tour as part of this "Underwater Monsters of the Deep" or whatever exhibit, and who is just recently returned and will be going back on display here at Mote this Fall.

[23:17 - 23:18]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay.

[23:18 - 23:55]
**MS. MILLER**: She involved a number of volunteers to help her both in terms of dissections of squid. In terms of underwriting, acquisition, and lab time. [And] in terms of photographing. So, I had the opportunity to go over to New Smyrna Beach when we collected a donated giant squid that a fisherman had caught there [Ms. Miller noted afterwards that the squid was found by a fisherman, not caught. The dead animal was floating on the surface]. And then participate in the necropsy with Debi and Dr. Clyde Roper who was with the Smithsonian and considered the world expert on squid.

[23:55 - 23:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh wow.

[23:56 - 24:11]
**MS. MILLER**: This was the *Architeuthis*. And then subsequently we got what we referred to as the

"Key West squid." And by the way, Mote has received at least two giant squid found off the coast of Florida.

[24:11 - 24:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[24:12 - 24:48]
**MS. MILLER**: The Key West squid was an *Asperoteuthis acanthoderma*. And this was an unusual species. It's the first one that had been found in this part of the country. It's normally a Pacific animal. And again, Dr. Roper came in and did a necropsy. And we had the opportunity, not only to assist, but to do photographs. And one of my photographs ended up being requested to go online. And I don't remember whether it was Smithsonian or National Geographic that wanted [it]. Of course, Dr. Roper was part of the Smithsonian program.

[24:48 - 24:51]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Did you get credit for that photograph?

[24:51 - 24:59]
**MS. MILLER**: Probably. I wasn't interested in the credit. It was just... and what it was was a new eye structure that nobody had ever seen before.

[24:59 - 25:10]
**MR. HARRIS**: Very interesting. And this was a squid that was only known before in the Pacific, and they found it offshore off in the Gulf Coast. Was it Atlantic or Gulf Coast?

[25:10 - 25:17]
**MS. MILLER**: I think it was the Gulf Coast. But I'm not sure. It was Key West, but I'm not really sure what part of Key West. You know.

[25:17 - 25:37]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So that's very interesting. So another thing you've done is assisting the aquarists in the preparation of the coastal water exhibit, otherwise known as Mollusk Hall, right?

[25:37 - 26:01]
**MS. MILLER**: Right. It was originally Mollusk Hall, and then they changed the name to Coastal Water a couple of years ago. And at that point what they were trying to do was get tanks cleaned and stickers off of them. But the point was, you established working relationships with people, and they felt comfortable in saying, "Hey, I need some help. Can you come help?"

[26:01 - 26:07]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right. Yep. And Mollusk Hall, that was something done here?

[26:07 - 26:08]
**MS. MILLER**: Yeah.

[26:08 - 26:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: It's just out… okay. Out in the Aquarium? Okay, yeah. I'm sure I've seen it.

[26:13 - 26:18]
**MS. MILLER**: If you go, currently, it's where the seahorses are outside.

[26:18 - 26:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay, yep. Then there are a variety of special events that you've done over the years. Such as helping off-site events like *Polo Under the Palms*. I haven't heard of that?

[26:32 - 27:03]
**MS. MILLER**: It was a fundraiser out at Lakewood Ranch. They were playing polo, and so Mote's biomedical program was to be a beneficiary. It was a charity event. And a sandcastle contest on Siesta Key has gone on for several years. And you have professional and amateur sandcastle builders come, and some of the sandcastles are pretty incredible. But again… and that's to be a benefit for the Sea Turtle Program.

[27:03 - 27:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yep. Okay. And then the volunteer fundraiser to be able to buy equipment [that the] volunteer organization needed.

[27:16 - 27:35]
**MS. MILLER**: Money at Mote has always been tight. And the volunteer organization has been called on to do different things such as presentations in the community. And we didn't have the computer, the cameras, the equipment necessary to do that and Mote didn't have the money for us.

[27:35 - 27:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[27:36 - 28:15]
**MS. MILLER**: So the volunteers got together and had a challenge grant from an individual, and we put on a folk music concert by [Bill] Schustik. And the proceeds of that went into a fund and bought things like a video camera that we could use to do the video recordings for the briefings; still cameras to do pictures that we needed; computer and projector to do the lectures or the speeches that the volunteers go out and do to community groups.

[28:15 - 28:29]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay, so you have raised a lot of money that way for a lot of good equipment that has gone a long way. Okay. Well, was there anything else on your outline that you wanted to discuss? Or do you think we hit it?

