

DATE: July 1, 2016
TIME: 5:19 PM
PROJECT CONSULTANT: Hartford Gongaware
INTERVIEWEE: Craig Barrow
INTERVIEW LOCATION: The Barrow Farm, Riverside Drive, Guyton

FULL NAME: Craig Barrow

D.O.B.:

BORN: Savannah, Georgia

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP:

TOPICS:

00:25	Buying the Land
04:25	Timber Companies and Divestment
07:00	Kenneth Wallace Stories
08:38	Kenneth Wallace Stories
10:00	Creating Habitat for Wildlife
11:30	Janisse Ray and Forestry
15:10	Learning the Land / 1980s
18:00	Year 'Round Labor
21:30	Hunting
22:50	Swamp / River / Tondee Lake
25:00	One Day Out of Savannah (Inn)
26:30	Jack Leigh and <i>Ogeechee</i>
31:30	Union Camp / Jim Pate / Funding and Printing <i>Ogeechee</i>
34:08	Billy Bishop / Boats
37:00	National Park Service
40:00	King Finishing / Guyton Wastewater Plant
44:00	"Poor Man's Country Club" / Governmental Corruption / Dr. Cone
50:50	Uses of the River / Neidlinger's Catfish Stew / King Finishing and John P. King
55:00	Description of Items in Old Kenneth Wallace Cottage

00:25

I was introduced to Kenneth Wallace by Waldo Bradley. Kenneth was the forester for Bradley Plywood, and we became good friends and spent a lot of time duck hunting up on Abercorn Island.

So Kenneth knew if I bought his place I would take care of it and I would respect it and I was the perfect person to own it. But he encouraged me to come look at it and I never did...

And then one day he called me and said, "The place is for sale. Man wants to buy it, but I told him you had the right of first refusal. If you want it, you better come look at it."

So I drove up here and he rode me all over the property, everywhere, and brought me back into this building we are in right now, and I knew right then that this place was built for me. It had my name all over it. I wanted it...

So I asked him how much he wanted, and he told me, and I said, "Kenneth, I don't have that kind of money."

And he said, "You haven't heard the terms! Listen to the terms!" and when he gave me the terms I knew that I could afford it and he would help me and work with me and he really wanted me to have it.

So that was 1980, we closed in the winter/fall of 1980 and that was 568 acres. And then he called me one day—and my neighbor then was Continental Woodlands, a big forestry company—and he called me one day and he said, "I've got a tract of land that I've got an option on and I can't handle it, would you go in halves with me and help me." And I said yeah, I'll do it and he said, "Well you got to go look at it," and I said, "I don't need to go look at it, if it's good enough for you it's good enough for me."

He said, "No, you've got to look at it, I won't let you in unless you go up."

So we rode up there and realized this tract, this three hundred acres, was surrounded by Continental, and they were my neighbors. It's three hundred acres, so I went to Walter Herbst at Continental and said would you consider swapping the tract. He swapped me 800 acres adjoining here for 300 acres up there, and I was able to cut enough timber to pay for it. It was amazing.

Then, Continental went out of business, and they wanted to sell all their land. Well, they still had 700 acres, so I went to Walter and said can I buy the 700 and he sold me the balance.

And then, the last tract I bought was the Macey-Owens tract. He took care—it was beautiful swamp, beautiful woods—and he died and his family all lived in Atlanta and they wanted to sell it. I was able to convince them that I was the best person to buy it. So I've got now 2500 acres.

It's a miracle.

You couldn't ever do that again today. It was pure luck.

04:25

You can go all over Georgia—it's an environmental history project—You can see, like, I know the landing down here was called Tyson Landing, the field over here was Grayson Field, and then there was the Hilton Tract, and you can recognize all the old names. And I know where the old schoolhouse was, where Kenneth Wallace's house was, and Mr. Tondee's old house was back here...

Well, all the kids moved to town, so then the timber companies came in and bought up all the land. Union Bag and Continental owned all the land around here... well, then when Union Camp merged with IP, then IP decided to sell all their land. So then private guys like me came back in and started buying the land.

McKenzies bought a whole tract...

05:28

I was lucky. I was in the 'eighties, but I would say IP, that was 2000 when they got rid of all their land... various people went and bought various tracts... and so now, there's a group of us... If you take Philip Morgan's tract and the guy next to him... what's his name... there's a tract that they call Shrimp Creek... Bill Monroe! He bought it and then I have this and above me is McKenzie... so between us all we have one of the largest forestry tracts along the Ogeechee River.

