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Interview Log

Interviewee: Mac Simpson

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Interviewer: Kelly Feltault

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Comments: Mr. Simpson was often very difficult to understand.

BEGIN SIDE A (TAPE 331)

K.F.: We are in Ocean City, West Ocean City, talking with Mac Simpson. And is that your first name?

M.S.: My first name is Louis, L-O-U-I-S, Malcom Simpson. Nobody knows much about those two names. It's Mac to everybody, M-A-C.

K.F.: Okay. All right. And over the phone, you mentioned you were born on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Is that right?

M.S.: Yes. I was born on Folly Creek. It's just the first creek below Accomac seaside.

K.F.: Okay. And was that out on the Barrier Islands then or -

M.S.: No, there was very little habitation on the Barrier Islands when I was born in 1928. I'm 70. So that's dating back a ways.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: In a rather dilapidated house just off the creek.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: The Barrier Islands from Folly Creek Landing is probably about three miles out to the island.

K.F.: Okay, all right. Now how did your family move up this way?

M.S.: Well that's quite a story, I guess. Well not really quite a story, but my father's family were Ocracokers, North Carolina. And some of my family on the Howard side originally owned the entire island of Ocracoke, according to some history. And things there were, certain times of the year in Ocracoke in those days and still is when there was -- now that the tourist trade is there, it's different, but in those days, many of the men had to leave the island to find work to support their families back in Ocracoke. My grandfather's wife, who as a Howard, died in about 1903 or something like that. He left the island and came to Ocean City in about 1906. And my father, because of the pound fishing industry here, which at that time they launched on and off the beach in Ocean City because at that time it was not an inlet. And most of the Ocracokers were surfmen, and they were able to maneuver boats in and out through the surf, and so he came to Ocean City for work. And there were quite a few other Ocracokers that settled here.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Yeah, I was going to just ask you that if that was their specialty. Did a lot of people move to Ocean City then?

M.S.: To work in the seafood or the fishing industry. So my father was - and his two siblings were raised for a while by their aunts on my grandfather's side. Made a home for them, it was a brother and a sister. So after a certain time, I guess my father was a cabin boy on a freighter out of Washington, North Carolina. Quit school at eight and went to work. And I think about 14 years of age, maybe 16, he came to Ocean City, worked in a store here for a while, and then as soon as he was old enough, he went to work in the pound boats with my grandfather who, at that time, moved to Chincoteague.

K.F.: Okay, right.

M.S.: He'd married another lady up here, went to Chincoteague and, again worked for, I think, Leonard, Lucky Leonard down in Chincoteague in the pound boats after one of their vessels. My father followed that. And in the wintertime when pound fishing wasn't working, the people in Chincoteague always - they went down the bay from Chincoteague to the Chesapeake Bay is a long distance, and so under sail or whatever. But this time, there were motor boats, of course, and they went down oyster in that area where the spat oysters caught on the rocks down - there was a great rise and fall, and most of the oysters on the sea side caught in low water because the

tide is falling on existing rocks which were actually oyster shells that grew and died and so forth. That was a big industry at that time, and plus clamming. So they would be gone sometimes from their home in Chincoteague working in those bays for a period of time. And I guess during that period of time, my mother was born on the Western Shore, Carroll city - County, Charles City, Charles City.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: Her family moved to the Eastern Shore, my grandfather on that side was a farmer, on Folly Creek. Rented property there and grew good watermelons, as I remember as a child, strawberries, Hayman's Sweet Potatoes, one of the favorites of the Eastern Shore, plus cantaloupes and things like that. He was famous for his Hayman Potatoes as I recall. Died fairly early. And I guess during one of the down-the-bay trips, boats would put into Folly Creek, which was a protected area in case of storm. Somehow or another, he met my mother who may have been down on the creek cooling her feet in the creek. Anyhow, they were married, and I don't know that - I don't think that they lived in Chincoteague at all. He had lived there with his father, but by this time, he was probably 22 or 3 or something, 21. He was married in Chincoteague. Little aside, they were married on Saturday night, and of course, in those days, you had to keep working to make it go. And he went down the bay the following morning with a man named - right on the tip of my tongue, John Jones. And so he was accused of spending his honeymoon with a man years thereafter.

