

Interview Log

Interviewee: Larry Sir **Tape #:** OH158

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Comments:

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Why don't you -

L. S.: Okay, I can take care of that.

K.F.: I'll adjust these and let me have you say your name.

L. S.: Okay. Larry Simms. I'm president of the Maryland Watermen's Association, also charter boat operator, commercial fishermen. Does that help you?

K.F.: Yes, that's great. Okay. So how did you get into this, Larry?

L. S.: I was born in Rock Hall, and that pretty much explains it because back in those days, you're born in Rock Hall, you didn't have many choices. You're either a bunch of watermen or a farmer or a storekeeper or maybe construction person building houses or something, so that was the choices you had. And back in those days, it was probably the most prestigious job to be captain of your own boat, so that's what most of the boys did in the town.

K.F.: How do you get to be captain of your own boat?

L. S.: Well we work with other captains till you get the experience, and then you, I'm talking about back in those days, then you had to establish enough credit to be able to borrow the money to buy a boat of your own. And so you had to - back then, you had to prove your experience before the banks would even lend you the money to buy a boat. So it's a lot easier now buying a boat. It's a little harder paying for them, but it's easier to get the money. Back then, the banks wouldn't lend you money unless you had half the money up front, and you had a lot of experience, you had a lot of people that would say they thought you could make it on the water. Then they'd lend you the money. So it was not an easy thing to get into. But it was - I started out when I was just a kid working with my great-grandfather. He was trot lining, and he rode the boat down his trot line. That's how long ago that was. And that's seven years old, I rode the boat for him in the summertime while he dipped the crabs. And then I went on, got, I got - he gave me a small rowboat, and I crabbed myself, and then I got another small boat with a motor in it, and I just kept graduating up. By the time I got out of high school, I had a medium size boat that I oystered and crabbed and everything in. And then eventually, I got a bigger boat, and I commercial fished, and oystered, and crabbed and run fishing parties in it. And so over the years, you just keep trading boats in, and getting new boats, and bigger boats. That's the kind of way you evolve in the industry.

K.F.: Okay. So you couldn't really do the charter fishing until you got the bigger boat.

L. S.: Right. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And when I was younger, I also went, I used to mate for my uncle who was a charter boat captain. So you get the experience doing that in the summer months when you was out of school. I had my, I had my charter license. I got my first charter license when I was 18 years old. You have to pass a Coast Guard test and get people to sign for you that you're capable of running the boat and everything. So now I think you have to be, I think now you have to be 21 to be your master's license. You can get your six-pack license when you're 18, but you have to be 21 to get your master's.

K.F.: What's your six-pack license?

L. S.: That's when you can only carry six passengers.

K.F.: Well when did the charter fishing industry kind of start up here in Rock Hall?

L. S.: Well it started before my time. The fellows here, the older fellows, what I would call older when I was say 13 or 14 years old, the older fellows were probably in their 60's, and they had started it years before, and they used to go over on the Western Shore and pick their parties up over to amusement or park over there on the Western Shore, and I forget the name of it, but that's what, that's what they did. They went across the bay, picked the parties up, took them out fishing and took them back in. See back then, didn't have a means of traveling around by land. Most everybody traveled by boat in this area. We used to go to Baltimore on the Tolchester boat or the steamboats that hauled freight. And the parties, it was too much drive to come all the way around with the kind of roads and stuff they had, so they went to Baltimore and picked the parties up. Not right up in the harbor, but Bay Shore Park, I think it was. That was before my - that's when I was a kid, and I don't know how much longer they've been - I imagine they've been doing that for 25 or 30 years before that. So I call that before my time. In my time, you know they had more, that's when the automobiles were coming along, the roads were good and people traveled more. So the people came down from Pennsylvania and that's when we carried our fishing.

K.F.: Well how did sort of the Bay Bridge and more roads change the charter fishing industry, really?

L.S.: Well it got the people to us easier so we didn't have to go across the bay. When the Bay Bridge went across, a lot of the people in Baltimore across the Bay Bridge and went to Kent Narrows, Kent Island and that way, and maybe Tilghman Island, that direction. Our parties, because it's closer, came from Pennsylvania, and they still do. Most of our parties come from York, Lancaster, Redding and those areas there. Philadelphia and all those areas. When you get down around Kent Narrows, they come from D.C., Baltimore and all that area. So everybody goes to what's closest to them. So and we happened to be closest to those areas up north. But the roads, you know the roads, everything changed when the automobile and the roads got better because we used to have steamships that went across the bay and hauled freight and hauled people, and we used to have amusement parks, like Tolchester had an amusement park, and Betterton had an amusement park. And the people from the city, that's the way they got to go out of the town. Well when they got the bridge in, the roads got better and the cars got better, then those places went out of business, those boats went out of business because people were going in their cars. So it all kind of changed at the same time.

K.F.: So what's the difference between being, say, a charter captain and being a captain on an oyster -

L. S.: I could not - well in Rock Hall area, it's different than a lot of areas. In Rock Hall area, the only people that - when they first start out, the only people that had boats were watermen. So the only people that run charter boats were watermen. So they did, they commercial fished in the wintertime, and this area was known for the striped bass year-round, so we capitalized on the striped bass. We commercial fished all winter and all spring, and then summertime come, we carried people out fishing. Of course, there's other fishing, seine hauling and other things, we had other watermen that caught fish all year round commercially. And in the fall when the parties dropped off, we'd go oystering until fishing season started. So the watermen, basically, were the first ones to run parties because they're the first ones that had big enough boats for that. Now the way it is now, I

would say not so much here in Rock Hall, but if you looked over the whole bay, most of the charter fleet is made up of people that's retired from other jobs or doing it as a hobby job, and got the money to buy a nice boat, and then they would take people out so they can get their tax deductions and stuff. In Rock Hall here, we still have what we call commercial fleets, charter boats, people that make a living year-round on the water. But that's how, you know, that's how it originated. We had the boats, and people had the need. And so, you know, people didn't have something to do in the summertime, somebody asked them to take them fishing, they took them fishing. And that's the way it started.

K.F.: So what makes a good charter captain?

L.S.: It has to be somebody that's good with boats and loves boats so he maintains the boat in good condition and, you know, the boat's just part of his life. He also has to know the water, the bottom of the bay, and know the fish habits and all that. It's years of experience that make a good charter captain. When fish are real plentiful, anybody can go out here and catch them, but when they get real scarce, it weeds out the ones that are watermen versus the guy that happens along and tries to get in the business. Right now, we got so many fish, it doesn't matter. Anybody can go out there and catch them. So you don't have to have any special skills now, but when fish are scarce, it makes a big difference.

K.F.: Well can you remember a time when fish were scarce and what that was like?

