

Title: Key West Oral History Interview with Ray "Tricky" Pinder

INTERVIEWER: Ray 'Tricky' Pinder

INTERVIEWEE: Albert Key

TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Benitez

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INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:06:07

Key: We have to go just about a short distance (before we record?). This is Albert [clears throat] Key interviewing Mr. Ray Pinder, commonly known as 'Ray Tricky'. Mr. Pinder, can you tell me how you got your name as Ray Tricky?

Pinder: Yes, that come from my father. He was called Joe Tricky and I guess I just picked it up from him.

K: Why was he called 'Tricky'? Do you know?

P: His grand-- his daddy was called Joe Tricky, also and it just followed right down in the family.

K: Are you third generation Conch?

P: Right.

K: Where were your parents from?

P: My parents was from Key West.

K: Originally from the Bahamas, your parents?

P: Uh, grandparents was from Bahamas Islands.

K: You had Ray's Grocery Store on Southard Street. That was Southard and White Street?

P: Southard and uh-- no, it was Newton and White, right at the intersection of Newton and White.

K: Uh-huh. And you now have Ray's Fish House right there on Eisenhower Drive and Truman Avenue?

P: Eisenhower and Roosevelt.

K: Eisenhower and Roosevelt. I always thought maybe they call you 'Ray Tricky' because you've pulled a lot of tricks on people--

P: No, my daddy was called 'Joe Tricky'.

K: Joe Tricky? Because he played tricks on people do you think? Do you know?

P: I don't know.

K: You don't know?

P: I really don't know how he got the name.

K: Oh. Well, maybe because you're called Ray Tricky now and I know that you play tricks on people. Are you living up--?

P: They used to just call me 'Tricky' but now they have the 'Ray' in front of it.

K: You have been known, Ray, to fish for turtle in a very unique way and this has been, of course, many years ago before all the laws now that prohibit the catching or slaughtering of small turtles. But I heard about you and your turtling days which hasn't been too far-- too long ago. Can you tell me as best you can how you were able to go after turtles and tell me the turtles habits the best way you can?

P: Well, turtling is very unique because you have to have two people. One that steers the boat has to know as much as the one that harpoons. And the man that's steering, he more or less has to herd the turtle in and keep them in towards the bank because if they get in deep water, you lose them and there's just no way to harpoon them. So you keep herding them in towards the shallow water and as people know, they go real fast- maybe thirty, thirty-five miles an hour sometimes. So, you have to keep chasing them 'til you tire them down quite a bit and then when they get in front of you and the man manipulates the boat and gets in position, then you harpoon him and then you throw the buoy overboard and let him take it for awhile and then they'll settle on the bottom and then you go and pull them up. They're still alive and you can plug them and they'll live even after that.

K: Is it true that the turtles will try to out-maneuver you by going into the sun so that they can blind you? Is that true or do you--?

P: Oh, yes. Turtles will-- his natural instincts will make him turn towards the sun so you can't see him too well. And if you over-speed the boat, they will stop almost on a dime and you pass over them before you know it and then they get in back of you and you'll never be able to find them again.

K: How are you able to spot a turtle? Where are they located? In channels or in flats? Where do you look for the young turtles that you were after?

P: The turtle we was after, we went on the banks mostly in the shallow water- maybe three feet, four foot deep- and you have to stand on a high bow. The bow has to be high because the man that's steering the boat, he's down a little lower and he can't see too well so you have to guide the man that's steering the boat with your (pole?) more or less.

K: Do you have to be a sharp-shooter harpoonist?

P: Only at times. If you got a good man that knows what he's doing steering the boat, he'll take you right to the turtle.

K: Do you ride right on top of that turtle until you're in good position to harpoon?

P: Well, usually you keep him about four or five feet ahead of the boat if you can and on your right hand side.

K: Are you giving directions to the man who's steering the boat or he feels your-- he can see the turtle, also?

P: When you first spot the turtle, usually the man will see him at the same time- the one that's steering. But after he picks up speed, then the man will lose sight of him who's steering and you have to more or less direct him and keep him going on the course the turtle's taking.

K: That brings me to another point. I understand that the turtle backs- the shell itself- has a commercial value. Did you always-- or did you ever consider how you had to harpoon that turtle so you wouldn't destroy the shell?

P: No, it didn't make much difference. You try to hit him in the center of the back but that little hole-- the harpoon is so small that it could be plugged very easy with a little cement or (fiber wood?) and you'd never hardly notice it.

K: Thereby not destroying the shell?

P: Not destroying the shell.

K: You have just heard from Ray Pinder, known as Ray Tricky living at 1315 Pine Street, Key West, Florida. This is our bicentennial year, our anniversary of 200 years. These records will be placed in the Monroe County Library for future use to those who are interested in this material and will be there for prosperity. Thank You.

END OF INTERVIEW