... Plum Creek owns a tract up the road, but it's for sale. And Timbervest owns a tract across the river, and it's for sale... They'll sell it in a minute.

07:00

...I know he was four years old. I know where his house was, and then he built another house and started acquiring little pieces around here.

And he would talk about things like—there was a wild bull—I don't know if you know, but all of Effingham County, that's where all the people of Savannah put their cows, Effingham County. Well then they started rounding them up and getting rid of them, well there was one bull they never got.

And that one bull, he said if you were in the woods and that bull came around you had to get out of there. And then they had a lot of problem with wild dogs, packs of wild dogs... feral dogs gone wild.

He told me, he showed me one time down on the road coming in the gate, just where y'all came in my gate and you made that turn, he stopped and said, "See that tree right there? That's a honey tree, it's got a beehive in it," and he said, "When we were kids we

craved something sweet, we craved it, because you didn't have anything. You couldn't go to the store. We were dirt poor. If we found a bee tree, it was like heaven."

08:38

The guy had a fourth-grade education, and he was one of the smartest men I have ever known. I mean, everything in here, the engineering that he did... like that cone: you and I would think, if we all tried to lift it up, and then put the bolts in... He didn't. He got automobile jacks, jacked it up, pulled the chain up there, and bolted it in. Pretty simple. But we'd have done it just the opposite...

I mean, everything he showed me he did, all these big beams he and his wife put up by themselves. They had a telephone pole back here and one down there, and they had a cable, and they would raise the beam up on the cable and then slide it down the cable right into place.

I mean, look at the steps coming up. That's an old logging truck bed—outside, when you went outside—that's a logging truck bed, and he angled it and he got logging chains and welded them down the side.

10:00

We've never shot a duck up here. We just want the wood duck boxes and have the wood ducks. Ducks, my feeling about ducks is there's so few of them, I don't want to kill them anymore. I haven't been duck hunting since... well, when Kenneth died I quit duck hunting. We don't shoot them.

We want... forestry, okay... we grow pine trees, but then we plant fields for game. Deer. Dove. Turkey. But then I want every kind of piece of wildlife that there is on this property. We have a huge gopher tortoise population. We have seen a few indigo snakes, but very rarely. The birds, wow...

Like and I've had Whit Gibbons... Whit Gibbons is probably the top herpetologist in the country. He's come up here and gone over this whole piece of property. That girl Wendy Zomlefer just did the flowers... I was aghast studying wildflowers, studying butterflies... so I am interested in the whole deal.

[Gongaware: Have you been curating it that way, managing it that way since 1980?]

11:30

Let me tell you what happened. Here's what happened... This is a true story...

I did what the foresters said to do and planted these great pines, and I read *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* by Janisse Ray, and I realized I have created a desert, just a wildlife desert.

And I wrote her a letter and said how much that book meant to me and that I was changing my whole way of managing forests to follow her guidance, and, so, about three or four months later, the Macon newspaper called me and said, Janisse Ray gave us your name and would you comment on the impact that book made on you.

And, um, yeah. So it was all published in the paper. And then she and I became very good friends, and I know her very well, and we published some Wormsloe Books of hers, but she changed my whole way of looking at land.

[Gongaware: “And so what did that mean sort of functionally in terms of the labor you had to do and the sort of replanting or rethinking of the planting plan?”]

Well, you don’t plant, like... Pine trees if you notice are planted like corn? We don’t do that, if we are going to plant them we go like this... [“So sort of, zig-zag”]... so then when you go to thin them you have a forest, rather than rows and rows of trees. Because I can show you, how bad, I’ve got a tract over here, they’re all in rows and it just looks horrible, just like a cornfield. And you want enough understory, so your natural vegetations will come back.

I’ve got a lot of longleaf I have planted, and we are trying to create the longleaf habitat, and we’re doing it. I mean, it’s working.

[Gongaware: “How many acres do you have planted longleaf now?”]

I think about 150.

[Gongaware: “And then on the other tracts, what are the sort of species there?”]

We have slash and loblolly.

[Gongaware: “And do you manage them with burning, or how do you...?”]