L.S.: Oh, yeah. We've had, you know, fish being scarce, we've always had scarce years, and we've always had abundant years. So it's up and down all the time. When we had scarce years, it was back, we didn't - wasn't a lot of boats around. Fiberglass has changed the boating industry. But when all boats were wood, wooden boats would be hard to maintain, wasn't a lot of people had boats, except the watermen or somebody that had a lot of money and had a yacht. So for fishing, the watermen had the boats. And so even when the fish were scarce, the watermen were able to still satisfy the party because they knew where to go and how to fish, you know, to catch them. In the early 70's when Hurricane Agnes came through, it kind of forced the fish out, and so the fish were pretty scarce then. And, in fact, they were so scarce, I quit for a few years because it just wasn't enough fish to really satisfy your customers. So I quit and went crabbing, done other things until the fish came back. And a lot of people did. We went from having 50 boats here in the harbor, charter boat captains, to actually there for a few years, one. And now we're back up to about, oh, 10 to 15. So since the moratorium's been taken off and the fishing restrictions have been relaxed and the fishing party business has built back up and a lot of the watermen are getting their license again and going back into it, and me being one of them.

K.F.: Well how did the rockfish moratorium affect -

L.S.: Rockfish moratorium wiped Rock Hall out. The moratorium, the only fish we really have in this area to catch, the main fish, is striped bass. So when the moratorium came in effect, it wasn't nothing for us to catch. Perch and catfish, and you can't run a party business on that. So everybody basically quit. Think it was only one boat that run. He tried to catch Bluefish and stuff like that. But it wasn't enough business to go around. When you don't have the fish, you don't have the business. So he kind of runs the business that everybody had let go. And the ones that were just diehards wanted to go

anyhow. So the town itself, the whole structure of the town changed because all the shoreline was for workboats. And all the support facilities, like the ice house, and the freezers and the fish house and all that, well when they couldn't make a living because they didn't have any fish going through there, they had to sell out to developers. So now we got condos and sailboat marinas. And now the fish are back, we have a little problem, places to land and stuff and tie our boats up. So that's how it changed, changed the whole structure of the town.

K.F.: Okay.

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: Well tell me more about the bottoms here in this area and what makes them unique, say, other than, say, midshore or lower shore.

L. S.: The bottom?

K.F.: Yeah.

L. S.: Of the bay you mean?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L.S.: I don't think it's anything unique about the bottom so much as it is the freshness and salinity of the water. We're in a brackish water here where it gets down ever lower than 5 parts per 1,000, and may get up to, in real dry years, maybe 12 parts per 1,000. But mostly, it hangs around 5 or 7. And, of course, the rock, striped bass, they spawn in fresh water, so the striped bass would go through here, in the spring of the year, go to the headwaters where it was zero salinity, and that's where they spawn, then they come back and they hang around here because it's close proximity to the spawning grounds. But the bottom itself is basically the same up and down the whole Chesapeake Bay where you've got the deep water is muddy bottom, and the shallow water, and I talk about shallow water as being 20 foot or less, are mostly oyster bars, and you get real shoal, it might be sand bars where the clams grow and stuff. But fish like to feed on the oyster bars. It's a habitat that draws the sea creatures like worms and mussels and all that that the rockfish feed on. So oyster bar is really good habitat. And this area here hasn't been real affected by the disease that wipes the oyster out. So we still maintain a good oyster business here, and that's good for the fish too.

K.F.: Tell me more about the fish habits.

L. S.: Fish habits. Well, basically, fish spawn in the upper bay, and they, the larvae is there. When that egg is hatched, the larva is there. The larva feeds off the egg sack for three or four days or five days, and when it opens its mouth if you have the right plankton there for it to feed on, it'll survive. If you don't have the right plankton, it dies, it starves to death because it can't swim away to find stuff. So then as it gets bigger, it goes to the nursery area where it changes, you know, starts, goes from a larva to a fish or from the, whatever they call it, goes into a - fish, and they grow, this is what we call nursery area for the whole east coast. And then the fish, as they get bigger, when they get up around 18 inches, they leave the bay, the bulk of them leave and go on up and down the coast. So they go as far up north as Maine. The bigger they get, the further north they go. And they go down around North Carolina, South Carolina. So then they come back. Now there's a certain amount of them stay here, even the big ones. You always have some big ones stay. The majority of them leave. But you always have lots of little ones. So it's kind of a mix and mash. The fish might not come back for three years to spawn. Might

come back the very next year, you never know, it's different. But they travel up and down the whole coast; they migrate up and down the whole coast. And when they're ready to spawn, they come back in here.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you about some of the things you've seen happen on your charter boat with the tourists? How are they at catching fish, by the way?

L. S.: Well you have from the novice who don't know how to fish, but quick to learn and listens and learns. By the way, women are probably best at that because they listen to everything you say, and they do exactly the way you say it, and they wind up out fishing the men if they're all novices on the boat. A lot of children are real good if they listen and do what you tell them. They catch fish, they learn to catch fish quick. We have a lot of experts, I mean a lot of people that's real good at fishing so they, you know, they catch fish a lot. Then you have a lot of people think they know how to fish and don't, and you can't tell them a damn thing, so they don't do so good because they won't listen. They got - the worst fisherman is a guy that's used to fishing a certain area and he's not willing to change. And he comes to our area, tries to fish the way he fished somewhere else and he won't listen to what you tell him, and he keeps fishing and don't catch anything, and everybody else around him's catching them on the same boat and he don't understand it. But it's mainly because he's hardheaded. So fish are real, relatively easy to catch if you get where they are. It's just a little feel to it, you know, if you catch them on a light tackle. If you're trolling, really don't matter because we set the rods out, and you're dragging the rods and, you know, it's not a skill for the fisherman to catch them. It's more skill getting it in. But you get all kinds of people. Most all people are really good people and nice people. They get a big - if they're newcomers and they get a big thrill out of catching that first fish, and I think that's what I enjoy more is teaching somebody how to catch the first fish and seeing how they react. And you get other people that just like to catch one fish in and throw him back. And you get other people that want to take some home. It's just every, every different walk of life, people that enjoy fishing.

K.F.: Okay. Anything funny or dangerous ever happen on the boats?

L. S.: Oh, yeah. Lots of stuff happens. (Laughter.) I mean you have some people that drink too much when they get on the boat, fall down and fall overboard. Not too many fall overboard, but they almost fall overboard. Some drop the rods overboard, and you got to try to catch them. You have people get seasick. Sometimes it's comical the way they handle it. It's not comical to them because seasickness is a very - it's one of those sicknesses you want to die when you get it. I've seen all forms of it. We're in the part of the bay where people don't get seasick unless they're just a person that's real susceptible to it 'cause it's not that rough in this part of the bay as far as, you know, like being in the ocean where it's a long roll and stuff. But still, some people just, as soon as they get on the boat, they're sick. The boat don't have to move, you know. It's all in their equilibrium, how that works. Far as - funny things happen mostly wit the fish when they catch the fish and what they do to, you know, drop the rod and get excited and that kind of thing. But it's not a whole lot of different stuff happens. Just ordinary, everyday life stuff. The best part about it is the thrill that some people get out of catching fish. And, of course, we catch fish all the time, so we can't understand why they get such a thrill out of it. But when it's somebody that never gets out on a boat and they catch a fish and just

seeing the expression their face and how serious they get and how happy they are when they get a big fish in and all, it really, that's a nice experience.