[28:29 - 28:31]
**MS. MILLER**: I think we hit it. I don't know how you feel?

[28:31 - 28:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: I feel good about it. One of the things - it wasn't on the protocol I showed you, so it's nothing to, you know... - But with the passing of Dr. Clark this year, I've been kind of focusing on a little bit on her legacy and asking volunteers if they ever had an opportunity to meet her or discuss, you know, talk with her. Did you have a chance to meet Dr. Clark?

[28:59 - 30:12]
**MS. MILLER**: Oh, on many occasions. And in fact, I underwrote the... getting that office ready for her. So that was one of my things. But I think one of the... First of all, she was a charming lady who always had time to talk to people at their level of understanding. And [she] was just so warm and gracious. And she was such a terrific role model, particularly for young women. One of the most memorable occasions I think was... there was an intern pizza party. And she had come over to the pizza party. I was in attendance as well. And at the end of the party, there [were] one or two girls who came over and very shyly asked to meet her. And [Dr. Clark] was so genuinely nice that, before you knew it, the table was full of girls and she sat there and answered their questions. We kind of eased out so that we wouldn't be interfering. But it was so good to see, you know, this kind of an interaction.

[30:12 - 30:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: That kind of rapport with the public and prospective scientists. Yep. And I remember when I was talking to Mr. Bowman, he made sure to point out to me that in the original Papers of Incorporation, there was a line about Mote [Cape Haze Marine Laboratory] being set up as a facility where people could learn about the sea. Not just scientists. So it was... her original idea was to have an effective outreach.

[30:44 - 31:29]
**MS. MILLER**: Mhm. And we would see her with a great deal of frequency downstairs because she has an ongoing exhibit that's a research project: the Convict fish. She was diving off of Papua New Guinea, by now about fifteen years ago, and attempting to identify a new species of reef shark. And [she] noticed these small fish, wanted to learn more, couldn't find the answers to her questions. So we had an ongoing... still have an ongoing program down in the Aquarium - both where the public can see and behind the scenes - attempting to find out more about the mating behavior of Convict fish and the interaction of adults and juveniles.

[31:29 - 31:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[31:30 - 31:44]
**MS. MILLER**: And my sister, Carol, was a University Professor who taught German. And she's been called on on several occasions to do translations of documents for Dr. Clark.

[31:44 - 31:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: For a German audience?

[31:47 - 31:53]
**MS. MILLER**: Well, it would be German articles that Dr. Clark wanted know, “What’s this article about?”

[31:53 - 31:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, okay. Yep.

[31:54 - 31:55]
**MS. MILLER**: From German to English.

[31:55 - 32:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: From German scientists. Okay. Well, very good.

**LIN VERTEFEUILLE WITH JASON HARRIS**
**AUDIO RECORDING**
**JULY 10, 2015**

[This interview was recorded at the back table of the Arthur Vining Davis Library & Archives at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. The transcript was edited by request of Ms. Vertefeuille.]

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[0:00 - 0:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: It's July 10th, 2015, and we're sitting in the Library and Archives at Mote Marine Lab, and I'm talking with Lin Vertefeuille.

[0:09 - 0:10]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: You did that well!

[0:10 - 0:12]
**MR. HARRIS**: I'm glad... I'm glad I talked with Virginia [Miller].

[0:12 - 0:16]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: You practiced it? It's French but that's the English way.

[0:16 - 0:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: I'm glad I had my interview with Virginia yesterday so I had a chance to learn how to pronounce your name before we talked.

[0:22 - 0:24]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, good. Good.

[0:24 - 0:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: How did... Lin, how did you become involved with Mote initially?

[0:31 - 0:50]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, actually before I even moved here, I met Eugenie Clark at a conference in Connecticut. It was offered to mentoring teachers in Connecticut, and she was the keynote speaker.

[0:50 - 0:51]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[0:51 - 1:26]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: My students had studied - fourth graders - in an Oceanography unit, and had read an abridged form of her first biography: *Shark Lady* [*True Adventures of Eugenie Clark* by Ann McGovern]. She became kind of a heroine to them, and they were very excited that I was going to a conference where I would actually meet her. So I took - you'll have to understand, this is about 22-23 years ago - I took this *enormous* video camera. Nothing was miniaturized then.

[1:26 - 1:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: In the mid-to-late nineties? Yeah.