We burn. We... Thornton and I have an argument going. [*Thornton Barrow, Craig’s son, born 1971*] I think you ought to burn everything. He doesn’t. He wants more habitat. He thinks, I think he’s wrong, he thinks I’m wrong, so we have this debate going on.

I am convinced that the burning is really, really great for wildlife, and I can show you places that, if you let gum trees go for two years, you lose them. I mean, you can’t get rid of them. Once they get about that big, it’s over. I think he’s going to realize really soon that he needs to burn more.

15:10

Every weekend just about. My son and my daughter. (Remember Catherine?). We probably spent every weekend. [*His wife*] Diana didn’t like it too much, because she couldn’t get away, because it was just this room and two bedrooms upstairs and a

bathroom downstairs. And finally when I built that wing, that made her happy, because we have our bedroom over there.

...

You've got to remember, I was stupid. I was a stockbroker, okay. I didn't know that much about tractors and equipment. So I had to sort of learn, and make a lot of dumb mistakes. Lucky I didn't kill myself. You just get out there and you learn. Shit, now, there's not a piece of equipment on earth I can't run. But... I didn't ... you just have to learn.

You learn not to plow... you make these patches for game to go into... to breed, like quail and turkeys love it. The turkeys need to have insects in the spring when the babies are born, because that's where they get their protein, the insects. Well, if you disc in the summertime, all of your obnoxious weeds come up. If you disc in the wintertime, all of your good legumes come up. And, you learn all these things.

Also, I've learned how to burn. We had some close calls, and you know, I learned all that.

Luckily I had Kenneth guiding me, and then his son Barry [*Neidlinger*], we became good friends and Barry lives across the road, and he knows the woods and the rivers and he taught me an awful lot. I am indebted to both Kenneth and Barry. It was something go wrong I would call Barry, "Barry, I screwed up again!"

18:00

January, we are ending up the deer season. There's not much to do, okay. And then February, March, we're cleaning up, getting organized, if you got holes in the road, you patch the roads. You take up the deerstands. You just clean up. And then, in the Spring, we have turkey season. So we start turkeys. We all only hunt early in the morning, so we have the rest of the day. You're getting the fields ready, discing, you plant corn...

[Gongaware: You say you plant some patches for the turkeys, what are you planting there?]

Well, there's two different kind of patches. One is a patch, field, we plant, we put it in oats, or we put it in corn, or we put it in soybeans. These other patches you just want cleared. You might put wildflowers in there, you might put... you let the natural legumes come up in there. And so if you don't have crops coming up, they can go into these natural fields, and I am big on that... it really, really works.

I have strips that I disc every winter. Every spring, briar comes up, and all kind of legumes, blackberries, the deer and the turkeys all love it. The partridge pea is huge. We have a lot of that, fortunately.

[Gongaware: more questions re: planting...]

20:00

This year we planted this thing, it's called perennial peanut. The flower looks like a peanut, but it doesn't grow peanuts. We planted that and it's supposed to last five years, we'll see.

But now... all your planting is done, and so we will be listening for quail, because now is when the quail start calling each other and calling the young, their broods. See, I like to go out in the morning and do a quail count, and then it's just mowing grass.

It's just constant. Like down here we've got a big washout. I've got to go into town tomorrow and get a pipe, we'll have to put a pipe in. We had eight inches of rain in one day and the place was underwater. So, you doing a lot of maintenance and mowing.

This time of you have to work early in the morning because, goddamn, the afternoon'll kill you. So you try to work smart, and then September comes around and you start getting ready for deer season.

21:30

We kill every hog we see. And it's all trophy deer hunting, all of these deer were killed here. We don't shoot unless they're wall hangers.

22:15

Most people that quail hunt, they want action. Well, you're not going to find action up here. You're going to find two, three coveys. To me that's exciting, but my friends they want ten or twelve coveys. So they add supplement, and I am not going to do that.

22:50

... that's swamp, hardwood beautiful swamp, and the foresters will tell you to cut it. We will never cut it. I mean, Thornton won't cut it, I won't cut it. I mean, it's just too beautiful. You walk back in there... I'll take you down there and show it to you, it's pretty spectacular.

We're lucky because we can put in the river at the top of the property and float all the way down—I've done steel bridge, but a lot of the time we just float down, Barry's got a house at the point of the property and I float down to it. Bill Eswine and I float it a lot.

