

**CBMM-MontroWright**

Q: Okay, so we're doing an interview, oral history interview today. It's at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. Could you please tell us your name, your date of birth, and that you give us permission to record?

A: [00:00:11] My name is Montro Wright. Birthday 12/06/39.  
I'm giving y'all permission to interview me and...

Q: And record.

A: [00:00:24] And record.

Q: Yes, sir.

A: [00:00:26] Yeah.

Q: So, first question, Captain Montro: where are you from?

A: [00:00:31] I'm from down... I was raised down at Kent Narrows, Grasonville. My mother and father, they worked in the packing houses, shucking the oysters. And they would shuck while the oyster seasons was in. When the oyster season was over, they would leave and go up to Saulsbury Brothers Cannery in Grasonville, Maryland.

Q: Were they from the Queen Anne's County, your parents from Queen Anne's County area?

A: [00:01:01] My mother was from Cambridge, Maryland. My father was from Oxford.

Q: What were their names?

A: [00:01:07] My father's name was Andrew Wright, and my mother's name was Evelyn Askins.

Q: Who did they work for when they worked at Kent Narrows?

A: [00:01:17] Mr. Johnny Coursey.

Q: Shucking oysters in the winter?

A: [00:01:21] Shucking oysters in the winter, and after the oyster season was over, they always went up to the cannery in Ridgely, Maryland and worked for Saulsbury Brothers.

Q: Canning tomatoes?

A: [00:01:38] They did peas, corn, no tomatoes, string beans, sweet potatoes.

Q: It was a big industry down there?

A: [00:01:48] It was one of the biggest.

Q: Did you have siblings, brothers and sisters?

A: [00:01:55] Yes, I had one brother and two sisters.

Q: Are they still with us?

A: [00:01:59] No, they're passed.

Q: And what were their names, Captain?

A: [00:02:03] My brother's name was Andrew Wright, Junior. My sister's name was Dolores Askins and Lucille Askins.

Q: What was Kent Narrows like when you were little?

A: [00:02:17] It was about 19 or 21 shucking houses on the Kent Narrows when I was really young, and they had the shanties that... where the people lived that helped process

the oysters and you know, shuck the oysters and all that. And they was only small places, like 12-by-12 maybe, and that's where we lived. And some had two rooms, and some had three rooms. Some had one room. It was just according to how large your family was.

Q: Where at in Kent Narrows was where you lived?

A: [00:02:58] We lived right there by where United Shellfish is now.

Q: So, the northern...northeastern side of Kent Narrows.

A: [00:03:06] Yes.

Q: And there were shanties on both sides of Kent... the Kent Island and Grasonville side or just the Grasonville?

A: [00:03:16] Both sides.

Q: Both sides.

A: [00:03:17] Yeah. You had [unclear]. You had Johnny Coursey, and that was the ones that was operating when I was growing up. And you had Cal Baxter.

Q: Cal Baxter?

A: [00:03:33] Yes.

Q: And they hired... were they local workers, or were there people coming from all over?

A: [00:03:41] The people came from all over.

Q: So, they were almost migrant workers in some ways. They went to [both speaking-unclear]

A: [00:03:46] A lot of them. A lot of them were. They came like the side of Virginia. A lot of them came from Crisfield, and once they got up here, they stayed. It was awful lot.

Q: Why do you think that they stayed once they got up here?

A: [00:03:59] Well, they shucked oysters down in Crisfield too, but they had more places to work up here. Like Darrell's family, his mother was from Crisfield area, so once they all moved up here, and George Roy and all them.

Q: So, they started their families here based on work?

A: [00:04:20] Right.

Q: They came up to work and started...

A: [00:04:21] Right.

Q: ... their families. And most of those families still live in the area though. A lot of them do.

A: [00:04:28] Some of them do, yeah, and a lot of them passed on.

Q: What was your childhood like, your earliest memories?

A: It was fair. I mean, we was very, very poor, and sometime we had plenty, and sometime we didn't have plenty. Sometime we had... it was very, very stressful, and there was times we didn't even have no food. And then Mr. Carroll Baxter had a store, and mostly the families always could choice food on credit. So, you'd go down there and

get whatever you need, and at the end of the week, you always had to pay the bill.

Q: How often... so, your parents were both working in the shucking houses. They got paid once a week and then would have to go... I imagine that was a big chunk of their paycheck went out on...

A: [00:05:23] It was most of it.

Q: So, you were always working to catch up.

A: [00:05:27] Right. Never was no money left over. And my father, he kind of drank a lot, so... my mother never drank. She never touched a drop, but... and it was up and down for us. We was really, really had a rough time. And it wasn't only our family. It was, I know at least most all families down there, you know.

Q: How many shanties or families do you think lived down in Kent Narrows back then?

A: [00:06:04] Goodness, let me see. I would say William H. Harris, he had about maybe 30, 35 places to live, and you came over to William Harris, he had about the same. Then you came over to Mr. Johnny Coursey; he had about... he might've had 30, 35. And then Mr. Carroll Baxter had some. And it was a few left from... I remember Gilbert Baxter, but I can't think of his father's name. He used to have a oyster house, but it burnt down, and it never was built

back up, but it still was some of the shanties left, maybe about 20 up. And then they had a Mr... oh, what was his name? He was Chance. I can't remember his...

Q: Did the people who lived in the shanties have to pay anything, or was that [both speaking-unclear]?

A: [00:07:10] It was like all they had to pay was their electric, like two dollars a week or something like that.

Q: What kind of heating was in those shanties?

A: [00:07:18] You did the best you could.

Q: A space heater?

A: [00:07:21] Space heater, little wooden heater, things like that. It was a lot of fires, that when one of them would catch a fire at some time, the whole row burned down.

Q: No kidding? Do you remember any of those, like from when you were younger, the...

A: [00:07:37] Plenty of them.

Q: ...fires down there?

A: [00:07:40] Yes, I've seen some. I even have seen some of the kids that got burnt up, because a lot of time, their parents would, if they had a child maybe one, two years old, they didn't have a babysitter, so they would go and work for like a hour and then run back to the house because it was only just a little walking distance, a half a block maybe. You know, you could just look right up at your

door, so they would just go and work little while. Then, they'd run back up the house.

Q: So, it was a danger.

A: [00:08:15] It was a lot of dangers.

Q: Well, was Kent Narrows also a dangerous place in other ways?

A: [00:08:22] It was rough because it was a lot of little speakies, they used to call them, little bars where when people got paid on Friday, they'd... I would say on that side, on the northern side, guess you would call it, it was maybe like seven or eight different little speakies around.

Q: No kidding?

A: [00:08:51] Yeah. They wouldn't hold many. Some of them would hold 10, 12; some would hold 15.