[1:28 - 2:35]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes, the old video camera. [I] took that with me with the hope of being able to video her. And before her speech, I asked her if I could video her after the speech. Well, afterwards, she sought *me* out. She found me. I was very nervous [and] very excited. So I turned on this enormous video camera, and [I] suddenly died. I hadn't thought of any questions to ask her! I had no introduction; no preliminary; no nothing! And she was seeing me just standing there with this camera! So she, then, took it over and controlled [the session] and welcomed students. And I took it back. The children were thrilled to see her. And she also signed the program we had, so I gave each child a copy of her signature. So they were very thrilled. So coming here...

[2:35 - 2:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: So... uh huh?

[2:36 - 2:56]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: I had a student who had a winter vacation home in Englewood, and told me that she was affiliated with Mote. So when I moved to the area, I came to Mote, and really [it] was far smaller than it is now.

[2:56 - 2:57]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[2:57 - 3:15]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But I was very interested in it, and I was really stimulated by the other volunteers that were there. Because they were very in-depth sharing the information. It wasn't just naming this animal or that animal. It was really going into the ecosystems of them and the whole...

[3:15 - 3:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Okay.

[3:16 - 3:22]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And, of course, that's always been an interest of mine. I grew up on the shore.

[3:22 - 3:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: In Connecticut?

[3:23 - 3:49]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Connecticut. But I knew that this would be a different environment here, and I was [interested]. So it was to learn. But also it was knowing that she had had [an] adjacent connection with Mote. That really [is what] got me here, and it's kept me here. And I never regretted all twenty-one years.

[3:49 - 3:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So, I mean, when you were a teacher in Connecticut, [you] teached fourth grade and then...

[3:55 - 3:57]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes. Primarily middle grades.

[3:57 - 4:03]
**MR. HARRIS**: And [you] did a conference with Eugenie. And you knew she was... I mean, that was in...

[4:03 - 4:07]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Oh yes. We knew of her. We read...

[4:07 - 4:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: She was already involved in Mote. Or was that before she came to Mote?

[4:09 - 4:13]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Oh no. Well, she started Mote. Eugenie started Mote, of course.

[4:13 - 4:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right, right.

[4:14 - 4:30]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: I mean, not under Mote. But in Placida. Yes. But no, I knew of her. But I didn't know at that time her affiliation at Mote until my student's parents told me. And they told me because I was moving here.

[4:30 - 4:36]
**MR: HARRIS**: Okay. I gotcha now. So you didn't know about her affiliation with Mote when the conference took place?

[4:36 - 4:38]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: She was still at Maryland. She was still at the University of Maryland. Yes.

[4:38 - 4:42]
**MR. HARRIS**: So that was kind of a fortuitous...

[4:42 - 4:53]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: I think she was always interested in students. [She was] very interested in student education. And that definitely shone through in her presentations.

[4:53 - 5:08]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Well, and a lot of volunteers have told me just how... I mean, being such an acknowledged expert on Marine Biology, and being as busy as she was, she was still so generous with her time.

[5:08 - 5:11]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: That's right. Very approachable. Very kind person.

[5:11 - 5:20]
**MR. HARRIS**: And [she] made time for anyone. So you came here through Dr. Clark, and she was actually... it was kind of a personal invite then that got you through the door?

[5:20 - 5:33]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well... yes, indirectly. But yes. I would say because of her affiliation here it got me to really [move] out. But at that time I think she was still in Maryland. Or [at] the University of Maryland.

[5:33 - 5:35]
**MR. HARRIS**: And that was twenty-one years ago?

[5:35 - 5:39]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Oh, at least. Yes. Here about twenty-one years ago.

[5:39 - 5:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. And then when you started here you got screened to work in the Aquarium, right? In the Fish and Invertebrate Aquarium.

[5:48 - 6:29]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes. Aquarium guide [in] Fish and Invertebrate. Now, I have to explain. I did other things. At that time - and my husband helped out - we would go up in the Mammal Center, and - it wasn't quite at that time [but] a little later - we worked with the mammals up there: "Juno" and "Richey" and different sperm whales. You'd have to do the vitals on them and walk them. And so I did a little volunteering on that. But it was always Fish and Invertebrate [which] was my standard Friday job.

[6:29 - 6:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[6:30 - 6:46]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And then I did the Explorer Boat. When that started, [we'd] go out on the boat with the staff. And we would help with the otter trawl [and] the island walk. Basically that supportive [system].