K.F.: What are some people's reactions when they do catch that first fish?

L. S.: Oh, some of them jump up and down and scream. Most women scream and jump up and down. Some of the men, you know, they brag to one another, you know. It, the expressions on their face is more than the reaction. Some of them will holler. When you dip the fishes out on the deck and it happens to be a big one, you know, they'll holler out. The biggest hollerer I ever heard was Siragusa that plays for the Ravens, I take the - I book the whole Ravens team and take them out fishing every year, and I get seven other boats to take them all, and of course, the Ravens, being the nature they are, they're very competitive even when they're fishing, so they're trying to beat one another. Who catches the first fish, who catches the biggest, who catches the most. Siragusa, I don't know if you follow football or not, but he's a big guy. He's got the loudest voice of any man I have ever heard. (Laughter.) The first time we took them out, went clear up in Baltimore Harbor, and picked them up and took them out here fishing, and he was on my boat. The boats are all about, oh, half a mile or more apart, all around, you know, all scattered around. And he caught the first fish. When it hit the deck, he hollered so loud that the furthest boat away, everybody on that boat jumped because it scared them, that's how loud it was. Almost deafened me, he hollered so loud. I mean I never heard a voice come out of a man so loud as that. It carried all over the whole bay. He just hollered, you know, 'cause he caught the first one. And then, of course, when we got in, the team had to sponsor a little tournament, so they had a little prize, like VCR and a TV, whoever caught the biggest, and who caught the first and all that. So Siragusa caught the biggest one. And the quarterback at the time, Chester Felly, I think his name was, he had caught a big one on my step-son's boat. Well we got in, they got to arguing about whose was the biggest and everything. It was a menagerie. And here they were arguing about winning the TV set that wasn't worth a whole lot of money. They just signed a 2 or \$3 million contract, you know, but it was all competition. You know, it was really fun to watch them, how they competed against each other. So that's why they're superbowl champions because they're such a competitive nature, and then they worked as a team when they were doing that. So that was a lot of fun. I take them every year. So every year is a different experience with them.

K.F.: What time of year do you usually take them?

L. S.: In June, right there when they're doing their summer training.

K.F.: Do you have any other regular customers?

L. S.: Oh, I have a lot of regular customers. I mean most everybody goes at least once a year. Some of them go 10 times a year, but most of them are repeat business, they keep coming back. Shut her off again there a minute.

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: All right. So how has equipment changed since the early days?

L. S.: The biggest, the biggest change - well I'll give you some dates here. When I, when I graduated from high school was 1956. And the biggest change, I would say, is the boats and the engines. We used to go to the junk yard and get an old gas motor and put it in the boat and run it till it fell apart, then we'd go get another one. We used to take the transmission off, straight transmission, and we had a blacksmith named Harry Layton

down at the Rock Hall Marine Railway, and he knew how to change the gears in them. He'd put the second gear in the reverse gear so that when you put it in reverse, you had more power. And it was just a straight transmission with a hand clutch on it. And an old gasoline motor from a straight eight Buick to a six cylinder Chevrolet or V-8 Ford. But we used, boats were wooden, boats were smaller. It was on the same basic, looked the same, but they were just smaller, scaled down to what we have today. Then we got different transmissions. A hydraulic transmission so that you could shift without using the clutch. And it was 100 percent reversed. So that was a big, big thing. And then we went from gasoline motors to diesel motors, and that was a big thing too. It was a lot of savings, and it was, it cost a lot to start with, but you saved on fuel. And they run so good, you didn't have to worry about them, and it took a lot to wear them out. So that was a big change. And then the boats, big change on the boats was fiberglass. We got fiberglass boats, it's less maintenance on them, and we built bigger boats and nicer boats all the way around, and faster boats so you could get further distances and stuff. So that's the big change. And change on the electronics is a big change. Because when I started working on the water, we found out how deep the water was, what we called a plunker line, that was a lead weight on a long line with marks on it, and you threw it in the boat and let it hit bottom, measured the line back in, and that's how you knew how deep it was. And all you had was a compass to tell you where you were going, how to get there. You used your watch and your compass to run your time in the fog to tell you where you were. And every once in a while, you would sound with your plunker line to see if you'd got there yet. So now we've got video depth finders that show you the bottom, and the contour of the bottom. We've got radar that shows you all the surface stuff on the water, and we've got Loran and GPS, and now we got DGPS that shows you exactly where you are on the chart plotter, and you follow it right along. And so what it did, you might think it was real good for us, actually for us it was just almost a play toy for us because we knew where everything was. We could find them by landmarks, and knew how to travel around without it, and the other people didn't. And now then the other people are smart as we are because all they got to do is go where we're at and punch it in on Loran, and they can always find it again. Where before, they couldn't find it unless we were there. So now they're smart as we are about where to go and how to get there because they got all these electronics. And so that's made it more comfortable for us, but it didn't really help us. It probably hurt us because it made everybody else equal to us without have to go through the experience and training and hardships that we went through to get that knowledge, now all they got to do is punch it in the computer, and they got it.

K.F.: Well how does it affect the commercial fishing industry here when boats became accessible to anybody who wanted one?

L. S.: Well, I don't know how to put this, but in every walk of life, you got people that own businesses, and you got people that work for them. And it's no different working on the water. On the water, you got people that are captain material, and you got people are crew material. And there was a time there when we had an abundance of stock, and money was easy to get, that a lot of people that really were just crew members wind up getting the boat and running their own boat because they could. Now what happens when the times got tough and they wouldn't make it because they still were the kind of people that work for somebody else. And so they couldn't manage their money, you know,

couldn't keep things above. And so that kind of put more boats out there for a little while than should've been there, but some of them it made good watermen out of them, and some of them went back to being crew members, and some of them just barely made it. So it helped, and it hurt a little bit. It put people out there without them having to go through years of working with somebody else. Put somebody right off the street, buy a boat, buy a license and just go whether they knew anything or not. So consequently, sometimes that made a conflict out there because they didn't know how to work with everybody else, and that made it a little difficult. And in the charter business, they got these schools down that guaranty your captain's license if you go to school long enough to pay them the money. And if you got the money to buy the boat, then you're a captain. You don't have to do anything, you know. Just 'cause you go to school, learn all the regulations doesn't mean you know how to operate a boat safely or anything. But we got people that just go to school and get the license and buy a boat and go to work. And so that's, you know, we think that's a deterioration of the professionalism of the job. But some of those people turn out to be good captains. So, you know, who's to judge?