Q: Were they legal places?

A: [00:09:00] No.

Q: They were little clubs, kind of?

A: [00:09:02] Yeah. Some of them weren't legal at all.

Q: Gambling? Was there gambling?

A: [00:09:09] Well, they would gamble, but most of the time they would gamble outside, shooting crap and stuff like that and all.

Q: When I was a kid, I remember down that way, a guy they called Tap, right?

A: [00:09:21] Tap, yeah.

Q: Tap. Tell me about him. Who was that?

A: [00:09:24] Tap, he was... his family was Sorrells, and he had some kind of disorder.

Q: He seemed to be well liked.

A: [00:09:37] Oh, he was well liked, never bothered nobody.

Q: People say [both speaking-unclear].

A: [00:09:40] He always walked around up and down the road and all, and his family took care of him and everything, so... and...

Q: He was one of those characters in the area.

A: [00:09:52] Right. Right. He never worked or anything. They just... he wasn't able to work because...

Q: And he was a Sorrell?

A: [00:10:00] He was a Sorrell, yeah.

Q: Which we'll talk about in a little bit because I want to ask you something about packinghouses and the efforts to unionize back in the '60s. Sorrell's name, Richard Sorrell's name kept coming up as I was researching that.

A: [00:10:19] Yeah.

Q: But in the meantime, when did you start working on the water? Or first, let me ask you this: did you have a job before you started working on the water?

A: [00:10:29] No. Well, we used to come home from school, like we was eight, nine years old, we'd go wait for the boats to come in, and we'd help them unload. We'd wheel the oysters in the bin. They was 50 cents, 75 cents. That's the way we would make our little extra money. And by the time we got maybe...maybe 14, so we started going out on some of their boats on Saturdays because some of the guys didn't have nobody to go with them, and the ones that really was hard workers, they didn't want to miss a day, so they would take you on the boat, and we'd go culling oysters for them. That's how we fell in love with working.

Q: Culling?

A: [00:11:13] Yeah, culling oysters.

Q: Do you remember who you culled for?

A: [00:11:16] Oh, the first one I think I called for, his name was Mr. Rusher Cornish. He lived down a little creek road a little ways down to the place. I don't know what they call that now.

Q: How old do you think you were then?

A: [00:11:33] Oh, about 12.

Q: About 12?

A: [00:11:34] Yeah.

Q: Was that your money, or did that go to your family?

A: [00:11:38] [laughs] Well, sometime it was my money, but then we'd always give a... Whatever we made, we would give our mother half of it, to help out.

Q: Sounds like your mom was a hard worker.

A: [00:11:49] She was a hard worker. And it took a lot for her to survive because like I said, my father wasn't as good supportive as he should've been, you know.

Q: So, your mom had to pick up the slack.

A: [00:12:03] Had to pick up the slack. And there was a place on the other side that [unclear] over like where the fishermen and all, they was... well, where the crab deck is, and it used to be a placed they called Mr... we used to call him Mr. Holland, and he had this great, big building, and he sold used clothes. People, they'd come from Baltimore or somewhere, had all these clothes, and that's where most all the people down in there, you would go to get clothes. They would go get used clothes that came out of Baltimore City and different places that people donated.

Q: Wow.

A: [00:12:41] So, our mother, she was really a good [both speaking-unclear].

Q: She could probably make a little bit of money last.

A: [00:12:47] Yes.

Q: Oh, wow.

A: [00:12:48] Yeah. And they only made a little bit. It sound like, but they wasn't making much back then either.

Q: What did y'all eat when you were kids? What was on the table?

A: [00:13:01] Well, we'd... like on Sundays, sometime we would have chicken. But during the week, we'd, you know, have soups and whatever she could afford to do.

Q: Whatever she could come up with.

A: [00:13:12] Come up with at that time, yes, because we could... oh, we'd go to the store to get whatever they want, but they had to be able to pay the store at the end of the week too. You didn't go no two or three weeks; you had to pay it at the end of the week.

Q: Because then they wouldn't give you the credit again if you didn't do that.

A: [00:13:29] They wouldn't give you.

Q: So, you go out as a young, relatively young kid, culling oysters. How long did you do that, and did you do any other, crab or anything like that?

A: [00:13:47] I didn't. My brother tried crab when he was like maybe 15, but I started working. I used to... my grandparents, I went and lived with them for a little while, and they went over to the cannery because they would go in right after our season in April, early May. Sometime

I'd leave school a week or two early to go and pick strawberries, and I started working on a farm, was over in Ridgely. You said...

Q: What did you do down at the farm?

A: [00:14:19] I helped milk cows, and I got on and try a plowed and cultivate, and I did all that. We worked from...

Q: So, you'd done the two things that Maryland is known for, worked on the water and worked on the farm.

A: [00:14:34] Yep. I used to... we'd start five or six in the morning and worked up... take off for lunch for half a hour, but then we'd five or six in the evening, all day. I used to get 15 dollars a week, and even when I worked down at Mr. Johnny Coursey's, I used to get three dollars a day. [laughs] Used to work half a day Saturday for nothing. [laughs] But it was good money, man. I used to buy all my little school clothes and eyeglasses and all because you had to work if you're going to better yourself a little bit. So, then, by the time I got about 16, 16, yes, me and my brother, we bought this boat from Mr. Warren Butler. Boat was only 675 dollars, I think it was.

Q: And what kind of boat was that?

A: [00:15:40] It was a little deadrise Mr. Butler had bought from somebody in Grasonville, and it was a sharp stern,

like it was sharp on each end. They renamed the boat after our mother, used to call it *Little Mickey*, and the boat was only 675 dollars, and Mr. Asbury Timlin, he signed for me to get 275 dollars. You had to have a cosigner. You couldn't borrow anything then without someone signing for you. And we had a couple hundred dollar between us.

Q: That's it for a boat?

A: [00:16:18] Yes, and I had a car. I was 16, so I had it paid for, so I had to go up to Mr. Bishop, Mr. [unclear] Bishop, was his name. I pawned the car, and I got enough on the car for to go finish paint for the boat. So, that's how we became watermans, and somebody loaned us some tongs, and I was 16, and he was 17.

Q: Were you parents still alive then?

A: [00:16:50] Parents were still alive, but we never had a real home to live in, nothing like that, until we left on our own.

Q: Was it different, working back then, for African Americans, working?

A: [00:17:10] Not when you was on the water. When you was out on the water, everybody was treated the same. The only difference was when you came in, sometime they would get 25 cent more a bushel than you might would get.

Q: They would pay the white...

A: [00:17:27] Right.

Q: ... fishermen a little more?

A: [00:17:29] A little. They'd pay them like 25 cents.

Q: For no reason other than racism?