[6:46 - 6:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[6:47 - 7:03]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And we had a boat at that time, so I was pretty familiar with the waters. That was about two years. I would do it in [the] afternoon. The morning [was in] the Aquarium, and then the afternoon on the boat.

[7:03 - 7:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: What were you doing in the Explorer Boat? That was just... ?

[7:06 - 7:12]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: It was just supplemental. It was just helpful. You would help pull out the otter trawl.

[7:12 - 7:13]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[7:13 - 7:39]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And you'd often lead the island walk. They would get off on the island. [It was] kind of a spill island; [a] man-made island. And it had different growth that had occurred on the island: Brazilian peppers, or those Australian pines, or even periwinkles. Or all kinds of flora that developed on the island, and you'd do an island walk.

[7:39 - 7:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: And this was through the Mammal Center? And was it a rehabilitation thing or...?

[7:44 - 8:15]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, no. It had nothing to do with the Mammal Center. This was the Explorer Boat you have downstairs? The Explorer Boat? Well, it's affiliated with Mote. It's a privately-run enterprise. But they work with Mote. Often they would combine a ticket with the Mote, admission to the Mote combined with the Explorer Boat trip. Privately-owned, separate company. But under the...

[8:15 - 8:21]
**MR. HARRIS**: Is that what... That still exists today? Is that what the Venture... ?

[8:21 - 8:26]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: That's that desk downstairs. Yes. That desk outside? Downstairs?

[8:26 - 8:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah? Oh, just before you come in to... Okay, I understand what we're... yeah.

[8:32 - 8:35]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: They do kayak tours now. They do the Explorer Boat. Then it was just the Explorer Boat.

[8:35 - 8:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[8:36 - 9:15]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Very early on, I don't know whether there was much of an Education Department. School groups used to come in, and we used to do a slideshow. Usually for younger students. There were different programs. This was for schoolchildren. They would come in as a [class]. We would just give them basically a slide-show or whatever. And I think it was just when the additional buildings were [*noise*] that time, early on, when the addition was built onto Mote. Most of where we are is additional building. [It] is added on.

[9:15 - 9:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[9:16 - 9:52]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: That was for a short time. And then it became a little more professional with an Education staff and more programs. So I did that for a little while. I did do some lab tours. But I did that very briefly. Because I found time to be here to be familiar with all the research [difficult]. I could walk people around, but informationally I felt I needed [to learn more to do a tour]. So I stopped doing that. And that's what Joe Mathis did, and the Miller's did. A lot of the lab tours. They still do.

[9:52 - 9:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. I've heard, yeah, I've heard both of them talk about, a little bit about the process of writing the lab guides.

[9:58 - 10:11]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: What I did mostly... the contribution here in terms of volunteerism, I would say probably my main contribution has been as a mentor. I would say many of the people on my shift I mentored and trained.

[10:11 - 10:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: So you... That's basically mentoring the incoming volunteers - the new volunteers - who are matched up with you through the Volunteer Coordinator. And you just teach them about what you do, and what they're about to do.

[10:28 - 10:55]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes. They shadow. It's a lot of hands-on and it's shadowing. And sometimes it's prior to their getting classes. Which is not bad because then when they take the classes, they're more familiar, and they have an idea of what they want to know in taking the classes. So I would say probably almost half of my shift I've mentored through the years.

[10:55 - 11:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So I know, speaking with Virginia yesterday - I think, if I recall, this is still an ongoing thing - that when you're a new volunteer you do go through a required set of classes. And I think that's the, you know, the dozen or so classes that take place once a month... There's one every month or something like that?

[11:15 - 11:20]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, it's usually Fall and Spring. And it's a series of classes.

[11:20 - 11:23]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yep. Jogged my memory.

[11:23 - 12:35]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: On different topics. Yes. But sometimes a volunteer will be new [and] will come in interim between the classes or whatever. [They will] work in the summer [when classes] are not given. The classes are important because, you see, when you're mentoring on shift, you can give them a lot of background on how to work with the public; how to identify the animals; explain the exhibits a bit. But what's very important as a volunteer is to have background information. And that's where you want to get that out of the classes. You want to know more about in-depth information: how the animal functions; their life-cycles; how they function; how they interact in an environment with each other. So you need that background information. So the classes are good. One gives hands-on with the mentoring. The other is more academic background.

[12:35 - 12:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. So, I mean, there's still the required classes. But the Volunteer Education Committee as it was...

[12:44 - 12:45]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Was, unfortunately.