(Laughter.)

M.S.: But that's the way life was in those days. You didn't take off work very long. And then he went to work in the pound net business in Wachapreague, Virginia, for a man named George Knox. But we were still living on Folly Creek, or were living on Folly Creek, I should say. No, I'm wrong. He first went to - that's where I was born on Folly Creek. He went to work with a man named - can't think of the name right now, but out at what they call Black Stump, which is a creek, it's the head of Folly Creek right by Accomac as you go out of town going south of Accomac. And this man had a tremendous amount of oyster ground, and watch houses, the way they guarded the oyster, and shucking houses. And my father ran one of his pound boats during the summer and trapped ducks in the winter to feed the help that shucked the oysters.

K.F.: Right, right.

M.S.: Unfortunately, he got involved with the federal agents in 1935, I think it was, but by that time, we were living in Wachapreague. So I was born in there, well I started school at Accomac, went to Wachapreague, moved back to Accomac, Accomac back to Wachapreague, Wachapreague to Ocean City in 1938. So that's how I got up here.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

M.S.: You wondered if I would ever get here.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: I've worked in Wachapreague and stuff and talked with folks.

M.S.: Oh, you have?

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: It's one of my favorite places.

K.F.: It's really, really nice.

M.S.: Yeah. My wife and I launched there a couple days ago, went clamming out on the back of Cedar Island. When I was a little boy, my father used to take us to Metompkin, there's a coast guard station on the lower end of Metompkin at that time. And then it went down in the '33

storm, they moved it over on the other side of the inlet, on the Cedar Island side. And so the Barrier Islands have been one of my favorite places all my life. In fact, in 1976, a friend of mine, Buddy Jenkins here in town, and I had a house built on Cedar Island on the upper end, cottage, 20 by 40 cottage. And my wife and I spent for the next 16 years, actually about 14 years because the last two years erosion was a problem. But we spent two or three nights a week down there for 30 weeks of the year, generally, in the middle of the week when nobody was there. So many times, we were the only people, not the only people, but very few other people on the entire seven mile long island. And we clammed and fished and walked the beach and just enjoyed it. And then in 1991, we had 2000 feet of erosion on the upper end of the island. And eventually took our house down. And an old house - and a cabin that was built in 1931 by B.D. Heirs (phonetic), and another man down there. And that had weathered the '33 storm. In fact, two people were in it when the '33 storm. So we were built west of that thinking that this would be forever.

K.F.: That you'd be okay.

M.S.: Nature has away of beating you once in awhile. So we came to Ocean City in '38. And my father - we moved to Ocean City and lived down on St. Louis Avenue, and my father - let me digress a minute. My uncle Norman Hudson, who married my Aunt Lula, who as an Ocracoker, had moved to Ocean City. He was the son of Ira Hudson, the famous decoy carver.

K.F.: Okay, yeah. I was just going to ask you that.

M.S.: And I remember Ira. Because he came up here from Chincoteague. Norman built several boats during the early 40's. One was a 60-some foot offshore dragger. And Ira came up and worked on that with him for a while, and that's how I got to know him, a little bit. I mean at that time, I wasn't very old, but I do remember that man, old man. So he influenced my father that there were opportunities up here. Of course, that was right during the - at the end of the depression. And, of course, nobody had any money. And a man up here named C.P. Cropper who as very, had been very active in the fishing business, had three stands of poles, that would be three rigs of pound nets, down to Sandy Point, about five miles down here. So my father bargained to buy his company. And which included some land over here on the commercial harbor where the dock was where Doug Gate is now, about 3 or 400 feet at that. And he managed to buy or get a pound boat or two from Lucky Leonard who his father had worked for in Chincoteague, with no money.