K.F.: Well how about - when did you notice that there are a lot more recreational boats out on the bay?

L. S.: Oh, when I was a kid, the only boats on the bay was watermen. And you go, never see anybody or you see just two or three watermen friends, you know, at a distance. And you would see a big powerboat, yacht-type boat, go up and down the bay, but you never seen any little boats around the shore and stuff. And about the time the outboard come along, you started seeing little plywood boats with outboards on them. And then they built these little Chris Craft boats and different little boats, they were built out of plywood. And you just increased. Every year, you see more and more boats, more and more boats. And now, you know, with fiberglass coming along and the outboards of today, a good piece of machinery. The outboards of yesterday, you didn't know if they'd run or not. So now then, you know, anybody. You could go buy a fiberglass boat and an outboard motor and jump in it and run it. It wouldn't be no problem, you know, if you've never been on a boat in your life. It would be no different than buying a car and driving it away. So now everybody has the boat in the yard on the trailer, or one sitting at the marina. Not only two-car families, you're two-car, one boat or two boat families now. So everybody has got boats. So on the weekends sometime, you get off Annapolis and the sailboats there, you have to literally stop working because the boats are so bad. And then other areas where you got the go-fast boats, power boats, you know, you almost can't do anything on Saturday evenings or Sunday mornings because boat traffic is so bad. And we have trouble with our gear, like the crab pots and stuff. The boats cut our crab pots off and cost us a lot of money because of damage to our gear. Just so many people, you know. They all got a right to be there, and we just have to learn to live together and work together better than they have in the past, and accept each other for being there. I mean went through a long period of time everywhere, all these recreational fisherman got boats, and then they want to get rid of commercial fishermen, and they still, some of them still feel that way. But I think the majority of sports fishermen don't want to get rid of the commercial watermen. But there for a period, it was one of you as a group against the other. And it wasn't the watermen trying to get rid of the newcomers; it was the newcomers trying to get rid of the guys that had been there forever. And it's still a little

bit of that, and we still have to fight for that. That's why we have a watermen's association because we have to fight that all the time. The newcomer comes along, and he wants to get rid of the guy that's been there all his life and two generations. And the watermen never tried to get rid of anybody. They think it's there for everybody and try to work around everybody. But the sport fishermen put a propaganda campaign on to make us look bad. At one time in this town especially, and most all fishing towns around the bay, the most prestigious job would be captain of your own job. And that's the guy in the town or the guys in the town that were the guys everybody looked up to. The kids all looked up to. Now the guys go home, and the kids go to school and get taught that the commercial fisherman's a bad guy, and the father's almost ashamed to go home, tell his kids what he does. And that's a propaganda thing that was done purposely, and had a big effect on the commercial fisherman of this country, not just here, but this whole country. They've been made look bad, and purposely, because it wasn't anybody worried about the fish. It was them worried about save them from them to catch. You know, they take a viewpoint if we can't catch them, if we're not allowed to catch them, that's more for them to catch. It's not a point of saving the fish, it's save the fish for us. And that's what the recreational, some of those groups do. They save them for themselves. It's a conflict about who gets the resource. And we've never took that stand. We think it's enough for everybody if you manage it right. So we've had to battle. And, you know, we've had a lot of dispersions cast upon us that make us look bad. They'll pick one or two watermen out that don't do right, and make a big issue and make us all look like that. And if you looked at every walk of life, every walk of life has bad people in it. And if you judged every group of people by two or three bad people, then there wouldn't be no good people. But they've done that to the watermen of the bay, they've made them look like they're all outlaws and outcasts, and it's a shame to see that happening. I see it turning around now because we used to kind of frown on the sailboat people because they sail along, they're not paying attention, sail right across your gear, sail right in front of you, take the right of way even when they didn't have it, and when they had their motors running the stuff, but we used to frown on them a little bit. But over the years, my thing has always been to work with them. If somebody's aground, you go pull them off. You don't charge them for it. You just go help them out, and most watermen will do that. And over the years, these sailboat people who don't have a stake in the fishing thing, so they're not trying to save the fish for themselves, they're trying to save it for everybody, or you know, they look at the bay as what it is. They've been a help in keeping the quality of the bay because they're out there, they see it, they understand that you've got to have a good healthy bay. And they've got money, they got time. And they've been a help in keeping the bay clean. And they, I'd say the majority of them like seeing the watermen out there because they know if they get in trouble, we're going to help them, and they like the way of life, you know, they think it's romantic or whatever. But, and so they kind of lean in our favor, and it's so many of them that that's - I see the trend of the watermen being the bad guy being turned around, and I credit that a lot to the access to the bay that a lot of people have, and the sailing people because they don't have, they don't have that animosity about well if you catch a fish, I'm not going to get it. So they've been kind of more a help to us than a hindrance.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you about some of the equipment that you have on the boat for people to catch fish. Is there any special equipment that people need when they're first time fishermen?

L.S.: On our boats, we furnish everything. They don't have to bring anything except what they want to eat and drink. We've got, we've got the fishing tackle, the bait, the license. We license our boat flat license so they don't have to buy an individual license, and all they've got to do is bring what they want to eat and drink and step on the boat, and we take care of them. We have spinning tackle, we have trolling tackle, we have all the lures, we have whatever bait's needed for the time. And if they want to use their own rod, we'll rig them up with our rigs and, I mean, we're pretty - person come fishing with most any of the charter boat fleet on the Chesapeake Bay, and he's treated royally, and everybody's got a mate there to take their fish off the hook for them, put the bait on for them, and they're taken care of.

K.F.: What kind of line do you like to use for catching rock?

L. S.: Well most all the - most all the line's monofilament.

K.F.: Pounds?

L. S.: Well, we basically use 20-pound test line because you got a lot of people fishing. It gets tangled up if you had real fine line, you have trouble untangling it. We try to stay away from the spotter wire and the fire line because it tangles up so bad. And if you only got one or two people, it's fine, but if you got six people, it tangles up. You can't do anything but cut it. You can't untangle it. So we stay away from that. But most of it's monofilament. If you're trolling, sometimes we'll use Dacron line, like that, but basically spinning tackle is all monofilament.

K.F.: And what kind of fresh bait do you like to use?

L. S.: Well now we basically use menhaden. We call them bunkers or bug fish or menhaden or porgies. I mean everybody's got a different name for them, but it's basically menhaden, what it is, L-Y's.

K.F.: Is there a tackle shop that you prefer to deal wit?