[Gongaware: "*Fishing?*"]

No, we just float. Fish in the lake, and then we got a lake back here called Tundy lake. It's an oxbow. It's a famous hotspot, well, well known.

[Gongaware: "Do you know when it was formed?"]

It had to be formed a long, long, long, long time ago, because too many old gentlemen tell me about coming in here as kids and fishing. I bet you it was turn of the century. It had to be because, too, there's an old railroad, old logging railroad, and the bridge, we might be able to see some of the bridge. The pilings are still there and we find railroad spikes a lot.

[Gongaware: "Have you ever done any archeological surveys up here?"]

Just myself, looking for arrowheads. Around the old inn when I plow that field I look around, see what I can find.

[Gongaware: "What's the old inn?"]

One day out of Savannah.

[Gongaware: "Tell that story a little bit..."]

I was told when they brought the gold from Dahlonega, down to Savannah, they would come down and cross the Ogeechee River not far from here, and that's where the ruts are still in the river. And that's where Freddy Rawlings down there could tell you about it. And then they would come here and stay at that inn and that was one day out of Savannah.

[Gongaware: "And the inn was on this property?"]

Yes, and you can see, if I disc the fields, well, you can see bricks and stuff and find all kind of junk. Broken bottles and stuff...

[Gongaware: "Do we know what era that is?"]

Well, no, well, it would be when cotton was king.... The inn was still standing, Kenneth told me, when he was a little boy and somebody like that Susan Exley could probably tell you, she probably has knowledge of that, because all I know is Kenneth told me that's where the inn stood and he remembered it. It was abandoned, fell in.

[Gongaware: "Do you know the name of it?"]

One Day Out of Savannah

26:30

What happened about Jack Leigh was, I didn't know that he was my sister's husband's stepbrother. I didn't know that. And Kenneth Wallace called me up and said, "There's some guy wants to take pictures on this river and I don't know that we want people up here taking pictures. You need to go find all about it..."

Whenever Kenneth Wallace asked me to go find out about it, so I asked my mother, I said, “Mother, you know Jack Leigh?” “Yeah, it’s your step-brother-in-law,” I said “Oh, okay,” so I figured I should all him up, and I did, well little did I know I had to raise the money for the damn book... and all that.

But he was... it was phenomenal working with him, I mean, he would come in the office and tell me what he’d done and how he’d done it, and “You need to go meet this guy...” One of his subjects was Billy Bishop—do you know Billy Bishop? The boats?

That picture up there is, that’s Kenneth Wallace on the left and Dr. Cone on the right. I think that’s one of the most classic pictures ever taken, and it’s on Dr. Cone’s property across the river. And when Dr. Cone died—that’s his shad license up on the wall—I went and got it off a post on the river to keep it so I’d have it. That is great...

And Jack took that picture of me and Kenneth, and that’s the first time... When I brought Jack up here to meet Kenneth, we drove down to the, that’s way down at the bus body, and he took that picture, see I think that’s one of best pictures... I had a great time with Jack, but I had to work my tail off to raise the money.

[Gongaware: “When you were talking about the vision for the book, and, I mean was it hunting and gathering or did he have a very direct sense of how he wanted to approach it?]

He wanted to approach it, I think, by meeting all the landowners on the river and what they did on the river. He wanted to record them as people. And here’s that one of the man with the flyrod over the river, and then he has the kid swimming off the dike, and then he has the girl standing by the tree, and Miss Bessie down at shad’s, had that picture of her in her element.

So you wanted everybody in their element, I think. But he was trying to record the people, and he did, before he died.

[Looking at the book...]

This was taken on my property. That’s Follet. Earl Follet. He lived in Guyton, he lived in the quarters and worked for Kenneth, and he’d come down to go fishing.

There’s somebody that’s alive, and I can’t think of his name, but his father was pictured in the river... Darden... that’s it... Darden... Buddy Darden. Buddy Darden was a congressman and, United States Congressman, and I haven’t talked to him, I mean, I can run him down...

31:30

It was funny because it was so hard to get it started, to get the money, because he needed the money. You can see the donors at the beginning of the book—the bigger

contributors here in bigger letters, and then you go on down. But we had a hard time raising the money.

I went to Union Camp, Jim Pate, and I have the letter, I wrote it, I have it at home. I got my Uncle Mack, Mack Bell, to go with me and we had lunch with Jim Pate and we said Union Camp ought to help underwrite this book, fund it, I need five or ten thousand dollars.