And I can recall that -- I was 10 in '38 when we moved up here, and I can recall my father riding to work in the morning - of course, got up and were gone at 3, 3:30 in the morning riding a bicycle over to work because they didn't have a car, couldn't afford one. And that, he was able to hang in there with pieced-up nets and whatever he could scrape together. And, of course, in the early 40's when the war started, seafood products became very popular. They were shipped by lend lease here and there, fishing. And so the prices of the seafood were good. And as it turned out, the harvest was good. And from three rigs there, we drove three move rigs in the ocean right off Ocean City off Stephen Decatur Hotel, about two and a half, three miles offshore. Not that far, he was about a mile and a half to two miles. And, of course, I started to work other places when I was 10 years old selling newspapers and setting up pins at bowling alleys and helped to, I supported myself because, like I say, at the time, we had no money. And things got better. And the pound fishing business depended mostly, as far as volume of fish or production would be the croakers or hard-heads, which you're probably familiar with.

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: And at that time, looking back down to as far south as Willis Wharf, there were 30 stands of poles out at Willis Wharf. Wade Walker, Walker Brothers, Ballard Brothers, and Old Man John Ballard is still around. Talked to him. They had eight, nine boats, seven to eight in the crew, this old man's job -- he wasn't old then, of course, his main job was buying hickory poles, hickory trees, because up here in fairly shallow water, we grow 75 foot hickories.

K.F.: Now where would you get the hickory?

M.S.: He, I think, bought most of his out of Kentucky. I'm not sure where ours came from. I remember having a lot of experience with them, sharpening them in the spring, and trimming them up and that sort of thing, and helping to drive them later. I started the pound boats when I was 16. In fact, I started when I was 15. But I happened to turn out to be a chronic sea-sick, and so first summer, I couldn't handle it. But after you throw up two or three times in the morning trying to work, it gets on you. So I stayed on the dock, during the summer, of course. I went to school. And then out of Chincoteague, there was another 16 to 18 stands of poles, and Ocean City, there was Davis and Lynch at this time, there had been other companies prior to that. But Elliott Brothers, they had four stands, I think, and probably Davis and Lynch had at least six, maybe nine. We wound up with six stands of poles. And there was one other small company, but they were gone pretty quickly.

K.F.: What did your dad call the company?

M.S.: Simpson Brothers. His brother, Hilton, Perry Hilton Simpson, was coast guard.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

M.S.: He served on the -he was in charge of a flotilla of 83-footers in the English Channel on D-Day, and he had been in charge of three stations on Long Island back in the 30's during prohibition and the wars up there, the rum runners, quite exciting. And after he got out of the service on a medical discharge, he came down and went into - came out of the business.

Another half brother who got out of the service about the same time came to work. My brother, Jerry, was in the Navy at the time. And another half brother came down and worked for a while. But it was terribly hard work. One of the brothers didn't last very long. But then when my brother, Jerry, came home, he took over one of the pound boats and operated it. And by this time, we had, by this time we were packing a lot of the offshore draggers out of, mainly out of Hampton Roads, Virginia. Isaac, Saul Fast (phonetic), that business they bought and sold a lot of fish down particularly through the south. And the market there was small trout, croakers, butterfish, things like that. People huckstered them throughout. We had at one time, how things change when people knew how to clean their own fish, we had 22 steady hucksters in the morning.

K.F.: Really? Here in West Ocean City or in Ocean City?

M.S.: Right over in West Ocean City here on the commercial harbor. Doug Gate has a big shop there now. A tackle store and all that sort of thing. So it's quite large.

K.F.: Which tackle shop is it?

M.S.: It's called Eight Marine (phonetic).

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: And right next to it on the same property that we owned at one time, there's a new building up. It's a restaurant and bar. So things have changed dramatically during that period of time since the 40's. And with the packing of the large offshore draggers, and about 1938, the

first of the little draggers, we called it the day boats, appeared around here. Old man named Eddie Brecks. And the Martins who are still in the fishing business right here on the harbor -

K.F.: Oh, right.

M.S.: Old man Johnny Martin, he's long gone. His oldest son is still living. They - he, the old man Johnny Martin had a smaller dragger within a very short period of time. C.P. Cropper, who we were buying the property from had a several - seven or eight daughters, prolific man. And he, he had enough boats that he named at least four or five boats after his daughters. He had a couple built during the early part of the war because this business now was booming. We had by this time had a couple trucks on the road, and expanded our business. And we shipped mostly to, our small stuff to North Carolina with a couple - the Potter Brothers down there bought a lot of stuff from us, send their trucks up. And we packed as high as 1,000 boxes of fish in a night, a day off the draggers and the pound boats. And that was - they were 100 pound boxes in those days. Mostly everything today is shipped in 50 pound boxes. Packed in wooden boxes.