L. S.: Oh, we get our tackle all over the place, but right here in Rock Hall, we deal at Toy's outdoors place, right on the road going out of town.

K.F.: What is it?

L. S.: It's called Toy's. That's the man's name, Toy's Tackle Shop.

K.F.: T-O-Y-S?

L. S.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Well we buy stuff We go to shows and stuff and buy bulk stuff. We order stuff in bulk. And he orders a lot of stuff bulk for us, you know, gives us reduction in the cost by buying bulk. Turn it off again.

K.F.: All right.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

K.F.: All right. You mentioned that you used to work when it was rowboats, when your great-grandparents -

L.S.: Well my great-grandfather, I remember when I was a kid, my great-grandfather was probably 80-some years old, 80, probably 85 or 86. He used to be an old puny boat sailing skipper, and he used to purse seine. Well in the 30's, they outlawed that, and so they kind of broke his back there. So he really just kind of piddled around in a small boat after that. Of course, back then it wasn't, I don't think there was any social security for

watermen, so he had to, you know, he kept working on the water, most watermen do. They work on the water till they die. They don't retire. And he lived right up town here. And he walked every day down to Gratitude, which is about a mile and a half of the - old heavy hip boots on. And then he got in a rowboat and rowed out either on the oyster bar in oyster hand tongs, or he rode out and trot lined on in the summertime. And so him being old and everything, of course, everybody was worried about him, so they put me with him to kind of watch over him. Of course, he was really watching over me, so we made a good pair. But I rode the boat down trot lining; there was a skill to rowing the boat down trot lining because if you splashed the oars in the water, you scared the crabs off the line. So I learned how to rowboat real early in life because anytime I splashed the water, I got a boot when - boot in my rear any time I splashed the water, so I learned how to quietly row a rowboat when I was very young. And you didn't have to row it very hard, you know, you shoved it along, let it go down the line unless the wind was blowing, then it was hard. He gave me an old rowboat, and we fixed it up. One he found adrift or something, we took ashore and fixed it all up. So then I rowed myself. And used to row down and drag crab seine and stuff. Get overboard and drag crab seine. And so that was when I was very young doing that. There was, at that time now, there was engines. This wasn't a time that it was only rowboats. It's just that that's what he had because he was old and he stuck to his old ways, but there was other people that had small engines in the boat and things of that nature. And, of course, the bigger boats had engines in them, mostly gasoline motors that come out of cars and stuff.

K.F.: Okay. And then you said that you had worked with your uncle as a mate?

L. S.: Yeah, my uncle, my uncle on my mother's side, he was a good fishing captain, and he had probably one of the better boats for that time, nice wooden boat and fixed up nice.

K.F.: What was the name of it?

L.S.: Boat's name was Comet. And I was still pretty young when he would get me to go with him some, and just helped him out and really was there to learn. And he was a good fisherman. In fact, when I got out of school, he was the one that talked me into taking my boat and running some parties in it, and he gave me his extra parties. When he couldn't run them all, he gave them to me. That's what got me started.

K.F.: So what did you have to do on his boat?

L. S.: Well you scrubbed the deck, you got the bait out and you cut the bait, you put the bait on the hooks, you took the fish on the hooks, you dipped the fish up, and just helped the party in general. Go get them a soda when they wanted one and, you know, whatever. You waited on them just like a waitress waits on a person in a restaurant, and that's just what the mates do today. My oldest boy goes for me, right now, and my grandsons, they go with me some, of age, and learn that way.

K.F.: And were you catching rock back then?

L. S.: Yeah. Rock, striped bass mostly. Catch a few bluefish. And, you know, sometimes the blouse would come and we'd catch them, but mostly we were striped bass fisherman. It's always been that way.

K.F.: Okay. Who else did you work for before you became captain?

L. S.: Well I worked for another uncle that was crab potting. And my father, my father was great for giving me jobs. I'll give you a little story here. When I was real young, we was very poor. And my father used to work on the water when he was younger, and he

hurt his back and he couldn't work on the water any longer, so he took up barbering. So he was a barber. And there was a pharmacist that was in Rock Hall, and of course they was the rich people in town, and they had a boy and a girl about my age, and their mother would take them down, we used to call it the ferry park, down on the beach down there and go swimming. So they asked me, you know, did I want to go along. Well I had to go ask my mother, and then my mother told me to stop up the shop and ask my father. Of course, I wasn't very old, six maybe, something like that. He said yeah, you can go. But he said wait a minute. He said we'll go over the hardware store. So we went over the hardware store and bought me a dip net. And he said now while you're down there playing around, he said you shove around the store and catch enough soft crabs for dinner tonight. Well I'd never done it before, so the rest of the kids are out playing in the water, and I'm shoving around in the mud, and around the grass trying to catch a soft crab, I didn't know how to catch. But I learned, I caught a half a dozen or so, so I never did get to play in the water, I was soft crabbing. So I took them home. So the next time I wanted to go, he said yeah, take your dip net. And he said you catch enough soft crabs, you can sell them and pay for that dip net. So that's how I got started on the water. Everything was about making a living or feeding the family. And you learn what a dollar is by doing that. So that's how I started out. Then my father, I was going to say, my father was great for finding you a job. Never ever give me anything without making me work for it, even if I had to invent the job, he would invent something for me to do to make it. So he bought me some eel pots, some old eel pots, and they needed repair, needed new funnels put in them, so we sat in the shop and he taught me how to put the eel pot funnels in and all that. So then I needed to set my eel pots in. And where I needed to set them at that time of year was down on the flats down East Neck Island, and that's about seven miles away. So it's too far to row every day down there from Rock Hall, and it was too far to walk. I could've rode my bicycle down there, but my uncle, my other uncle, not the same one I run parties with, but another uncle, he was setting crab pots down there, so he rode down there in the truck. So my father's helping him, he would give me a ride down there if I went with him and steered the boat crab potting for the ride down, and then I could, while he was getting unloaded and everything, I could take the row boat and go fishing -
(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

L. S.: Okay. So I paid for my ride by helping him. And then, you know, I fished eel pots, and he'd take me out back down the fish house, sell my eels. That's how, you know, that's how I got started in that. So as I got older, you know, I started doing things on my own, and finally my father built the boat, a small boat in the old firehouse across the road from his shop, and they used it in the wintertime for gunning, and I used it in the summertime for fishing crab pots and stuff. So it had a little motor in it, and I started that way. Then I got a little bigger one, and a little bigger one until I got out of school, then I got a bigger one. So and I wasn't no different than any of the other boys. I mean that's the way, that's just the way you came up back then. You came up working your way through and learning as you went. It was a good system. We still should have it, but we don't, but I think we'd be a better world if we did because you learn a lot doing that. Kids stay out of trouble because they don't have time to get in trouble.

K.F.: Well I was going to ask you, what did - what did local people around here do for recreation?