He didn't comment, didn't comment, I didn't hear from him, didn't hear from him... So I finally called him up, I said, "Jim, I need to know something..." a lot of the landowners on the river want your company to participate, you own too much land.

He said, "We talked to George Busbee (George Busbee, he was a former governor, he was a great photographer in his own...) and he said that Jack Leigh's photographs aren't worthy." And I said, "Okay," and so I wrote him a letter and I told him, I said, I can't believe Union Camp can't spend a few thousand dollars supporting the people on the river when they own so much land.

Jack, the funny thing with this book, we dictated to the press... It had to be done by Steinhart... because they were the only ones capable of copying his photographs the exact correct way, and Jack went up there to watch every photograph come of the printer, to make sure it was right.

Today, I think this books in like the third printing, and now with digital, they can copy it identical. If you took this book and a new one, the pictures are identical. Isn't that amazing?

We auctioned off one of Billy Bishops boats. I think two or three of them we raffled off. They only cost three hundred dollars...

34:08

[Gongaware: Remind me, who was Billy Bishop? Tell the story about what made his boats special.]

They were made perfectly for the Ogeechee River, to paddle the Ogeechee River, and I think it's one of the finest photographs of a human being [*Paging through book...*] Here it is, look at it... and it's all made out of cypress and you had the handles, see the handles right here and right here, that's how you carried the boat. This was a trap door, so you would be sitting back here paddling, I'd be sitting on this seat, but I could swivel either way on this seat—not swivel, but move my feet either way. So when I catch a bream, I would swing it back, you would take the paddle, lift the door up, and I would drop the fish in. He had a plan, it was a systematic way you were supposed to do it, and he told me, he said, "Now, if you're going to be in that boat by yourself, you need to get a cement

block and put it in the front, but wrap it in the towel... don't scratch the boat, wrap it in a towel. You see he's got the boat there, he's got another one back there he's building.

[Gongaware: "You said there was something about the paint as well?"]

They were all painted the same color. I will show you one outside, it's a weird sort of green and then the inside is all varnished. I got one that Bil and I screwed up, and then I got another one.

37:00

Kenneth would call me—when someone would do something—

The National Park Service wanted to make the river a scenic river and that like—had to have been in the mid 'eighties—because they had a meeting at the Savannah Science Center and everybody on the lower river showed up, everybody that owned property...

And they made a mistake—in those days there was a color line still—and they sent the wrong person down to do it, and one man got up, that owned like five thousand acres, before the meeting started.

He said, "I am going to tell you something. I have taken the oath for this country three times in my life. Once in the Cub Scouts; once in the Boy Scouts; and once in the United States Marines. I went to Korea and then I went to Vietnam, to protect my damn land, and if you think that you are going to come down here and set one foot on my land, you're nuts. You get your black ass back on that plane and you get back to Washington."

And that did it. That killed the whole thing. It was tragic that they didn't have enough sense to do some politicking in the background before they came and they should have sent somebody that would be amenable to the culture that's on this river.

I mean, these people in Effingham county are the last ones to get rid of the Confederate flag, and a lot of them haven't done it yet.

[Gongaware: "Well it's impressive that they had such an incredible turnout."]

They were all there to fight. They didn't want people come and take their land. If they'd have done it in a positive way and an educated way and had the right kind of people do it and have a few people stand up and say, "Wait a minute let's protect this river..." but it was *they* were going to be taking *your* land.

Well, if they got an easement on my property along the river, what difference does that make? I can't use it anyway! It's floodplain. But it didn't fly at all, ooh, it was ugly and I had to come back and report to Kenneth

[Gongaware: “Well it’s interesting because there, you know, that would have been governmental protection, but it seems like the people who live along the river, the landowners, there’s a sense of protectiveness already.”]

40:00

That’s right, until you have threats like the King Finishing or this Guyton Wastewater Plant, which they are laying the pipes right now as we speak. The judge told them not to start that plant until my hearing on August 1st, and guess what? They’re doing it. And the judge is going to be pissed.

[Gongaware: “This is a big debate that you are heavily involved in?”]

I am fighting by myself. Couple hundred thousand dollars I spent in lawyers, but I’m right, and they’re wrong, and I made a commitment to Kenneth I’d take care of this place.