K.F.: And were they boxes or barrels?

M.S.: Boxes by this time. Barrels had gone out of- we shipped oysters in barrels. We got in the oyster business in a roundabout way. And we bought clams. And eventually we, in about '44, bought a block of land in Ocean City. Paid \$5,500 for it, I think, in 1944. And there, we took, we had - took 10 acres of land from the state, and we laid that - we graded our clams, we bought a million or two million, whatever, clams a year. In those days, there were a lot of clambers in the bay, mainly wading, raking, signing. And a lot of people made their living from clamming. This is - when you talked about history of the bay earlier, I have a - I gave a book to the museum which you might be interested in. I'm sure they still have it.

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: And it had to do with commercial fishing industry, I believe around the turn of the century and for a period of time on either side of that. And it was very interesting, parts of that they talked about rock fishing on Isle of White up here in the bay. And there were a lot of house boats in the - people lived on houseboats. And so the wintertime or some of them would go down and tie up in the slews down on Assateague and take gunning parties, or they netted, wives went along, of course, to cook. That book would be - I'm not sure what the name of it was. My wife might remember. But getting back to the fishing industry at that time, the - by this time, there were, we were packing probably seven or eight day boats plus the offshore boats would work for three or four days at a time offshore. And they would come in, and they would come in sometimes with 4 or 500 or 6 or 700 boxes of fish. There were a lot of those Fast Brothers boats were the old World War I sub chasers. They were 100 feet long, 16 feet wide. So the big boats that you see here today weren't the first big boats, big offshore vessels that came in. And it was a very busy time. A normal day for half uncle, my father's half brother and I, would be to, we'd get up around 2:30, quarter to three in the morning, be out on the water by just about daylight. And we'd generally before the sun would come up, we'd have fished two rigs. And if we didn't have to change nets because of the slur and slime and grass and growth that grows on them, we would be into the dock by probably 8:00 in the morning, 9, depending on how fast the current was running, how many fish you had, how many stingrays you had to slide over the back of the net. Sometimes you'd raise a net up and there would be 200 stingrays, some of them as high as six, eight feet across from wing to wing.

K.F.: Oh, you're kidding.

M.S.: Which, as my dear friend Lloyd Stearn (phonetic), a Hatterasman, used to say, one story always reminds you of another. As I probably said to you on the phone, my great-great grandfather was lost at sea, my grandfather and all of these before, they were 55 years of age. My grandfather was hit by a stingray in the foot.

K.F.: He was.

M.S.: Through the boot. And the bar broke off in his foot, and they thought they had it all out, but they didn't, and he died within six months of blood poisoning, before Penicillin. I've seen - saw a man come with the boats, came in one day and a big, strong guy was just laid right out from - by that time, Penicillin was around, and we had the doctor waiting or the doctor came as soon as he got in and pumped him full of Penicillin. And he survived. Most of the time, the poison wasn't necessarily fatal, but it made you terribly ill. So that, when we dry up these stingrays in the boat, I can recall standing beside one guy, and one of these fish with the tail at the base would be two inches in diameter, and the end of the tail, about six or seven foot tail, would be the size of your little finger. One slammed him beside the head and broke open - so it was a very dangerous business, you know, fishing with a lot of sea on. So it was one of those things that every day there was a change in time. Then you'd hit a period of good weather and good fishing and it was nice. So this was - now we're into about 1946 and 7. Things still going well. Well, actually, up to '46. And some of these rigs that we're talking about, these pounding rigs, I remember Davis and Lynch, they bailed about 3,000 boxes of fish out of one or two nets. Just, they start to go inside the net with a boat, 30 - about 38 feet long, six or seven head in a crew, and you just start raising the net up from the bottom, starting with the back of the net, which would be the in-shore side, towards the beach, and work your way off by pulling the net up, dropping the net underneath as you move off to dry the fish up. First came up with a couple lines to the boat called up-hauls.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: All the whole net would just be alive with fish, quite a sight, of all different kinds, many kinds. Squid, and we even caught sailfish once or twice if it got in there. And so if you had this many fish in there, you couldn't haul them all in one day, so you tie it off-tied them up and just get out of the, bring a load in, go back, get another load and pack them. But then comes 1947, and the last year of the croakers. The volume fish that the industry depended on.