L. S.: Work. Well, they had the firehouse they built. Then they built, up top of it, they built a big dance floor up there and a place to have banquets and stuff. So about once a month, they'd have a name band come in and play music, and everybody went to the firehouse to dance, and that's about the only thing they had to do. I mean it wasn't, it was a little before TV time, and so that, and as TV come on, then things changed, you know, but they, most time, people was too busy to worry about something to do. They was working to survive. When you work on the water, you don't have a whole lot of time. You work from sunup to sundown, and actually, you work before sunup and after sundown. So you don't have much time to play. Sometimes you have an off season that you get a little more time to do stuff, but most time then, you was working on your gear getting it ready for the next season. So you didn't have much. And you didn't want to do anything because you was, your life was your work, and so that's what you did, So - and you worked as a community too. I mean, you know, even though we was competing with one another out on the bay, we still was like a big family thing, like competing with your brother or something, you know. You helped one another, talked with one another, and that was your pleasure in life was just, you know, doing all that. And it's not a whole lot different now. You have a little more time, maybe, for other things, or you take more time for other things, but you still had that camaraderie out there. You know, you all worked together, you know each other's habits, the good and the bad, and you accept the bad for the good that they do, and you work together like that. And that's, that's what being a waterman is all about. You're living close to nature. You know there's nothing for sure. There's no easy fix to anything. You take what comes, whether it's good or bad, and you do the best with what you got, and you make it work. The trouble with today's society is everything's about their pleasure, and everything is about immediate gratification. And you read about the crab shortage, and everybody wants an immediate fix. Well it didn't get there in a hurry, and it ain't going to get fixed in a hurry. And the newspaper and TV cause a lot of that because everybody knows every detail what's going on from time to time. Well it's no different now than it was 30, 40, 50 years ago. We had the same ups and down, but nobody knew about them but us, and we took them in stride because Mother Nature working at her finest. But when other people that don't understand it and as soon as they say well I can't get crabs to eat, or the crabs are too high, so must be a shortage, they want it fixed right away. So they want to pass a law, and that law causes more havoc than it does good, and creates more problem. And consequently, it's like dominoes, you just slide downhill all the time. Back when nobody knew what else was going on except us in their different communities, it wasn't a big crisis thing. We knew that Mother Nature going to have a down, and she's going to have an up. And if you didn't provide for your downs when you had the up, then you was in trouble. So when you did real good, you had a couple good years, you bought new equipment, got yourself all ready 'cause you knew inevitably it was going to be a down year. So you had, you fixed yourself up enough to coast through the down years, and then when they come back again, you did the same thing over again. And we still live like that, but the rest of the public don't want us to live like that. They want it to be good years every year, and it's not going to be.

K.F.: Okay. Are there other things we should know about the charter fishing industry?

L. S.: No. Well that's one thing. It's probably the cheapest pleasurable thing you can do. You go out on a boat that's worth anywhere from 100 to \$200,000 in this area. You got a captain that's experienced and knows what he's doing, and it's six of you on that boat. And basically what you're paying is about \$50 an hour for a \$200 piece of equipment with an experienced captain on it. And that's cheaper than you can do. We always laugh about it. If our motor breaks down and a guy steps on the boat with a tool box that's worth maybe \$100, he gets \$50 an hour. And we've got a \$200,000 boat and a lot of experience, and we get \$50 an hour for the whole work. If you go get a backhoe to dig up a ditch in your back yard, you're going to pay \$75 to \$125 an hour for that backhoe and that operator. So fishing on a charter boat in the Chesapeake Bay is probably the cheapest form of entertainment that you can get. If you travel to Disney World or any of those other places, you'll pay a whole lot more of that to ride on a ride or enjoy yourself. So we think we're providing a very cheap entertainment for people like to fish. And we're a vehicle for people that don't want to own a boat or don't like to own a boat, but still like to fish. And the same token as commercial fishermen, we're providing fish for people that love to eat fish, but don't like to go fishing. And if you eliminate us, those people won't get the use out of the resource that they should be getting. So we're providing the service to the public to provide them with that resource for the people that don't want to go out there and catch it. And if the recreational fishermen had their way, the only people would ever eat a fish is the person that like to hook and line fish because the only way to get it. So we think what we're doing is a service to everybody to make everybody benefit by the bay, by either carrying them out there fishing when they couldn't afford to go there any other way, or catching the fish for them so they can eat it, or the crabs, or oysters or whatever. But you take six people that are paying \$450 for an all-day trip, an eight-hour trip, it's going to cost them \$75 a piece for a \$200,000 boat and experienced captain for a whole day's fishing. If they want to go a half a day, it's 360 for a half a day, so divide it up by six people, and that gets them a five or six-hour trip and plenty of fish. So it's something that everybody can afford to at least do once or twice a year. And some people go every week because it's cheap.

K.F.: So you usually do a full day or a half-day schedule then?

L. S.: Yeah. Whichever that they want, you know.

K.F.: And do you all have fish cutters on the dock here to -

L.S.: Our mates clean, our mates clean the fish, put them in a baggie for them, fillet them for them, put them in a baggie and send them up the road. So the mates work for tips. So, you know, the party has to tip the mate or should tip the mate if they want any kind of service, and the mate will clean the fish and everything for them.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you two questions about catching fish. I know rocks can be pretty powerful fish, so can you describe what it's like to catch one on a hook and line like if you're out on a charter?

L. S.: It's a thrill just getting him to bite the hook, because he has a very soft mouth. He's got a hard mouth, but he has a very soft touch. And you got to have a very soft feel to feel him picking at the bait. And he don't just run up there and grab that bait. He smells it, picks it, pushes it over, turns it over, shoves it ahead, and you got to play with him a little bit to get him to take it. And then when he takes it, he hits it, you know, and

bends your rod if you got light tackle, and bend your rod, and he pulls on it. Depends on the size fish. We try to fish tackle according to the size fish we're catching so you get the full benefit of feeling the fish. But let's say it's a 10-pound fish. He can fight, and he'll bend the rod double, and pull and pull the line out on the spool, and you get it in, and he pulls more out, you get it in, he pulls more out. And after a while, you tire him out, and you get him in. You dip him up. It's a thrill to people to do that. You know, that first initial hit is a thrill there when you hook him. And then after that fighting him getting him in, it's like any other kind of fishing.

K.F.: And why do you think people like fishing so much?