[Gongaware: “And so what’s the concern specifically. I mean, sort of lay out your concerns...”]

Well, it’s in the 100 year flood plain, okay, number one, and number two, all the water flows this way and downstream. So anything in that—wastewater plant’s a sprayfield—anything they put on the field, it’s going to go to subsurface water and flow downstream.

I had Terra-Com put wells in, and we’ve done tests showing where the subsurface water is, and most times it’s like at two feet. Their engineer, who measured it from the Chatham County well, subsurface water, on the bluff at Port Wentworth, says it’s seven feet. And he extrapolated that it would be seven feet up here, which is 45 miles away.

Well, if it’s seven feet you can spray it... but I have proven, absolutely by the best water company in America, Terra-Com, that it is going to go into the subsurface water and it is going to flow into everybody’s land downstream. That’s what’s going to happen, and the judge at the appeals court in Atlanta ruled that it was the worst possible site to build a wastewater treatment plant, but EPD has the right to issue a permit. And so we are appealing that to superior court and see if we can get a ruling to stop them...

If we don’t stop them, and they build a plant, if one speck of that comes on my property I can close the plant down forever. Now, don’t you think ... the city council would want to read our testimony, expert testimony, and say, “Wait a minute... it might not be too smart to do this, because Mr. Barrow can close us down.”

[Gongaware: “Are there other landowners that could participate?”]

They won’t. There’s a couple that would like to, but can’t afford to. Like Barry and Miss Jeanie Wallace, they’re all behind me. They write, Jeanie Wallace writes me notes. Freddy Rawlins up here, he got up and spoke, and almost cried, but he doesn’t have any

money. Will Monroe is too stupid and tight, and he's too stupid to realize that most of it's going to go on his property. He hasn't done a damn thing and isn't going to. And anybody above it doesn't care.

There's a guy across the river, Jimmy Hayes. Has an organic garden. Nice guy. And he can't ...

44:00

You know, these rivers are the poor-man's country club. They go to the river, they go to the river, they go to the river. It's the only thing they have... and why Effingham County and the City of Guyton doesn't realize they're surrounded by these two wonderful rivers, and yet, they don't care about them.

It's sad, and the EPD... as crooked as the state. When Sonny Purdue was governor it was Carolyn Couch, she was head of EPD... She was tough. Tough. One day the Dean of the College of Environmental Design got a phone call, said, "Ah, this is the governor's office and you're going to hire Ms. Carolyn Couch and she'll start next week and we're going to announce it in the Atlanta Journal that she's accepted the position at the University of Georgia," boom, she's was gone... The governor ... control...

And Jenny Lynn Bradley? You know Jenny Lynn? She was head of DNR, head of it... and Purdue wanted to buy Casey Woods, which is this big tract outside of Macon that had been offered to him, to the state, and they turned it down. Then somehow Purdue wound up owning a thousand acres next to Casey Woods... so instead of buying the whole tract he bought half the tract for twice the money it would have cost if he'd bought it originally. And Jenny Lynn Bradley had the votes to vote it down the night before the meeting. The next morning she did not have the votes and she was asked to resign.

I mean, you don't ask Jenny Lynn Bradley to resign. That's the smartest nicest woman on earth... she was gone... so the political machine is brutal.

[Gongaware: well sometimes the rivers get together, shake hands, and remind the county people that they're there, right? '29? Could that happen again?"]

Oh absolutely, it almost happened a month ago we had 8 inches of rain and we were just absolutely blessed that the river was low. If the river had been in floodstage, God help us. It would have been.... God help us...

Now, what these people don't realize is we have global warming, and one little change in temperature can have huge effects on the environment. Huge. Look at Saluda River in Columbia. Look at what happened to the Greenbriar in West Virginia. I mean, that is horrific. Look what's happened in Houston, Texas. It's going to happen here, and the... pollutants... the filth that went down the Saluda River went right into the river, has an effect on all the coastlines, all the shorelines. It's.... these people don't realize it.

[Dr. Perry: "It's all connected..."]

I think the Riverkeeper, as a group, ought to go to 100 Miles and say, y'all want to protect the coast, but you've got to be aware that what affects the coast is all our rivers coming down, and y'all have got to start doing something upstream to protect the coast. If you're not, then when we have one of these horrific events, kiss the coast goodbye. And they keep saying what a valuable coast we have and all the biodiversity and all the food chain and everything else. Well, if you're going to protect it, you better keep International Paper and ITT Rayonier from dumping all their crap in the river.