K.F.: What happened to the croakers?

M.S.: No one knows. At that time, of course, the last good catch we had was we had 800 boxes of croakers one day, and 200 boxes of trout. A thousand boxes of fish at that time was about a \$10,000 catch, \$10 a box approximately.

K.F.: And the croakers were a hardy fish. We would - the pound boats when they came in, the fish, 'cause they're only a couple of miles from the inlet, would be alive. We'd pack them in with a layer of ice in the bottom, layer on top, flounders and other fish that you would pack ice in the bottom, half-way up and then another layer on top, flounders, trout which were easy, you know, they'd get soft quickly, bluefish get soft quickly. But we had certain ways of packaging fish, but the croakers we'd dump them in there, put them on the truck, and some of them would still be almost alive when we got to Philadelphia, because they do live a long time. Now the Japanese, I think, have figured out a way to pack flounders in the United States and set a certain temperature. They lay dormant, air freight into Japan a lot, they like everything alive over there if they can get them. How did I get off on that? But so now the croakers are gone. And my father, who as obsessed with pound fishing, we have the block of land in Ocean City which was

- and we had oysters and clams, and he had a great idea of what to do, put a raw bar in there, because there's never been a real good raw bar in Ocean City, believe it or not. So this was '47, and he stuck with it until he went broke. And the land in Ocean City was sold. I was in the service at the time. By now this is '52, and he was blowing off the poles, which was required by the warring department, which was then the - within which was the Corps of Engineers. And they required, because the poles were a menace to navigation. It turns out that, I think, probably out of Ocean City was the only place that these poles were dynamited and removed from the service. But because down in Virginia, it didn't seem to happen. Anyhow, my father was blowing off the poles, and the top percussion popped three feet of hickory out of there, three men on a boat, one pole, 360 degree circle, and the engineer hollered watch out. My father looked up to see what was going on, and you know that pole struck him right between the eyes. So that killed him before he was 55.

And by 50 - probably 4, '53 or 4, all the pound net rigs were out of business from Willis Wharf all the way except one outfit, I think there's a sunfish company or something in New Jersey. Because of the disappearance of the croakers, because that was the volume fish that kept it all going, and the drivers, I mean we can stay in business all right, easy, if -- my father had to put everything back into the pound nets. And that's kind of the history of pound net fishing along the coast. There are still pound nets in the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, as you're aware of, on both sides of the bay. Very similar, know a lot of the people down there who are in the business, and very - the nets, the layout of the nets, there's a - you've visited the museum in Ocean City, I guess.

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: They had a little showing of what a pound net rig looked like there. Probably still there.

K.F.: Yeah, they did. They did.

M.S.: They're all generally the same. Some were draw rigs, some were funnel rigs and all these other different kinds. Hard to explain. But that was the end of that, and a lot of the big draggers went out of business or the industry was changing a great deal different, the types of fish involved. And today, of course, the big business in the seafood is offshore, sea clams, harvest. Some fishing boats, a lot in - whatever, the people who catch the horseshoe crabs to feed the - catch the eels with or whatever else they use them for.

K.F.: Bait guys.

M.S.: Tonks and that's been a big thing for the commercial people. Sea bass, and lobster, the-line business which is ruining the sword fishing, back in -just about ruined the sword fishing industry. Back when the stick boats out of down east were harpooning on the surface, the average weight of a fish that was harvested and killed was 265 pounds. Today, it's less than 60 pounds, the average weight, which tells you something. It's like the crabs in the bay.

K.F.: Right, right.