A: [00:17:33] Right, and because you could work right side of them, and you'd come in, they would say their oysters are better than yours, so they would give them a quarter more, the better price.

Q: Do you feel like that point is one of the reasons that you found yourself working on the water, that there was an equality out there that maybe wasn't on land as much?

A: [00:17:58] Well, once you was out there on that water, everybody respected you and treated you like a man. It wasn't a lot of racism out on that water. I mean, you know. And if you didn't have a real good education, that was a way that you could make some money if you worked hard. I mean, it was times there wasn't even 50 be out there when the ice and stuff be all on your face and mustache and stuff like that. And you'd be so cold, you couldn't even move, but you could be...you was your own boss, and if you worked hard, you could survive.

Q: So, if you were willing to work hard and learn the business...

A: [00:18:40] Right.

Q: So, you go on, work for somebody else to learn how to do it.

A: [00:18:46] Yes.

Q: You mentioned the first gentleman you worked with when you were calling. Do any other mentors jump out in your mind? People who taught you?

A: [00:18:55] It was a lot of them that I had respect for and I used to pay attention to, and I learned a lot from them, like Mr. Warren Butler, and you had Paul Washington. And it was quite a few more, Mr. James McDaniel, probably heard of him. And it was quite a few. I can't remember all their names right now.

Q: Captain Warren passed away recently.

A: [00:19:26] Yeah, couple years ago.

Q: So, he was someone to look up to.

A: [00:19:30] He was really someone to look up to because him and his father worked together a long while, and they all finished high school, and Mr. Butler was well educated. And he left and went in the service, and when he came out, he built his home. It's in Grasonville right today.

Q: Let's talk about your other boats a little bit. After you bought that first boat with your brother, tell me what came next, like how many boats have you owned?

A: [00:20:09] Altogether, with that one, I done had four boats.

Q: So, was the next boat after that, after the *Little Mickey*, was the first *Miss Shirley B*?

A: [00:20:20] Yes. It was named *Shirley B*.

Q: So, you'd gotten married by then.

A: [00:20:27] Yes.

Q: Who was your... what was your wife's name then?

A: [00:20:30] Bordley.

Q: And she was from?

A: [00:20:32] Batts Neck.

Q: Batts Neck?

A: [00:20:33] Yes.

Q: And you guys got married in...?

A: [00:20:37] We got married in 1968, but we lived together 10 years before we got married.

Q: And how many kids do you have?

A: [00:20:48] We have two together. She already had two when I met her. She had been married before. And I had two before we got...

Q: So, six total?

A: [00:21:02] Yes.

Q: And you guys have been together ever since?

A: [00:21:06] Ever since. Ever since.

Q: Quite a strong family.

A: [00:21:10] Yes. It was a close-knit family, and the Bordley family was really close, so after I met her, I moved down to Batts Neck and stayed down there with her for like 9 to 10 years. Then after we got married, then that's when we moved to Grasonville, Upper Heights in Grasonville.

Q: So, the first boat after the *Little Mickey* was the first *Miss Shirley B*?

A: [00:21:38] Yes.

Q: And you've had three *Miss Shirley Bs*?

A: [00:21:43] Yeah, had *Shirley B* and *Shirley B II*, and this is *Shirley B III*.

Q: About how long did you own those boats in between the next... before the next one.

A: [00:21:53] Well, the one, I kept for about maybe four years, five years maybe, and Mr. Edwards Thompson, he had a boat, and I ran... I had my captain license. It was in 1970, and he had a boat that he had it Coast Guard approved, so I ran that one year, can fishing parties. And then the next... well, and then he sold that one. The next year, he built another one, and then he asked me, did I want it? Did I want the next one he had built? He made me a proposition and told me what he wanted for the boat and how much I had to give down. He was a nice man. I had

no idea to ever own a boat like that back then. The boat was 16,000 dollar, and it was a fortune back then. It worked out fine. It was named *Shirley B II*. It was brand new.

Q: Wooden boat? Fiberglass boat?

A: [00:22:56] Wooden boat.

Q: Wooden boat.

A: [00:22:57] It was brand new. And so, I ran parties in that for a couple of years, and then I went clamming. My heart was always clams because I used to pick clam too for Mr. Gilbert Baxter, and I worked picking clams for William Wide...and....

Q: What'd you love about that? What'd you love about clamming?

A: [00:23:22] Clamming was something that you would fall in love with as well as hand tonging. But the most thing I loved the most on the water was hand tonging. It was the hardest work, but you just felt so good doing it. I mean, you was out there; you worked so hard. And when you came in, you might go sleep at your table. But if you worked hard, you could make a good day's work.

Q: And feel like you'd accomplished something.

A: [00:23:46] Yes. And I just had in my mind, I just didn't want none of my kids to go through what we went through,

because neither one of us graduated from my high school, not me or my brother, neither one of my sisters. They all... they left. They moved to Walnford, New Jersey when they was real young because we just...didn't have a chance down here. Yeah. But we all took... all of us had kids. All of us took care of family, because I had kids ever since I was 16 years old, and...

Q: So, you saw a real obligation to care of the people...

A: [00:24:30] Big obligation.

Q: ... that meant something to you.

A: [00:24:34] Yes. That meant everything.

Q: [both speaking-unclear]

A: [00:24:37] It meant everything to me. I just determined I wasn't going to let them go through... me and my brother both. Me and my brother was so close.

Q: Well, you see your kids and the way they are in the community, they're all hard workers. They all good people, nice people, so congratulations.

A: [00:24:56] Yeah, well, I taught them all I could about that because, you know, my father didn't sit down and have no talks with us all because he was kind of alcoholic.

Q: Times were different too, right?

A: [00:25:13] Yeah.

Q: Like men have changed. We deal with our feelings.

A: [00:25:16] Yes, because he was violent towards my mother. But you know, we all survive, and we did better by our families, and... but I clammed for 30 years. And after clamming got so bad, I started can fishing parties again. I started can fishing parties back in 1970, '71, but then I started... I fell in love with clamming, so I managed to...

Q: Well, as we moved into that because those were kind of the next questions that I had. Can you tell us what a head boat is and how a head boat works?

A: [00:26:03] A head boat is something... it's like you get paid by each head you take out. It's not like a party boat, a six-pack party boat. Six-pack party boat, you pay for the whole boat, but a head boat, if you have 10 people come down and get on in the morning, each head pays you, so that's why they call them a head boat.

Q: How many heads does your boat *Shirley B III* can you get onboard?

A: [00:26:34] I'm license for... now I'm licensed for 44, but if 25 gets on there, and now I charges for like 25, that's aplenty for me. I mean, I've had more. Never had the maximum because the Coast Guard always give you more than what you can carry because they base it on standing up and how much each one weighs and stuff like that. That's how they determine it.