L. S.: Beats the dickens out of me. I don't know. (Laughter.) Like I said, I like watching them catch them. As far as me catching them, winding them in, it doesn't do anything for me, but that's because I probably caught so many and seen so many caught, but there's a thrill there. I really think it's the challenge of enticing that fish to bite that hook, and feeling and knowing that you - when you get it down pat, it's like you conquered the world because you, I see people when they're missing them all the time, they snatch too quick or they leave it too long, they lose their bait, and they get disgusted. And after a while, it clicks, and they catch one, and they catch another one, and I've got it made now, I know how to do it. And they really get into it, catching it, catching it. And then the fish would change on them, and then they got to start all over again. And so seeing that click in that person when he really figures out that he's figured out how to catch them, you see it in their face that I got it now. And then they go catching some. But then when the tide changes a little bit, fish changes the way it's feeding, and they do change constantly, then you got to change with them. And I'll show you one person that's tearing everybody up. He's catching twice as many as everybody. And he's bragging and having a big time. Everything changes, and he can't catch them no more, and the other fellow that wasn't catching them, he starts catching them. So he fun of it is the banter back and forth of rubbing on each other, when he misses a fish, or loses one, or can't catch any. And, you know, when it changes, then the other guy gets back at him, you know, and starts rubbing him about it. So that's the fun of it.

K.F.: Okay. Well tell me a little bit about the tides and how the fish change their feeding habits. You just mentioned about that.

L. S.: Well, hold that thing up there for a minute.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

L. S.: Well the tide, the tide affects in a lot of different ways. There's no magic formula to it. Everybody says, oh, they bite on flood tide, and people say they bite on ebb tide, some people say they bite on slack tide, and truth of it is, fish bites when it wants to. And there's no magic formula there. You try to give it your best of what you know happens, but basically, if you had an all-around time, it's the last of the tide and the first of the tide. When the tide's slacking off and when it's picking up speed. When it's running real hard, it's real hard to catch them, and when it's dead slack, it's real hard to catch them because the lines are laying slack. So there's a, there's a time there when they bite the best. And the trick of it is being at the right place at the right time with the right bait and the right technique. You get all that working for you, you do all right.

K.F.: I guess that is really the trick of the captain.

L. S.: That's trick of the captain, yes. And what I tell all my people, they don't pay me for what I know, they pay me for my patience. Most people, most fishermen don't have any patience. They sit there a while, and they say oh, I've got to move, there ain't no fish here. And they move just about the time the fish get ready to bite there, and they go somewheres else and they sit there for a while, and they move again and they miss those fish. And so while they're moving, the fish are biting and, you know, people get all fidgety and the fish aren't biting, want to go somewheres else, captain? Said you're paying me for my patience, `cause you haven't got any. So I'm going to give you what I've got the best of is patience. And then you wait. But of course, you got to have a little knowledge to go with that patience because you could sit somewhere where you're never going to catch one. But if you've got the knowledge of what happened yesterday, and the day before and this time last year, and you know that if you wait that place out, you'll catch them sometime or another when the tide's right. So sometimes, they put a lot of pressure on you about moving, and sometimes you get tempted, sometimes you move. And every time you do, you get burnt. I'm not saying we don't move. We move a lot. But we got to move when we think we should move, not when somebody else does. And when we think we need the patience to wait it out, we need to wait it out, and that's basically the skill that we have is patience. And we learn that over the years of when to have it, when not to have it.

K.F.: Do you keep records of where, and how much -

L. S.: Only up here. And it comes back to you. The weather conditions are the same it was last year or 10 years ago, you remember it, and you say well I did this when the weather was like this, or when the conditions were like this, or the salinity was like this. I'm going to go try it. And you go try it, and most times, it'll work. So you keep a mental record of it. And that's part of your learning. That's part of your college education right there that you put away in your mind and you use it. That's what pays off when fish are scarce over the fellow that don't have that in his mind, and he don't make out good when fish are scarce and we've got that little extra edge on it.

K.F.: Okay. All right. Well is there anybody else we should talk to?

L.S.: Nobody else gonna talk to you, tell you the truth. (Laughter.) I tried to, I tried to get Calvin to talk to you, he wouldn't talk to you. He don't like getting interviewed.

K.F.: Well he's not the first waterman that said no.

L. S.: Well they're not used to talking to people. They don't, they're embarrassed by, they're embarrassed by another waterman hearing him talk and saying well I, he don't know what the hell he's talking about, you know. So they're not going to, they don't like to expose their self, but I'm used to it, so I don't care what they say about it, you know. Being President of the Maryland Watermen's Association, you learn to have a real thick skin because you'd never last if you had a thin skin, so you don't really worry about it. You just tell it like it is and do what you think is best, and they have to say whatever they want to say. It's the only way you survive in this business.

K.F.: True, true. How long have you been president?

L.S.: Twenty-eight years, I think. We incorporated in 1973, and I was president then. We was forming it for two years before that, so I've been involved in it the whole time. I was one of the ones, the main ones that formed it. So I've been there, so I think it's officially 28 years.

K.F.: Wow.

L. S.: Too long. (Laughter.) But it's not a very rewarding job financially, but it's been very, very rewarding in lots of things. You're able to stop some things happening that would be bad for the industry, and bad for the people, and you're able to make some things happen that's good for the industry and good for the people. You're able to shed some light on the bay, and get people to stop some detrimental things that happen to the bay, and you meet a lot, a lot of good people that are, have their heart in the right place about doing what's right for the bay and the people. Legislators that everybody talks about, most of them are giving people that are there to help the people, and if you can explain it to them right, they'll do everything to help you. There's a few of them, just like a few of anybody else, that are there for their own personal gain, but majority of the legislators are there to help the people, they have a calling to help the people, and that's what they do.

K.F.: Right.

L. S.: And it's been a pleasure working with most of them.

K.F.: Yeah.

L. S.: So it's been very rewarding to me. You know, I came from, you know, little waterman town here. If you had told me when I was 30 years old that I was going to be talking into this microphone, or I was going to be talking to four people at one sit-down, I'd have told you you was crazy. And now, you know, I'm talking to 10,000 people at a time, and it doesn't bother me. But I would never, ever dreamed that I would have the opportunity to do what I'm doing. You know, when you work on the water, and you come up on the water, you live an isolated life away from what's going on. The world goes by you when you're a waterman. Time goes by you, you know. People are making more money, and you don't even know it. And things are building up on the Western Shore, you don't even know it. And the amount of money they're making versus the amount of money you're making, you don't have any idea or conception that anybody can make that much money, or anybody's worth that much money. And then when it hits your area, you're totally floored by it, and then you wind up being the poorest person in town instead of the richest person in town, because it snuck up on you, you didn't know it. And so I try to educate my watermen to that in all these little communities. It's hard for them to realize it, but the world's going by us, and it's hard for us to keep up. And their way of life is slipping away because more people we get, the less they understand what we're doing, and the more they want to get rid of us, and the more they're polluting what we got out there. And so that - we have to be the people that try to keep the apprised of what's happening out there because nobody else would notice the changes. The changes are so subtle that you wouldn't see them. Most anybody else wouldn't see them, but we see them because we live there. Live there on the bay for 50-some years right out there in the water, and we see the subtle changes over a period of a year become big changes. Nobody else would notice it because those people are going and coming, you know. But we notice it because we're always there. And it's, we try to make the right people aware of it so they can do something about it, but it takes a long while, and you got to have a lot of patience again to see something happen. I'll give you a little example. When the bay cleanup all started, started right here in this little town. Senator Mathias came down here, and he was doing some campaign photos, so he wanted to be with watermen, so he called