M.S.: The waterman is his own worst enemy. Always has been. It's all for today. And tomorrow will take care of itself. But crabs are in a precarious situation. And we were talking earlier about old buildings. The one thing that really disturbs me is when the Federal Government take over things, things happen that shouldn't. All the great - the large gunning clubs that used to be on the beach. And, of course, on the barrier islands of Virginia, most of them washed away one time or another. Some of them - well some of them were built back in the marshes, like Accomac club and the private club on Revel's Island. And but here, I guided

in the wintertime after I got out of school with some of the major clubs down here. Old Man Sam Riddle built a house in about 1902 or 3 on Assateague. And then the Jackson brothers had a club there that would, they could take 45 gunners, house 45 gunners. And the building itself, main club house was 40 by 80, I think. Then they have cook houses and guide houses and so forth. And there's still, the last one that's now - the time is up. When the Federal Government took over, they allowed 25 years approximately for the club to stay in business at that point. And the club house called Middle Moore's, this was their last year. Last year was their last year. And I've often wondered. Some of the club houses are still there, and the park service uses them. But I would've thought that they would've maintained or allowed some of those to be still in use, or at least maintain them and make sort of a museum out of them with showing people the old gunning rigs and such things as that.

And the other sad part about it is that the Coast Guard stations, there's this one here in Ocean City, and North Beach mysteriously burned. And Pope's Island club station mysteriously burned. And just recently on Fairmore Island up on the north end, lightening struck the Coast Guard station there. And, of course, in the meantime, the conservancy bought that from the Smedlaps (phonetic), they have - that was probably legitimate. I don't know. It probably was like about some, down on Hog Island where I fished a lot, station there, the old station mysteriously burned. Well that wasn't mysterious. They were using a torch, supposedly, to cut the lower rungs of the steel tower there because it had a parrot and falcon nest up there, and they were burning that, and the grass caught fire and burned the station down. And certainly there's a lot of old buildings in this country that are being preserved. And it would seem like to me that just to have one of those Coast Guard stations on Assateague maintained and used as a museum would've been wonderful for 2 or 3 million people who visit Assateague in a year. But at the time, in the 40's, there had been a lot of activity in the fishing business in Ocean City long before that. I'm not sure when the first pound nets were installed, but probably in the - around the turn of the century.

Another sideline on that was the sturgeon harvest. Actually, the mouth of the Potomac River was probably the largest - if not the largest sturgeon industry in this country certainly. Maybe not in Russia and some other places. But the man named Pagan who built and had the Maryland Inn in Ocean City, where as a sideline, my wife - three of us, the ex-mayor of the town Fish Powell, a fellow named Fred Hastings and myself, all married our wives out of the Maryland Inn. The ladies came down to work in the summertime, we locals gathered there to get - choose and pick, pick out our wives.

(Laughter.)

M.S.: In fact, we actually dated some of the girls, I dated Fish's wife, and I think he dated mine at times. This was before we were married, obviously.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: Somehow or another, chemistry took over or whatever, and we singled each other out. But he made his money on the sturgeon business. In those days, the sturgeon here were caught with nets. And the ladies of the town probably knitted most of the, built most of the nets during the wintertime. That was part of their job. And they would actually make the nets.

K.F.: Even the pound nets too?

M.S.: No, not the pound nets.

K.F.: Just for the sturgeon.

M.S.: Just - well for other gill nets also. You could buy webbing, obviously, but they also knitted nets, like they would knit sweaters or whatever. And it's not a difficult thing once you get the hang of it. And certainly the nets were always getting tom up. And sharks would get in the nets and tear them up. And the ladies did a lot of that. And those nets were, as I recall, about seven or eight inch nets. You get some big sturgeon, that's a stretch, stretch measure.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: The nets, as we call it, the nets.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: And when we went into business, I'd say 1938, sometime during the early part of, early part of the 40's in one of the buildings, in fact, the building, I guess, had just been torn down. We found a rig of- we knew they were in there, but a rig of sturgeon nets. So my brother and another fellow named Skate Redden set the last rig of gill, sturgeon gill nets along the coast. And by then, of course, the sturgeon were not really plentiful. But they had one fish that I recall was, the fish gutted weighed 211 pounds. And there was 48 pounds of roe, eggs and the fish. And the way we handled the eggs, cut the fish open and take the, break the line, outside lining of the sac, scoop the eggs out and the prime size was about a number four shot of a shotgun shell. So you had different size bronze wire, which we still had some of that there, and little wooden buckets. So you just gently rubbed the thing to get the things, whatever it is, the holes that rigs together, and get the gristle and whatever out of it. And so you wind up with individual eggs falling through the screen, and you put a certain amount in, like some salt, another layer of eggs, salt. Package that, and we shipped that to Henson Caviar Company in New York at \$4.25 a pound in those days, which was quite exciting.