Q: What do you fish for when you go out?

A: [00:27:03] We'd fish for perch, spot, and used to catch croakers and trout and anything that's biting. Sometimes you luck up and get a rock, but we just don't go rock fishing. We bottom... we call what we do bottom fishing.

Q: Where do you work out of?

A: [00:27:23] We work out of the Kent Narrows, and we run all over like the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries. We go to Wye River, and sometime we run all the way down Choptank River.

Q: Is that planned ahead of time, or you kind of decide where you go [both speaking-unclear]?

A: [00:27:39] It just come with the fish. You know, we'd be on the radios, and some say they're catching a lot of fish down here, and they're catching a lot of fish down there. And you don't know when you leave. A lot of times, you go out according to the wind. If the wind blowing northwest, you try to go east [unclear]. Wind blowing hard out the south, and you go to Chester River.

Q: Who are your customers?

A: [00:28:03] Oh, I got some from D.C. I got some from Baltimore. I got some from Virginia and a lot of them from Philly. I have had them come from as high as Connecticut when the spots were there.

Q: Loyal customers come back again and again?

A: [00:28:15] Over and over, that's what you have. You don't have that many new customers. You have the same ones. Some come every other week, well, before the price got ridiculous, but you had some used to come every week.

Q: I've read some articles over the last couple days, and some of the more recent ones talk about how the clientele has changed a little bit since COVID and since the black captains have become kind of, people know about you guys now. It's a popular thing. Have you noticed a change in clientele at all?

A: [00:28:52] Well, it used to be more people coming down [unclear] on boats back in the '70s than they do now.

Q: Is that right?

A: [00:29:01] Yes, because see, you had... one time, we had about 25 boats used to run out down Kent Narrows. They used to have to back in, and two-thirds of them was un-legal. So, that's how they got down there. It was so many.

Q: The head boats?

A: [00:29:17] Well, they call them head boats, any boats you had, but they was un-legal, so if you had a boat and you came down there and people wanted to go fishing, they would take them. It was like 20-some boats at one time ran out

every day, so it was five times as many people came down back in the '70s. They'd come down.

Q: How many boats now?

A: [00:29:39] Oh, it's only five, six of us now, maybe seven. Let me see. It's four over there, Price and James, Lynch...seven.

Q: So, the captains who do it have diminished, have...

A: [00:30:03] Yes.

Q: ... been reduced.

A: [00:30:05] Yes, and it's new... I mean, they have diminished, as far as the water business, because it was one time they was over 300 Black watermans on the water right here.

Q: How many now, do you think?

A: [00:30:19] Altogether, like 12. That's for the oyster and can parties. You only got about... well, two of them that [unclear] party, they oyster too, but outside them, you only got about three or four more Blacks. So, altogether, it's not over 12, 13 Blacks work on the water, out of about 300.

Q: My understanding is that you're the oldest active...

A: [00:30:50] Yes.

Q: ... African American captain on the boat?

A: [00:30:51] Yes.

Q: Congratulations.

A: [00:30:54] I'm 83 years old, be 84 in December.

Q: How often do you go out? How many times a year do you go out fishing?

A: [00:31:02] It all depends on... You know, during the COVID, when people weren't working, we went. We was going every day. But right now, we might not go once or twice a week. It's getting... every year is getting worse and worse because we don't have the fish anymore.

Q: So, there's less to catch.

A: [00:31:21] It's less to catch. The dolphins is coming up here, and they're eating up everything, along with the catfish. They was catching one or two perch in Wye River, and they seen all them dolphins in there the other day. Now they went back in there and couldn't catch a fish, and they claim the dolphins can eat up to 40 pounds a day per fish.

Q: What's the reason for the dolphins that's come up? Have you ever seen it like this?

A: [00:31:48] Their food. They follow the food. You know, they used to come up years ago but not this bad. If you saw 10 the whole summer, you would see a lot, but now, last year in Chester River, I've seen 100 one time. I've never seen that since I've been on the water. They was all

around me, I mean, just diving up and down, up and down, everywhere. I've never seen nothing like it.

Q: While you were fishing?

A: [00:32:17] While we was setting out fishing.

Q: So, they're competing with you for the catfish.

A: [00:32:21] It's right there in Chester River. I've never seen it, but I used to see them be off [unclear] sometime. You might see 10, but it was a... I know it was over 100. I never seen that. I tried to take pictures of it but couldn't get them as fast as they was, going up and down.

Q: That's amazing. I kind of jumped ahead a little bit. I'd like to fact check for a moment and talk about how you guys got in the head boat business. Tell me a little bit about the history of your industry.

A: [00:32:58] Well, the head boats, it started with Mr. Elvis Murdoff and Warren Butler. They were the first two captains that started carrying people like fishing. People used to come from Baltimore, and Mr. Murdoff used to have... Mr. Murdoff, Elvis Murdoff's father had a club and a restaurant down there, so the people come by, and they stopped and start talking about fishing. And one day, Mr. Murdoff took some out, and the fishing was so good, and after a while, they started coming. Mr. Butler and Mr. Murdoff, for years, I mean, they just... it was just good.

They was first started with only like five, six dollars a person.

Q: And so, it kind of started organically. He didn't think, "Oh, I'm going to start this business."

A: [00:33:52] No.

Q: Someone asked him about it.

A: [00:33:55] Yeah, they was...they was oystermans, but somebody came by and asked them about... talking about fishing, because they'd be going all the way to Ocean City to go fishing. And one of them stopped in there and asked him about going out fishing. He'd say, "Yeah, I'll take y'all out." Did so good, that was it.

Q: Watermen made good head-boat captains?

A: [00:34:16] Huh?

Q: Watermen made head-boat... made good captains?

A: [00:34:21] Yes, yes, because you know the water, and you know all the bars and things, and most fish feed around oyster bar.

Q: So, having been an oysterman helped you...

A: [00:34:28] Yes.

Q: ... know where to take these folks fishing.

A: [00:34:31] Yes, because we always fish mostly on shell beds, oyster beds. And we knew a lot of them. And now with the new GPS and all, they shows you all the bottom,

and it shows you the dips and the hills, and, you know, it's something that really help you a lot.

Q: You're ahead of me a lot of times because that was the next thing I was going to ask you is...

A: [00:34:55] [laughs]

Q: ... how has the equipment changed over the years?

A: [00:34:58] Well, they got equipment have changed a great deal. And it's all be when the GPSs and things came out, it was really, really good because you could just throw a little [unclear] atop of board, a little cart and punch it in with that GPS. And next day, you could go right back, go right out there [both speaking-unclear].

Q: So, it makes it easier for people who don't have the skills that you have. [laughs]

A: [00:35:25] Right.

Q: Right.