[12:45 - 12:54]
**MR. HARRIS**: As it was. [It] is no more. So once you go through those initial classes, there really isn't any ongoing learning anymore for volunteers?

[12:54 - 13:37]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: No. What you can do - because you always self-motivate - But what you can do is attend our monthly volunteer meetings [which] usually have a speaker, and [you can] pick up information that way. Attend *Monday at Mote* lectures. But they're variable. You can get the Mote magazine that gives a little background information that way. They're starting a Mote Insider newsletter. [There's] background with that. You try to get it from all sources. But right, after that initial series of trainings...

[13:37 - 13:38]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, it's not quite as structured anymore.

[13:38 - 14:15]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: No, it's not. You hope to keep on top if you get a briefing. In your briefings, you might get an aquarist who would come in and [you would come to] know what they're doing. But it usually relates to the actual Aquarium or the Mammal [Center]. It is not going to be the research component that you're getting that's going on. So the important thing is to really have information. I have to say something. The Education Department used to be a committee. Do you realize they wrote the manual?

[14:15 - 14:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. Virginia was talking... B. J. Peters was instrumental in that. Yeah, it was volunteer-led.

[14:22 - 14:25]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And that is your resource. That's a resource book.

[14:25 - 14:30]
**MR. HARRIS**: And the reference handbook, she told me, I mean, there was a lot of pages to it. And it was an immense contribution.

[14:30 - 15:43]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Right. But that manual is your reference book. And then they put together video programs. They tried to keep education ongoing, which was very important. And they did it in different ways from the written [to the visual]. But they had very good quality information. Now, everything was always vetted. Everything was always vetted. But it was always *significant*. It was meaningful. Everything that you got from it. And many were educators: B. J. [is] a Doctorate. A lot of us were educators. But [we] had Masters. And some on my shift: we had a Principal, Department Heads and things. But they know how to communicate as well. So they were very, very beneficial.

[15:43 - 15:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. And I know that's kind of... I mean, that's one of those sore points in the

Volunteer Program.

[15:52 - 15:53]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes. You picked that up?

[15:53 - 15:56]
**MR. HARRIS**: I've picked that up, and I mean...

[15:56 - 16:14]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Let me explain one of the problems with it. You see, the Education Department is fine. They do a wonderful job of programming for students. They have a very active summer camp [and] summer programming. All school year the school groups that come through. And they're very busy doing that.

[16:14 - 16:15]
**MR. HARRIS**: Mhm.

[16:15 - 16:54]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But there's a dearth of "Where do the volunteers get that segment of education?" And to be honest, I think the Education Department is overloaded with what they're doing. They don't know the volunteers directly. Frequently they're not even in the Aquarium because they're in their own classrooms, and even in the water with the kids. But there should be, I personally feel, a resurrection of a...

[16:54 - 16:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Some sort of a colloquium or something. Like some sort of a get-together. Yeah.

[16:58 - 17:08]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: A committee that works with volunteer education. And I value it. You see, most of us as volunteers, we're here to learn.

[17:08 - 17:09]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[17:09 - 17:40]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: I would dry up if I couldn't learn. It's very nice. Mote is very nice in recognizing people's pins for the number of years you're here. I got a very nice trophy for my 20 years. You see, it boasts twenty years on my shirt. All that is very nice. But the real thing that we want to do as docents, as volunteers, is learn.

[17:40 - 17:49]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Continue to be able to learn, and not reiterate the same things every week-to-week, month-to-month for the public.

[17:49 - 18:15]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Our particular shift. We have two doctors. Medical doctors. We have Principals; Department [Heads]. To show how diverse we are... Oh, [we have] a pharmaceutical sales. Rick

[Magee] was an interpreter. French and Spanish. He did translations of the sheets that identified animals.

[18:15 - 18:17]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay, yep. Carol Miller was...

[18:17 - 18:23]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Did you know he got the Turtle Ordinance written for Venice?

[18:23 - 18:24]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, really?

[18:24 - 18:25]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Oh yes.

[18:25 - 18:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: What was his name again?

[18:26 - 18:48]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: You should interview him. Rick Magee. He's in Canada right now. He's our Day Chairman, in fact. M-A-G-E-E. He actually put in the Turtle Ordinance for Venice. Wrote it. His wife is a very active environmentalist. So you want to... I mean, they're significant.

[18:48 - 18:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. And we're not talking staff. We're talking volunteers.