The largest fish I recall, we had a 350 some pound sturgeon. And she had 60 some pounds of roe. And a little aside, N.D. Lynch, who was part of Davis and Lynch, at that time I guess the man was probably 65 or 70, huge man. The Lynch family had a great reputation about being eaters and drinkers. And I've seen him, somebody offered him, standing on the dock one day, and somebody came by and offered him a pint of whiskey. And Old Man D asked if he'd like to have a drink, and the old man drank the whole pint down and threw the bottle over as a joke. Went down and gave the man a pint out of his, he always kept whiskey on hand, of course. And these people were amazing. But he came over on that morning, we had just cut this big sturgeon open, and word got around we had a big sturgeon. He walks over, and bends down, and I can see him now, he had a great big hand. He just scooped up a whole handful of egg out of that fish's belly, sprinkled, took the salt box, sprinkled some salt on it, gobbled it down. And is favorite expression was hell down. And he said hell down, that's good. I wished I'd had a camera on that. I look back, I never was a camera bug, but I missed a lot of things.

During that period of time, though, we changed our webbing on the leaders of nets, and instead of using what we call a string weir, that's W-E-I-R, I guess, it's a Norwegian term, I believe.

We used -

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 331)

M.S.: -- some of the great restaurants, Marty's and Little Brothers, and Marty's in Baltimore, we had standing orders from those people with certain size clams, a barrel a week of 1,500

clams, and buck sturgeon. To serve, they always preferred the buck sturgeon, not the female. And oysters that we grew up here in the bay, right in back of Ocean City at that time. And we had, there was a big restaurant, nice restaurant in Southwest Washington called an English Raw Bar, and we shipped to them. We shipped to Philadelphia. And some - we were beginning to ship stuff as far west as Ohio, some to Pennsylvania. And our, we were shipping oysters and these clams which were excellent out of these bays, and certain specialty fish like large flounder and things like that would be restaurants. So and the hard clams in those days, in the wintertime, we would get cards from like Sam Cherry in Philadelphia and different places to ship all the clams we could, particularly the large clams, they were the best sellers. People, the restaurants opened them and made clam chowder out of bay clams rather than open the can like we do today and make some other kind of clam. All the good restaurants in those days, most of the good restaurants, I should say, had a raw bar where they hired people just to open clams and oysters, shuck them, yeah.

K.F.: Well what happened to those restaurants? Did they just lose their clientele, or was it the times, the raw bars were not -

M.S.: I guess at time, you know, terrapin soup, Little Brothers and Marty's, they specialized in terrapin soup. It's - what happened to the fishing business was that people, the people who bought fresh fish and cleaned their own fish from the hucksters walk into a market or had the market to clean them there. Now everything is processed and packaged, so the wife goes down and buys something, looks in the cold bin there and picks out a package of white fish. We started selling sharks back in those days. That was one of my terrible jobs was skinning sharks. I skinned sharks up to 535 pounds in size.

K.F.: Tell me about skinning sharks.

M.S.: Well you laid the devil out there either on the table or on the deck if it was too heavy to put on the table, and we'd take a sharp knife and go around the, just under the head, around the gill, and on a big shark, you would run your knife down, so you'd leave about three or four inch strips from the head all the way to the tail.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: Small shark, you just go down each side of the back of the dorsal fin, and leave most of the belly there and go around the rib cage, just through the skin and take a pair of pliers and just rip the hide right off, chop his head and tail and head off and the guts. It's a nice piece of steak fish, that's what we called it, steak fish.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: And the large one, you just had to make a lot of cuts to strip it. Interesting story on that. Right here in the harbor, the sharks that came up where you'd call fish and threw stuff overboard. I remember one morning we had our winches that - a winch, not ladies.