me. Said I'd like to get some pictures. I'm getting ready to run for office again. Come down on your boat. So they come down on my boat. We was talking. And he said, you know, how's everything going? What's happening? I was telling him about some of the things that happen. You know, we see the oysters going away from the plumes of the sugar treatment plants, and all different things which I seen happening. And he said well, you know, why isn't somebody doing something about that? I said well, nobody want to listen to us because we're not scientific enough. They don't think we know anything. But we see what's happening, and the bay's being degraded to the point that we're going to lose it. And he said well what do you think we need to do something about it? I said much as I hate to say it, much as I hate to even think about it, I hate seeing money spent on research, I said, but we need somebody to do a scientific study to prove what we're saying is true. So he went back and appropriated \$27 million for the Chesapeake Bay Study. At the time, that wasn't a popular thing to do. It took a lot for him to do that. But he got \$27 million appropriated to do the EPA study of the Chesapeake Bay. And about, I might be mixed up on my years, but I think it was somewhere between three and five years that they did that study. He called me one day. Said, Larry, I got this report in front of me from the EPA study. It's the first one out. He said I can't even believe it. He said outside of the scientific jargon, it's the same conversation me and you had on your boat. He said how did you know all of that? I said well, it's easy, we see it. You know, we're there, we're working in it, and we know. He said well, he said it did exactly what we thought, it proved what you said to be true. He said it looked like you wrote it, outside the scientific stuff. He said it was the same conversation we had. And so then, Harry Hughes, the Governor, then got on the bandwagon, the bay cleanup and everything, and that started us on a roll of stopping the degradations, and maybe even reversing it a little bit. The problem right now is we're right back here where we were 25 years ago, because the population's increased so much, they haven't kept up with it the rate the population's coming. We were right there. See what happens to the bay, you enrich it by all your runoff and all your stuff that's going on. And the bay really thrives, you have lots of fish, lots of seafood. You have everything really going. So, boy, this thing is really in great shape. And so the bay's getting enriched, enriched, enriched, and the stocks are climbing, and climbing and climbing. Get up here to this peak, and you over-enrich it. You don't go gradually down, you crash. You fall right off the edge like that. We're very close to that peak again in over-enrichment. We got all the fish in the world out here that we can have and, you know, outside of crabbing a little short, which is not a big thing, it's just a cycle, and the oysters which the disease has killed, but anything that swims, we got loads of it because we got lots of food in the water. So the bay is enriched, and it's peaking up again. If they're not careful, we're going to fall over that edge. When we fall over that edge, it's going to be a total crash, and it'll kill us. And that's where we were back when he did that study. And if we had waited a couple years, we'd have went over that edge. And we're close to that edge now. So we need to really get the people woke up. Everybody's kind of coasted and got lackadaisical about it. Said oh, we're doing good, but the population is sneaking up on us. And population brings pollution. And I'm not talking about dirty pollution. I'm talking about foreign stuff to the bay that you got different planktons and different things. The bay's clean. You could drink the water, it wouldn't hurt you, outside of the salt and stuff. But it's over-enriched. Phosphorus, and

nitrogen, makes the algae bloom. And the problem with a lot of the algae blooms, they're not the algae blooms that our species need to live in. And so they smother out the algae blooms that we do need. And so we're getting there. That's why we don't have any SAV's in the bay because the algae blooms are clouding the water up so the sunlight don't penetrate, so the grass don't grow. But guess who they attack on the SAV's? They try to get rid of the clammers, saying he's ruining the SAV's, but that's not the problem. We had more clam boats back before Hurricane Agnes, and we had so much grass that they was cutting it wit sickle bars and they was putting poison out to kill it and everything else. We had 300 clam boats running around in a small area, and couldn't clam because of grass. So now we got less than 100 clam boats, they're trying to blame the grass on us. It's not - it's what's happening to the water. So I don't know what you do about it except try to get it cleaned up.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L. S.: Or try to come up with a hybrid grass that will grow in cloudy water, 'cause I don't think we're going to turn it around.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Right.

L. S.: So we got to work on other species. So I don't know. Anything else you can think of?

K.F.: No. Well I'm thinking we're working on this seafood industries project with clam picking and oyster shucking and clamming and all that, so we may call you again and see if there's anybody in the area -

L. S.: Okay. Well I can help you, I can help you with anybody. And I can get somebody to talk to you about it. I mean the clam industry's gone downhill because it's got dermo in it just like the oysters do.

K.F.: Haven't that that.

L.S.: So that's, we're down in production of clamming. And, of course, oyster production is down because lower bay, we got MSX and dermo down there that kills the oysters off. Crabs, crabs going to go up and down. I don't think there's a problem with crabs right now, but everybody else thinks there is.

K.F.: Well the packing houses have a different take on it.

L. S.: Well the packing houses, the packing houses are getting antiquated, and if they don't change what they're doing, they're not going to make it anyway. They've got to, I mean if you don't change with the times, you're not going to make it. We wouldn't make it as watermen if we didn't change with the times. And the packing houses are doing it the same way they did for 100 years, and they're not going to be able to, they're not going to be able to do it because the market's have changed. So with crabs, the basket trade has changed so much that all the good crabs go to basket trade.

K.F.: Right.

L.S.: And so anything that's left, goes in the picking house. Well the picking house can't survive on that. So he's just going to have to learn to do some value-added or do something different or he's not going to make it. So I mean everybody has to change. Markets change. You've got to change with them. So I don't know what's going to happen there. But the foreign meat coming in, you know, they thought that was their problem and all that. But, yeah, it's a problem, it's a change in time, but we can't supply all that crabmeat. So we got, we got to think smart. We got to use it to our advantage.

You know, you got Phillips and Maryland style crab cakes all over the country. Well is that a good thing or a bad thing? Well he's sending a good product all over the country, putting Maryland on the map for crab meat. So we got to follow up on that. Say, okay, we got Maryland crab cakes, but they're Maryland crab meat instead of foreign crab meat. You know, you got to change. He probably packs more crab meat than what we pick in the State of Maryland, you know. Could we supply that? No, we couldn't supply it. Could the markets build if we didn't have it? No, we couldn't build a market because it's, you know, it's up and down. The consumer can't stand to pay but so much. So the whole industry's going to change in the next 10 years.
(END OF INTERVIEW)