[18:52 - 18:57]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But that's our shift. That is our shift. Now think of that shift. Oh, and then we have a housewife who raised eight children.

[18:57 - 18:58]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right.

[18:58 - 18:59]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: So you see how diverse we are?

[18:59 - 19:00]
**MR. HARRIS**: Just as important!

[19:00 - 19:05]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But thinking of that shift, can't you see that the core of us want to learn?

[19:05 - 19:11]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yeah, and that's just one shift under one Day Chair. And one day of the week.

[19:11 - 19:16]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: That's right. I mean, every shift is different. But this is our shift. And...

[19:16 - 19:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: And probably, the other shifts probably resemble to some... just remarkable

backgrounds.

[19:22 - 19:37]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But the whole point is, we come week after week volunteering. [We] travel getting here. Some come up from Venice. We have a new volunteer - a young man - he's now commuting from Hillsborough County. That's north.

[19:37 - 19:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. Yeah, I haven't heard of it, but long drive, huh?

[19:41 - 19:53]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes, about forty-five minute/hour drive. So the point I'm making is we're diverse. But I think the single common core is that we all want to learn. We all want to expand.

[19:53 - 20:03]
**MR. HARRIS**: And that's just been something that's kind of been taken away. It's... is there a way to, I mean...

[20:03 - 20:49]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: We share with each other a lot of times, because several of our staff are Turtle Watch people. They do the Turtle Watch, and they'll inform us as [to] what's going in terms of the whole programming. Not just Rick. He doesn't do the actual Turtle Watch. His wife does. But he develops the program. But we have other people on our shift that do Turtle Watch. So we share whatever information we gather. We read an article in [the] *New York Times*; which you bring it in; you tell them about what you read. Or we try to do a little sharing. But we really would like - I think we all want to get a continuing education.

[20:49 - 20:52]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yep. That makes sense.

[20:52 - 20:57]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: With a designated group that really would be able to handle it and do it.

[20:57 - 21:03]
**MR. HARRIS**: And one that's, you know, associated with the staff and the scientists so that there is an integrated effort.

[21:03 - 21:37]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, Mote is very fortunate because they have... We're not Candy Stripers at a hospital. I would say most of our volunteers have travelled all over the world. They do a lot of travel. They have had life experience. Oh, one person on our staff is an economist. She graduated [from] University of Chicago. She was International... working in International economy. We have people that have all life experiences.

[21:37 - 21:41]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. Mr. Mathis is an agricultural... or was an agricultural economist.

[21:41 - 22:22]

**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: See what I mean? We all have life experiences. And I think that is a tremendous resource. This area attracts people to it. So that that resource they have... Mote is undervaluing its volunteers. Sticking them in a spot so they can get coverage in a new exhibit like "Oh Baby." Worrying about getting coverage there. That's fine. But it's so much more. They could contribute so much more given that opportunity. And I think Mote should take advantage of some of the experiences of people they have.

[22:22 - 22:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Is there any sort of platform or a timeline where you can bring that up to the staff or to request that again so it comes resurrected in some form? Or is it just a dead letter until someone on the Administration decides, "Hey, we need this again."

[22:47 - 24:00]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, I don't know that they fully realize it. I think they're looking to fill slots in terms of coverage. They want to make sure their special exhibitions are covered. Unfortunately, when the organization was set up, volunteers were set up under Education. And I think that was a mistake. I think it would be far better to place them under Aquarium. But the problem with that is Education has their own programming, their own emphasis, [and] involvement. And there's very little interaction. The volunteers they work with are volunteers who lead the school groups into the Aquarium. That's primarily whom they would interact with. So I think if it were removed away from Education. I don't know what other category it would be under. My guess would be Aquarium. But also Aquarium is pretty darn busy. They're understaffed. So I don't know. Unless it could be a separate designation. I don't know. Our new Volunteer Coordinator is wonderful: Robert [Rogers].

[24:00 - 24:02]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. He's excellent.

[24:02 - 24:34]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: [He's] really great. I'm glad we have Robert. A lot of stuff was formed by our first [Volunteer Coordinator]. And she was wonderful. Because she was a true Liaison between staff and volunteers. And she really knew how to get the most out of volunteers by accepting what they could contribute, and using and working with them. I don't know how it can be formed. But I think there should be some...

[24:34 - 24:36]
**MR. HARRIS**: But it should be considered again, most definitely.

[24:36 - 24:42]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And at this point I would say it's dead-lettered. I don't go to Volunteer Board meetings. I'm not on the Board.