A: [00:35:27] But it's still a lot to learn. I... you know, I wouldn't recommend to anybody, if you haven't grewed up a little bit on the water, to get in a 30-, 40-years-old and say, "I'm going to start [unclear]," it just don't work like that. You almost have to grow up a little bit on... it's so much that you have to learn, and it's a lot you need to know when you're out there with people lives in your hand, if a storm comes up and different things like

that and the wind and all, what to do, how you should maneuver your boat and all. You always keep the boat headed up in the wind, no matter how hard it's blowing if you get in trouble.

Q: Have you had any scary trouble? Have you ever been [both speaking-unclear]?

A: [00:36:09] Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I've had a couple of them.

Q: What's the one that... or the ones that you remember the most?

A: [00:36:17] The worst one I've seen was in Chester River. It was a... had to be a twister or a hurricane. I can't remember what year it was now. I think it somewhere like... because Lamont was working with me, so it had to be in the '80s. And it was a twister came through, and we was right out on Ferry Point. We wasn't 15 minutes from in. And a dark cloud just rose up, and it start thundering, boom, boom, boom. I said, "Get your lines in. We're going in." And we started in, and I got to the channel, and my raft blew off the top. That's what you need case you get in trouble, the raft, and my son said, "Dad, the raft blew off." It was blowing. I turned the raft, go get that raft, and that wind got underneath that top, and it had that boat right down to the sides. And it was like eight boats out there, and they blew the tops off of them, some

of them. They blew the cabins off some of them, and all of us got our life jackets underneath the top, and all you could see... it only lasted about seven or eight minutes, and all you could see when it cleared up was life jackets, and I said, "Oh, my God." We was all right because... but some of the boats, the canopy's gone, and the cabin was gone.

Q: Your passengers... I bet your passengers were frightened.

A: [00:37:44] Some of them were praying. Some of them were in the bathroom. Some of them were wrapped around poles. They wouldn't turn it loose even after we got in. [laughs] So, that was the most scariest time in my lifetime that I've been on the water, because I've been out here in some heavy wind and stuff, clammings and different things like that. But they was the most scariest time that I...

Q: Because of... partly because of how quick it came up?

A: [00:38:08] Just like that, and they only lasted about 8, 10 minutes. It was so powerful. I mean, it just... just never seen nothing like it. Just... it's just... and Annie's was over there, and it was about 50 cars down there, just popped all the windows out of them, pop, pop, pop, pop. That's how... it had to be something. It had to be a twister.

Q: That's crazy, man. Have you ever rescued anybody out there, or have you ever had a reason to have to save anyone?

A: [00:38:37] No. No. Sometimes you might have to pull a boat in but not... not save anybody. Well, I was over Sandy Point, and this guy had a brand-new boat, and it was six of them on there, brand-new beautiful boat, high-dollar boat. He just got it, first time in the water, but one of the guys on there knew me. He knew my boat was yellow all over, so you could spot me a mile away. And he calls me on the radio. He said, "Captain Wright." I said, "Yes?" He said, "This boat's sinking." He said, "You better come get us." I said, "Sinking? What do you mean, sinking?" And he said, "It's a brand-new boat, and it's taking on water." And I wasn't that far from them. And I did; I ran to them fast as I could. And they had called... they had called the Coast Guard, and they was coming. The marine police was coming, but I got there first, so... four of them got on the boat, or three of them got on the boat, and three of them stayed with the boat because the Coast Guard was there, and they pumped it out. I don't know what happened. It was spanking brand new, high-dollar boat.

Q: It can be dangerous out there if you don't know what you're doing, can't it?

A: [00:39:55] It can be real dangerous, real dangerous.

Q: And like you say, you have other people's lives in...

A: [00:40:00] Yes.

Q: ... your hands as well.

A: [00:40:02] Yes. Yes.

Q: Have you ever had an emergency with... with the customers?

Or was there ever one... anybody you had to save or had a heart attack or anything?

A: [00:40:11] Oh, I had a lot of them. I had... had passed out from diabetes, diabetics and stuff like that. We had to bring them in, and you always have the ambulance that wait when you get in. Always call 911, and they'll make sure somebody there.

Q: Cellphones probably have changed...

A: [00:40:31] Yes.

Q: ... some of this stuff, right?

A: [00:40:32] Yeah, it's helped a lot, but it's how we would do to call on the cellphone.

Q: That way, they'd be there...

A: [00:40:38] Right.

Q: ... when you got there.

A: [00:40:40] Yep.

Q: When you think back, both as a head-boat captain and a waterman, what do you think of as your best days working on

the water? Do you have any that stand out for you, like just nostalgia-wise or in your memory as that was a great day working on the water?

A: [00:41:01] Well, about time when we was oystering, and we were great and really have some of those big catches, wasn't no limit back then, and sometimes you would hit some, catch six or five, seven bushel. That was some of your bigger days.

Q: That's one of those days when you come in...

A: [00:41:21] Right.

Q: ... and you feel like you've done something.

A: [00:41:23] You'd do something. Everybody's standing on the shore, watching you go by, because the pile of oysters be sticking out the boat so high because they had...

Q: How much you get for a bushel back then?

A: [00:41:34] Oh, sometimes you would get seven dollars, eight dollars.

Q: So, that's a pretty big haul for that... that time.

A: [00:41:40] Yes.

Q: That's a good day.

A: [00:41:43] I remember one day on Thanksgiving Eve, and we run out, and we caught 65 bushel. We hit a spot of oysters, and I tell you, I never seen them like it. We was so happy, we was jumping up and down. [laughs] And that...

that was money back then. I can't remember what we got back then, but we...we made a good... pretty good day that day.

Q: That's exciting.

A: [00:42:07] Yes. Really, really exciting.

Q: Is that part of the joy of working on the water is that every day, you could... that could happen...

A: [00:42:18] Yes.

Q: ... and it's all in how hard you're willing to work?

A: [00:42:22] Yes. And there was times when we to had travel a long ways to go to work because once we had to take our boats to Crisfield for clamming. You had to get up in the morning, drive two hours each way, two to go down and two hours coming back after you worked all day. And then for three years, we worked in Potomac River, oystering. And we had to travel all the way down to St. George's Island.

Q: So, you would keep your boats down there...

A: [00:42:50] Keep them...

Q: ... and have to drive back and forth every day.

A: [00:42:52] Yes.

Q: Wow.

A: [00:42:55] And... and we had to take our boats down there too, and that was... and them little boats we had back then, it wasn't safe out there at the... at the ... in that

Chesapeake Bay. You had to go around point, look at it, and that wind, [unclear].

Q: Was that the first time you'd ever been down that way on a boat?

A: [00:43:10] Yes.

Q: So, that was a challenge for you.

