

Cecile Robin

“I went shrimping with my husband in the '80s because my son had a boat and my other son bought a boat, so they weren't shrimping with their daddy anymore. So, I had to, well I didn't have to because he could have got a partner, but I went shrimping with him because I didn't have anything to do at home. All of the children was married, so I said, 'Well I'm going out with ya.'

“One time it was foggy. We were coming out of Shell Beach, and he was putting out the rigs, and instead of getting on one side he got on the other, and the rope knocked him overboard. I turned around with the boat, and when I saw him, all I saw was his bald head in the water, and I said I would never make fun of that bald head again.

“But, in Lake Borgne at the same time, they had a boy that fell off an oyster boat and drowned, and I said the waters were calling somebody. You know, they were calling somebody – that's how we say it.

“Now, my son, he will not go out on a Tuesday. He'll go out Monday evening at 10 or 11 o'clock in the nighttime, so he wouldn't say 'I'm going out on a Tuesday.' He's going out on a Monday night. He's always been superstitious like that.

“They have bad superstitions, good superstitions, fisherman's superstitions, and one was don't paint the boat blue. It was bad luck to paint the boat blue. And another guy said don't bring bananas on the boat. They said it was bad luck to have a woman on a shrimp boat. They also said it was bad luck for a woman to walk on a trawl, which I never did because my husband would say, 'Don't walk on that trawl!' I said, 'Ok!'

“My father-in-law would say, 'Well we didn't have any newscasters like we have today,' so, they went with how the gnats would bite you. It meant we had some bad weather. And you always saw three nights of fog, it's gonna rain the next night – always. And if you see the storm birds you better come in and pack up because we were getting some high tides, maybe hurricanes, something like that.

“A long time ago you had fishermen. You had a man that went out and he trapped, then he came in and he fished crabs, then he fished shrimp, then he fished oysters, then he went trapping again. Five different things he did in that year. In these days, you have an oysterman or a shrimper or a fisherman. They don't have too many men that just have seines and fish. One of my sons – right now with the gas so much and the shrimp so less – he's a carpenter. When you're a fisherman you've got to have another trade. My other son, he's a welder.”