[24:42 - 24:43]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay.

[24:43 - 25:11]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And I have to tell you, I am more active at Ringling Museum. And I volunteered at Ringling almost as long as Mote. [As a] volunteer at Mote, I became interested in Ringling. And I'm perhaps more active in Ringling than I am at Mote. But over the time I began to become [more

interested in Ringling]… because my use of what I could do here was drying up. Where I could be involved more...

[25:11 - 25:14]
**MR. HARRIS**: Continually active over at Ringling? Okay.

[25:14 - 25:59]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But what I used to really respect at Mote, as opposed to Ringling was, the wonderful Volunteer Board they had, where so much responsibility was given to volunteers. Now, not freely. I mean, you always vetted always under staff leadership. And the volunteer was much more aware as Ringling is a State facility. I mean, here you can volunteer at the Admissions. [At] Ringling you have to be a state employee, not retired, and you have to be bonded and all of that stuff.

[25:59 - 26:02]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yep. I've heard a little bit about that.

[26:02 - 26:31]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: And the Volunteer Board at Ringling was kind of nominal. It was titular, almost titular. All you did was plan the volunteer party essentially. Here at Mote you did substance. You did substance [and] input. Not that you could control or do [everything]… but you had input. And it was substance here. That has [begun] to ebb away here. That has definitely ebbed away here. It's too bad.

[26:31 - 26:44]
**MR. HARRIS**: Do you think it has anything to do with the volume of volunteers here since there's so many more here than there are at Ringling because of the... Well, maybe not so much an open-door policy. You [do] get screened. But...

[26:44 - 28:09]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: No, Ringling has quite a few. I think they're different animals. One is State; a State facility. This is private/non-profit. So they're very different that way. No, Ringling has a lot. There are at least a hundred active training programs. So it's pretty active. No, I don't think it's the volume. I think it's the attitude. Or the organization. It's the organization. Ringling strangely enough has opened up. They're a little more inclusive in volunteer input and what they're doing. This [has] gone in the opposite direction, and it's too bad. A lot has improved, and a lot has gone the other way. I mean, the research here is wonderful. And I feel for the staff. I feel for the scientists, because they have to write their own grants. When the economic downturn [hit], I mean, it was tough. A lot of the young aquarists, I don't know how they can… Their salaries are so low. I feel for the staff here. And they're very few. They're doing a lot. So you know, I'm not critical. We're very fine. And research is expanded.

[28:09 - 28:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: So would you... Do you want to discuss your typical workday routine in your department in the Aquarium? Is that… I mean, you do the stations in the Aquarium. [You] just move from one place to the other.

[28:27 - 28:45]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: What happens is you arrive a half-hour before, and you have a briefing. So we arrive by 9:30 am. We have a bearing with each other, and sometimes we have an aquarist come in. We really like getting a staff person [to] come in. Like an aquarist. They can inform us.

[28:45 - 28:47]
**MR. HARRIS**: Does that happen that frequently?

[28:47 - 29:30]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: That is very infrequent now. We're lucky [if] it's once a month. For many months it was none. Now let me explain. There was one simple thing they could do, and they don't [anymore]. We used to have a notebook; a loose-leaf book. And it had a lot of information, which it wasn't necessarily used or needed. But one was a sheet, and it listed all of the animals that were added recently to exhibits and were removed. So you had like a credit/debit list here. And you could go in and look at it. You could see, "Oh, they added a Frogfish to this Aquarium." Or... and it was just something, just a little note...

[29:30 - 29:31]
**MR. HARRIS**: That sounds like a good utility...

[29:31 - 29:54]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Just a little utility. A note. And that would keep you apprised on ongoing [changes]. These are live animals, so things are changing all the time. So this gave you a daily input of any change that happened that day or the day before or whatever. And it gave you an updating. They went from that, taking that completely away, and they went to this electronic thing.

[29:54 - 29:55]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. In the Volunteers lounge?

[29:55 - 30:14]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Right. Now it's very nice. Staff has to put in time to put in some stuff. But it's not your briefing. It's not your accounting of what [has] happened over the week; of what has been changed in exhibit[s]; what has been added; what has been subtracted.

[30:14 - 30:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: It has little daynotes but it doesn't have those statistical graphs and charts that you used to have?

[30:22 - 30:24]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, they weren't even statistical. They were just...

[30:24 - 30:26]
**MR. HARRIS**: Well, just tracking of what's changed. Yeah.