A: [00:43:12] It was a big challenge. And when he'd get ready to come back, my brother was coming, bringing the boat back by hisself. Got out there and got [unclear] job or something then. And the wind came up, and he had to go in some little creek around Point Lookout. He couldn't go no farther. That boat had... boat stayed after about a month before we could get [unclear].

Q: Wow.

A: [00:43:36] Yeah. So, that was some of the good moments.

Q: Do you ever thought to see anything unexplainable or out there, like something that you can't explain?

A: [00:43:49] No.

Q: And I want to touch base... this is kind of our middle section, and so I want to go back to Kent Narrows a little bit. You grew up around that area. Now you're a grown man, and the shucking houses are still down there, but there's a lot of controversy about those shanties. They want to clean up the area. At the same time, the shuckers

were trying to unionize down there. It seems like the late '60s, early '70s were a transitional period for Kent Narrows. Do you kind of see it the same way or am I...?

A: [00:44:31] I can... I can... I can't remember. I remember them talking about a union, but I don't think they ever unionized. I don't think they ever got it going. I remember them talking about it, but I don't think that I was working on the water then. I'm not sure.

Q: You were minding your business.

A: [00:44:47] Probably.

Q: [laughs]

A: [00:44:48] Probably. I can't remember because the water business, it got so bad, one time I had to leave, and I worked over at Baltimore doing construction about three or four or five years. Worked for a company called [unclear] over right where the Baltimore [unclear].

Q: That's kind of typical, right? Where in off season...

A: [00:45:11] Right.

Q: ... guys will have to find something else to do.

A: [00:45:12] Yeah, but this... this was right in the heart of the season. Oysters got so scarce. I've seen the oysters come and go three times in my life. About every 20 years, they would go in a cycle where they would get right down where you couldn't catch hardly anything, couldn't even

make a living. And then in two or three years, you would have to leave, and then two or three years, they would come back, and then you could work for another 15, 20 year. And they would leave again.

Q: Do you have an idea as to what explains that... what... why that cycle happens?

A: [00:45:43] No. That's why I always tell them that things go right in a cycle on the... even the clams. You know, they been gone now for eight, seven, eight years, and now some of them are showing up, the white clams.

Q: I saw an article this morning, oysters best season in 30 years...

A: [00:46:02] Oh, yes.

Q: ... or something like that. So, they caught a lot of oysters?

A: [00:46:04] They caught a lot of oyster, caught their limit every day, hand tonging and dredging, but they had to travel, not here in Queen Anne's County. We don't have. They won't let them dredge here in Queen... they only got a small area to dredge in Queen Anne's County.

Q: Did you oyster back when you could only oyster in your county?

A: [00:46:23] Yes.

Q: So, that's changed. Now waterman can...

A: [00:46:27] Yeah.

Q: ... work anywhere...

A: [00:46:29] Yeah, they could...

Q: ... in the state, right?

A: [00:46:30] They can work anywhere in the state of Maryland.

Q: They have to be conscious of that Virginia-Maryland line.

A: [00:46:36] Right.

Q: But you could work anywhere.

A: [00:46:38] Yeah. The only place you can work Virginia-Maryland line was in the Potomac River because half of it's Maryland; half of it's Virginia.

Q: Where are they catching all these oysters? Is there not [both speaking-unclear]?

A: [00:46:49] Down in like... who was... who was on the way? in the Choptank River and down Tangier Sound, everywhere down south but here.

Q: So, they can still tong down that way?

A: [00:47:07] They...

Q: It's still shallow enough, that tonging is a thing?

A: [00:47:10] But they don't... they... they... they tong down Broad Creek. That... that... that's where they hand tong, but they dredge all down the sounds and Hooper's Islands and all them places, they dredge.

Q: Does anybody still dive?

A: [00:47:23] Oh, yeah.

Q: Diving still?

A: [00:47:23] You got... you got a few divers. Yeah, they do, but they do down in Solomons Island.

Q: That was a new thing, when it...

A: [00:47:32] Right.

Q: ... when diving started, right?

A: [00:47:33] Right. Right.

Q: A lot of guys found that as a new method.

A: [00:47:38] But it was only a few that got good enough to... to do that. Yeah. But Ted Lee was the first one that started scuba diving, and he... he caught... he had about three or four years, nobody did it but him. And he caught... he caught his limit every day, 75 bushel, every day, six days a week.

Q: Was he the actual diver?

A: [00:48:05] No.

Q: He was the captain?

A: [00:48:06] Yeah, he was the captain. He had...

Q: Do you remember who the diver was?

A: [00:48:09] No, I can't. He wasn't from here.

Q: Right.

A: [00:48:11] He wasn't from here. And after a while, you had a few more got into it, and you had Freddy Baxter and

Glenny White. Glenny White was one of the best ever, ever did it. Did you know him?

Q: Yep. What made him so good?

A: [00:48:27] He... he said he used to train real hard before the season came in. He would run, run backwards and all, and you had to, you know... you... getting down there, you had to pick them up, you know. And some tried it, and they couldn't do it, but you had some was really, really good at it. But Glenny was the best I ever seen. He was so good, until they thought he was using a scraping something down there. The marine police jumped over and went down one day while he was working.

Q: Just to make sure he wasn't...

A: [00:48:55] Yeah.

Q: ... cheating?

A: [00:48:56] Making sure he wasn't. And people kept telling the DNR [Department of Natural Resources] that he was cheating. He wasn't cheating.

Q: Wow.

A: [00:49:01] He... he was just good at it.

Q: Just good at it.

A: [00:49:03] Never... I never seen anybody like him.

Q: That's amazing.

A: [00:49:06] It is amazing, the way he was. But then there were some more good too. They wasn't good as him, but they was... some of them got really good and...

Q: Real skilled too, huh?

A: [00:49:15] Yes. I mean, only... you only had... you only had two... two Black diver. My son Lamont, he tried diving for a little while, but we didn't... it didn't work out too good.

Q: Some of these things, you're either cut out to do that...

A: [00:49:35] Yeah.

Q: ... or not, right?

A: [00:49:36] And... and the... the one named... he just died about two months ago, used to call him Pinchy, name was Henry Pollard. He worked back [unclear]. He was a pretty good diver. He wasn't good as Glenny and them, but he was good. He was a Black diver. And I think what messed my son Lamont up was, he was down there diving, and Pinchy jumped over there, and he didn't know he was underneath the water and scared him to death. I had to bring him home. I don't think... I don't think we went no more after that.

Q: Pinchy ran him out of the business, [laughs] scared him.

A: [00:50:11] Pinchy ran him. I'm telling you, that was... can you imagine being down underneath that water, and

things look different to you anyway when you're under there swimming.

Q: And you don't have a lot of visibility.