The EPD, with King Finishing, let them discharge for seven years without a permit!

[Gongaware: "Crazy."]

It is... luckily... I am able to fight the war, so as long as I can fight it, I'm going to fight it.

[Gongaware: "Well it's interesting because there's a long history in America—I am thinking about the Mississippi—of trying to contain and constrain the rivers, and we're about to see on the Savannah River, dredging, deepening, and that's been a river that's so, at this point it's almost a manmade river. They've taken the cuts out, they've put them back. And the Ogeechee is sort of a miracle river in a way that hasn't had that, that's had people like you and the Kenneth Wallaces of the world fighting for it all this time..."]

And Dr. Cone. Dr. Cone told me one day he said, "Now look here boy, here's what you need to do. Those willows control that river. You need to go out there and cut those willows out of that river. Yeah, like, right! He would cut, spend days cutting the willows out of the river...

[Gongaware: "He had the property across the river? And what was your relationship with him?"]

Kenneth told me I needed to go meet him and took me over there to meet him. Said, I need you to go meet him. You need to know your neighbor. He'd see me on the river and he'd give us shad. "Son, take some shad..."

50:50

Everybody used the river for different reasons. Everybody had their reasons. He was... the older, older guys like Dr. Cone and Kenneth Wallace, they'd put out the effort, which the next generation, they would rather catch bream than put up a net and go check it all the time. Lot of the... Barry puts out catfish lines. His big thing is catfish. And if he ever cooks you catfish stew, don't eat it...

And they all go to the river! Little Jamie, his daughter, she's sweet as they come

[Gongaware: "So that would be Kenneth Wallace's granddaughter?"] Yes, she's fabulous.

She got up in front of the EPD and cried about King Finishing. She said, “We went to the river every year since the day I was born, the 4th of July, and now we can’t go. Y’all have ruined it for us.”

See, what everybody did, which was stupid, they went and got a class-action suit, and they got some lawyers that weren’t really that good, and then once they won the suit, they had to fight over how to distribute the money. Well, I sued them by myself... I wasn’t involved... I wasn’t going to join a class-action. So I was able to come out pretty well, and I didn’t have to divide my money with anybody.

[Gongaware: “Well it’s interesting, people as far down as Fort Argyle are just now beginning to feel comfortable pulling fish out of the river because of the testing that the University of Georgia’s been doing and... sort of... they seem convinced that it’s back.”]

When I bought this place in 1980, I didn’t hesitate to drink out of the river. No more.

[Gongaware: “Well at the time it was one of the five or so cleanest rivers in the country, right?”]

The way King Finishing got—this is a funny thing—the King Finishing plant was John P. King manufacturing. It was Riverside Mills, it’s out of Augusta... my father was on the board, and ... they put that plant there to hide from the unions. But they didn’t discharge anything into the river. They were making t-shirts and stuff. And then those crooked guys ended up buying it and made that flame-retardant stuff... and all those solvents and chemicals, and dumped them in the river.

And they did it Chicago and dumped it in the sewer system, so they came down here and bought that plant. But that plant was put there to hide from the unions. My father told me that.

There’s another guy outside of Millen. Emily knows them... you know the craftsman outside of Millen. He’s not on the board, but he’s made things for the riverkeeper...

[Regarding the cone that Kenneth Wallace had made into a fireplace hood:]

In the swamps, where they would cut big tupelo, they had to drag them out of the swamp, and so they’d get them over into an area and then they stick the heads up in here, and this chain goes to a big winch, and they would winch them back up on land. So when you went to Abercorn Island, this was the centerpiece where the winch was, and you’d see all the spokes, ditches going off ...

55:40

[The Bus Body [Gongaware: “What’s the story of the bus body?”]]

Well, that's its license plate up there. I got it off... and that's a 1949 license plate, so we would assume that Kenneth got the bus body back in 1949-1950 and he wanted to make a fish camp down at the river and so he based it, again, on the 1929 flood. He got old railroad tracks, stuck them up, put a bar across, and then got a cable, and just swung the bus up there and mounted it, and that was his fish camp.

You know what this is?

That... the black loggers couldn't drink out of the cups for the white people, so they made their own cups...

Etc. "We find things around here every now and again..."