[30:26 - 30:40]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Just a list. Just a simple list. "Right on this side. Added this. This was Arrow crab. Grassflat." "On this side..." The removed list might have what they took out. And that's all.

[30:40 - 30:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: You'd think that would be something that you would want. Because coming in on your shift you can see what's been added, and it's a good talking point for the public who comes in. You can tell them that, "We have this new feature; new animal in this tank." You know, if they've been by

before, maybe they hadn't seen it because it's new.

[30:59 - 32:02]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: I'll give you an example that happened two weeks ago. We have no… well, we had the electronic whatever... No staff person was there. We went out at our appointed time. [We] went out into our galleries. Into the different areas. [We] suddenly saw the Flamboyant Cuttlefish were set up next to the Dwarf Cuttlefish. Now the Flamboyant fish were removed from the exhibit [and] moved up into a different special exhibition we had a few months ago called "Survivors." So they had been offline for ages. Suddenly they were put back. And the only way we knew was by seeing it when we appeared on shift. Now that would've been simple just to put in a list in the book. So we're left with not knowing if something is gone, and where it is, or if it is. If it's hiding. Or is it gone? Or some, we discover new things added.

[32:02 - 32:16]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah. And it's nice to know… I mean, you spend a half an hour at each place. So you're going to know what's there and what's not. Especially when… if you've been here for awhile. Yeah, it's nice to know, but...

[32:16 - 32:45]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, we do rotate all the positions. [You'd] be bored if you stayed at any one. Some of us have been around for awhile. When there's a new animal added, most of us recognize it because we've been here [and] we know. But for some new people who've never seen that animal before, suddenly it appears, and there's no notification that it's going to be there. I mean, it's a lack of communication. Which you feel that, if they really want us functioning and sharing with the public, we should be knowledgeable.

[32:45 - 32:48]
**MR. HARRIS**: Right. Yeah, you should be notified. Certainly.

[32:48 - 32:59]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: But communication is a weak point in all organizations. It's a weak point everywhere. But I would say improving communications would be great. That would be great.

[32:59 - 33:06]
**MR. HARRIS**: Alright, so, yep. That was the first time I had heard about, you know, keeping track of the animals in the Aquarium through a logbook.

[33:06 - 33:13]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Just a simple list. A logbook, right. Or it could be just a logbook. We discover new things all the time.

[33:13 - 33:28]
**MR. HARRIS**: Okay. So I was... I've been ending the interviews on a positive note - and [that] kind of sounds like what we might need today - about what your most fondest… fond memory is?

[33:28 - 33:34]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well... Yes, I want to let you know that although I'm making these comments that seem negative, there's so much positive here.

[33:34 - 33:35]
**MR. HARRIS**: Oh, I believe it. I believe you. Yep.

[33:35 - 33:38]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, do you think I would be twenty-one years in a place that I didn't like?

[33:38 - 33:40]
**MR. HARRIS**: No, absolutely not.

[33:40 - 33:50]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Or feel it wasn't worth going to or being a part of? Yes, fondest memory though. That's very hard.

[33:50 - 33:59]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, that was one of the hardest questions for all the volunteers to answer. Because no matter what's going on here it's just... [Mote] is such an amazing place.

[33:59 - 34:20]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Yes, I've met... I'd say probably meeting just the people I've met that are volunteers or staff that are here. The people are integral to the facility. And that's staff as well as volunteers. That would be it. I would say a lot of it is the interpersonal.

[34:20 - 34:27]
**MR. HARRIS**: I mean, it's common sense to state it. But if it weren't for the volunteers here, Mote wouldn't be open to the public.

[34:27 - 34:31]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: Well, and the staff. The staff is very wonderful.

[34:31 - 34:32]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, you can't ignore the staff.

[34:32 - 35:14]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: So it's having that exposure, I guess. When you volunteer - now I've been involved in volunteerism with Ringling and here, and other places - the one thing you want is respect. You want to give respect because you feel it's [important]. People; the staff you respect. But you want to get [it returned]. And respect is giving information to that person. It isn't just the "Atta boy's." It's knowing you are respected too. So I would say...

[35:14 - 35:22]
**MR. HARRIS**: Yeah, not just your name on some sort of a appreciation list at the end of the year. But...

[35:22 - 35:36]
**MS. VERTEFEUILLE**: It's very nice. All that is very nice. And Mote does it better than Ringling. I gotta tell you that. It really does it better. It's one of the best organizations, volunteer organizations in the area in terms of that.

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