A: [00:50:19] No. And we was over Gilpin's Point, where they got big stones over there half big as this building, inside, where we were diving at, and he down there.

Q: Where do stones come from?

A: [00:50:29] I don't know.

Q: That's weird, right?

A: [00:50:31] Yeah.

Q: You don't see a lot of that.

A: [00:50:33] No. I mean, you see stones, but you don't see big ones like that were there.

Q: Boulders.

A: [00:50:36] Yeah. Yep, and he scared him, and... and I think we stopped after that. [laughs] I don't think he ever got his head. We had to come home that day, and I couldn't understand him because...

Q: Sure.

A: [00:50:48] ... you down there swimming for oysters, and somebody come up and just grab you. [laughs] He thought he wanted to get him.

Q: Pinchy getting rid of the competition.

A: [00:50:58] [laughs] But he knew him though. They was just...

Q: Yeah, he was playing.

A: [00:51:01] Yeah, he was playing, but [laughs] there wasn't no playing then.

Q: [unclear] play. So, I'm going to move into some of my last questions. We're going to kind of wrap up talking about more general stuff. I wanted to ask you, how do you think the larger community sees watermen? Do we recognize how important you guys are to the food chain? Is awareness more or less? How do you see the way...

A: [00:51:26] I...

Q: ... the general community [unclear]

A: [00:51:30] To me, I don't feel like that they really pay... pay attention to how important working on the water is to some of the watermen, because all the other counties all the way down, Talbot County and Somerset County and all those kind of all the way down, all of them got dredging. And if you dredge and turn the bottom over, you'll have your own oysters. And they won't let it come here in this county for some reason. I just don't understand it, and they're meeting, and they're meeting, and they're meeting. If you turn that bottom over, you would catch that, and you

will have some oysters. They don't seem to understand that.

Q: Who makes that decision not to dredge?

A: [00:52:16] DNR. DNR. DNR makes that decision. I don't understand. It's political; a lot of it is.

Q: So, people don't understand how much you guys have to deal with off the boat.

A: [00:52:30] Yeah. I mean, we'd been to meetings. I used to go to meetings over years... year... years ago, I mean, 30 or 40 years ago. And sometime nothing ever change. They always say, "We doing the study, study." Been studying for 50 years, and they still studying on something. [Laughs]

Q: Feel like you're hitting a brick wall sometimes.

A: [00:52:47] Yes, but if they turn that bottom over like they did down Talbot County and Somerset County, they... more they scrape, the more little oysters they have down there. It's... it's enough oyster. And they don't dive last, next 10 years.

Q: So, you think, it sounds like in some ways, that the people who make the decisions don't have the information that you all have, being out on the water.

A: [00:53:16] Right. Well, I feel like they should let some of the watermen help make some of the decision. It's just

like they got 40 percent of natural oyster bars, they got up them closed up to sanctuaries, and...

Q: That makes no sense to you.

A: [00:53:32] It makes no... no sense at all because they'll let the oysters stay there and die. They... and... and the foundation, they claim that purify... they... the oysters just stay down and help purify the bay, but that's not so. Why would you let a oyster get to four inches and die? If they would open up the sanctuaries and let them take the oysters up and let more oysters grow, it'd be something different. Right.

Q: Because it's a cycle...

A: [00:53:59] Right.

Q: ... sort of process.

A: [00:54:00] Right.

Q: And if you stop the cycle, the process stops.

A: [00:54:02] That's how come I know, when it was like 300 to 400 oystermen a day, we'd work in the Eastern Bay and Chester River, always turned the bottom over, so we always had new growth that would come. Now, when everybody stopped working, turning the bottom over, we don't have the... we don't have it.

Q: So, what the outsiders see sometimes is as bad methodology actually is good methodology.

A: [00:54:29] Right. You take like Wye River; they won't let you oyster in Wye River. I knew some families like Mr. Whittaker and all lived right there in Grasonville, two brothers of them, and they kept their boat in Wye River. [unclear] they never came out of Wye River.

Q: Wow.

A: [00:54:44] And they oystered there all the time, 30, 40 years. And now you can't even oyster. You're not allowed to oyster now because, you know, the rich people complain about the noise. And only one little part, they let them clam in there, so...

Q: Do you feel that the general public then doesn't really understand much about your job?

A: [00:55:06] I would say that, my personal opinion.

Q: What do you think the future of oystering is?

A: [00:55:15] A young man can do good, but he has to travel, and you have to... it's not like it was when I started. You could take a little bit of money and become a waterman. Now if you don't have a parents that can back you up, to get... get in the water business right now, it costs you 200,000, 300,000 dollars.

Q: Wow. By the time you bought your boat...

A: [00:55:39] Fiberglass, you need a fiberglass boats, and you need a good diesel motor if you have something running up

and down the Bay. You got to have a patent tong rig. You got to have a dredge rig. You got to have a clam rig, all that stuff.

Q: And on top of that, you need the skills...

A: [00:55:55] Right.

Q: ... to operate that too.

A: [00:55:57] To operate. Yes. You need the skills to operate it. But you could... you... you can learn to oyster and clam and all that more than you can.... can fishing parties, as far as I'm concerned, because, you know, there's nobody but you and whoever working with you. You don't have all them people lives in your hand. Now, if something happened out there, you know, if you... if you out there oystering [unclear] something come up, you just got to worry about yourself. Most of them work by themselves when they're clamming, or they might have somebody with them. But so, if you 30 or 40 years old, you used to want to... if you got the money to get in the business and get a good boat, you can become a waterman.

Q: Plus, you... as a head-boat captain, you also are dealing with the public.

A: [00:56:40] Right.

Q: So, you have to have a little charm and charisma to do that.

A: [00:56:46] You... you better.

Q: Because that would bring them back, as well as catching the fish.

A: [00:56:51] It brings them back, and you have to... sometimes you have to hold your tongue when there's some things said that you don't like, and some of them get unruly and complain about they ain't catching no fish and things like that, so...

Q: Do you allow them to drink on your boat?

A: [00:57:05] Yeah. Long as they don't get... you know.

Q: You watch. You... yeah.

A: [00:57:09] Yeah.

Q: You monitor your...

A: [00:57:10] Yeah.

Q: [both speaking-unclear]

A: [00:57:11] They don't... they don't get too drunk, but you know, they'll bring beer on there, and some of them will take a drink and all, so you have to keep your eye on them.

Q: I bet you've made some good friends in the business.

A: [00:57:20] Oh, I... real good friends, real, real good friends. I got one group, it's about 15 of them; they all work over in D.C., and they come about every three weeks. They don't care about no fees. All they want to do is party, get away from their job, and have a good time. And

to catch some fish is fine; they don't catch none, they're still fine.

Q: That camaraderie between you guys, between the head-boat captains, it's... if you have a full boat, do you call the other captains if there's someone who is trying to get on? Do you...

A: [00:57:54] Yes.

Q: ... send them somewhere else?

A: [00:57:57] Yes. Yeah, we do that right on. We try to look out for each other. If we got more than we can carry, or if somebody calls you, you already loaded, but you'll call one of the other captains, see if he can carry them.

Q: It's good for the customer too...

A: [00:58:10] Yes.

Q: ... because they've driven over...

A: [00:58:11] Right.

Q: ... to spend the day out [both speaking-unclear] out.

A: [00:58:14] Right, because you don't want them to come down and can't get out.

Q: Right.

A: [00:58:17] We have seen that. There used to be so many coming down, they couldn't get out.

Q: Even with all of those captains running.

A: [00:58:23] Yep.

Q: Wow.

A: [00:58:24] They used to have to wait until the boats come in and go back out.

Q: I wanted to ask you about environmental changes. In all of your years on the water, have you seen environmental changes, bigger-picture stuff, and has it had an impact on your industry?

A: [00:58:47] Yeah, it has a real... a real big impact on the industry, I would say, but it's hard to say, you know, but it's not like it was, so... but the environmental and stuff, regulations stuff, it's just, it takes a toll sometime.

Q: Makes it harder to do your job.

A: [00:59:14] Yeah. Well, it's like when they put a 50 limit on the spots. Some of the people used to come from Philly and all, and they used to get like 75 spot all day, like whatever they could catch. But now, by law, you can only catch 50, but the netters can catch all they want to, and the potters take out them little drop pots for line diving, and they can catch all they want.

Q: So, the rules don't always make sense.

A: [00:59:41] No, not to me.

Q: How would you describe your life working on the water? Has it been a good career?

A: [00:59:49] It hasn't been bad. It hasn't been bad, and I helped raise six kids, and they all... they're pretty good. Some of them... all of them graduated school, and couple of them went to college, and I helped raise some grandkids too because we helped raise three or four grandkids.

Q: Worked your way out of the poverty that you grew up in.

A: [01:00:09] Yes. And I also managed to build a home. I [unclear] it. And I was well satisfied at the way things turned out.

Q: Do you mark that up to hard work?

A: [01:00:25] Yes, real hard work and... but you had to... because working the water was sometime you had aplenty, and sometimes you didn't have much, so you had to keep good credit, and you had to pay your bill. Yeah. As long as you could do that, because the bad times, you'd had to go borrow some money. You just, you had no....

Q: You didn't make enough really to save...

A: [01:00:47] No.

Q: ... to get through the hard times.

A: [01:00:48] No, not all the time.

Q: Not [both speaking-unclear].

A: [01:00:50] No. No. You could save a little. You could save some, but there're times you couldn't save any. And there was times where it's... if you... you had to have

good credit. If you didn't, you couldn't... you couldn't become a waterman. You couldn't survive.

Q: Captain Montro, how old are you?

A: [01:01:08] Eighty-three.

Q: Eighty-three.

A: [01:01:10] Yeah.

Q: You're the oldest active Black captain on the Chesapeake Bay.

A: [01:01:15] Yes.

Q: That's something to be proud of.

A: [01:01:17] Yes, I'm almost one of the oldest captains, period. [laughs]

Q: [unclear] Okay.

A: [01:01:24] And there ain't many. It's not... I don't think, white or Black, I don't think it's many are over 83 though, you know, that's really active on the water right now.

Q: You in good health? You in good...

A: Doctor said I'm doing good. Told me don't stop what I'm doing, but I said, you know, sometime I said, "Doc, [unclear]." [laughs] But...

Q: All your years on the water, among what are you most proud of in your career?

A: [01:01:54] Well, I'm... I'm really proud of the way things turned out, you know, that I was able to make a better life for my kids. That's the most important thing, and the grandkids and... and helped raise of the great-grandkids too, so I'm awfully proud of that.

Q: Your family.

A: [01:02:14] Yes.

Q: In regards to working on the water, my understanding is you have a real clean Coast Guard inspection.

A: [01:02:25] Yes. I have 20... I have 26 years straight without any deficiencies. They have never found anything wrong with my boat in 26 years straight, have never been done before, nobody, white or Black. I think it's... the closest, next one to me is like 20.

Q: That's outstanding.

A: [01:02:50] Yes. It is, and never been done before.

Q: That is something to be proud of.

A: [01:02:53] Yeah, I am. It takes a lot of work, and I like to keep everything as best I can. And a lot of things, I do myself. I can do my own welding. I can do my own electrical work. Whatever needs to be done, I'm a little mechanic and stuff like that, so...

Q: So, that's one thing you've learned on your life on the water is how to do a lot of things.

A: [01:03:14] I had to because you had to learn how to build your clam rig and all to stay in the clamming. You can't afford to pay somebody to do it. Most clammers can weld and stuff like...

Q: A bit of a mechanic.

A: [01:03:25] Right.

Q: A bit of a carpenter.

A: [01:03:26] Right. You have to be all those things.

Q: All those things. [laughs]

A: [01:03:30] Yep.

Q: Even an astronomer. [laughter] [unclear], right?

A: [01:03:35] So, yes.

Q: What did you learn about life, working on the water?

A: [01:03:41] Well, it... it was a good life, I would say, you know, and it taught me a lot, and independent and everything. And you go through life, and you try to treat people like you want to be treated. That's the way my [unclear]. You know, I mean, if you don't have that and be respected and everything, then far as I'm concerned, you know, you don't have much.

Q: My next-to-last question, because we've kind of focused a little bit on Kent Narrows because of your connection to that area, having grown up there, having worked there all your life. How has that area changed?

A: [01:04:27] Oh, it's changed. It's... it's... it's... it's nobody there nothing but big businesses and things that are now, hotels and restaurant and all that. The only... only place left there is the Harrises' oyster company, far as the oyster house. That's the last... that's it.

Q: It used to be a real working location. Now it's a tourist town.

A: It was 20-some oyster shucking houses on both sides at one time.

Q: That's a lot of oysters.

A: [01:05:01] You go all the way back where Annie's was, to all the way over to where Gene [unclear] jetty and all that was, all those little oyster buildings one time.

Q: So, thank you very much. The last question I'm going to ask you: is there anything that you'd like to share that we haven't talked about or haven't asked yet?

A: [01:50:24] Not really.

Q: Thank you, Captain Montro...

A: [01:05:28] No, thank you.

Q: ... for taking the time to do this again. It's really important, I think, for the culture around just to understand what you guys do, so...

A: [01:05:37] Yes.

Q: ... thanks for taking the time.

A: [01:05:39] No problem at all.

END OF AUDIO FILE