K.F.: Yeah.

(Laughter.)

M.S.: But to haul the fish in baskets out of the hull of the boats with the boom up here. And I threw a little hammerhead shark a hook that would be about a 15, 16 hook, which would be a bite about that big. And just hooked that into a shark and threw it out on the end of this quarter inch line and made it fastened to the winch line. And within just a very short period of time, I put that on the winch haul, about an eight or nine foot shark on the dock, skin it and sold it all in about 30 minutes. One of my records. And it just, a lot of people were quite surprised to see these sharks that size come right out of the harbor. But we sold all the, virtually all the shark we

could get. Sam Cherry out of Philadelphia sent us a barrel, talking about barrels, hogs head of big rock one time. Rock was anywhere from 50 to 60 pounds. And I skinned those and sold them, and he shipped us a couple blue fin tuna one time. One of them, I guess, was 600 pounds. For days, I worked on that beauty. But when them hucksters went through the countryside selling them, those hucksters would buy the - we've had hucksters who were older men. We'd just buy 50 pounds of fish in the morning, had his horn, you know, go through the little scale hanging on the back end of the truck, and his fish hom, would blow that when he'd come around so people would know he was coming, stop.

And out of these 22 hucksters I mentioned earlier, some of them would buy up to a 1,000 pounds or more. And then they would distribute them to different people throughout. And it was quite a big business. We handled a lot of stuff that way, in particular, the skate fish. And get those tuna, and we'd cut the sections like this just to make them so that when they were sliced, steak out, make a nice piece of meat about like that, maybe a half a pound. And they huckstered that through the countryside. And for a long time after that, they always want more of this. They didn't know what tuna was. But evidently, the people out there had a great liking for it. But that was just one of those things. They were caught in the pound nets out of , out of- what do they call them, mud hole out of Barnegat, New Jersey, somewhere up there. They would occasionally catch those big tuna in the traps.

And then from there on, the fishing industry has been - a lot of the small draggers went out of business because they depended on porgy which, we used to get porgies that would weigh two, three pounds. And I haven't seen a porgy brought in here unless it's just a small thing, in years. Whiting, the croakers, of course, and decent size trout and very small numbers of trout. It's amazing. They just, in those days, that's what we packed day after day. And now you don't see them. Few trout, flounders are the big thing because they bring a very high price. And occasionally now that there is some croakers that have come back in the last few years.

K.F.: Yeah, I was just going to ask you because I know the pound netters in the bay said they're back and forth.

M.S.: Last year, Wayne Heath, one of the -

K.F.: Oh, yeah, down in Virginia.

M.S.: -- Heath guys, yeah, he told me that they sold just over a million pounds. A lot of those, there are some decent size croakers. And here the people catch more on hook and line that will weigh up to, I think was one weighed in last year about four pounds, something like that. But most of them are maybe up to a pound and a half was a good size croaker that I've seen. I hear about a lot of these others and I know some of them are weighed in. But I recall, which I've only known one other person to believe what I say, is that we were, we bought fish from all different places, and there was a netter out of Rehoboth Bay who we bought from. He'd set nets, and we'd bring whatever his - he'd buy them, and he brought in about 500 pounds of croakers. And they average 20 to the box, 100 pound box. It was an average of five pounds a piece.

K.F.: A piece.

M.S.: And the biggest one I weighed was seven pounds. And for years, I told them, I said - Hugh Cropper (phonetic), a young friend of mine, I think he caught one over five pounds one time. So he verified that it was quite young. And I was talking to Albert Heath who was a netter down in the mouth of the bay. And we were reminiscing about the time invested in the business.

And I was talking about the difference in the ocean fishing and some of the modern ways now. They're driving poles, and we did it by hand, step a 75 foot hickory with now power other than man strength and awkwardness, as they say. Between two pound boats lashed together in the sea and hold it up there until you drop it down, water power to wash it in. We were sitting there talking one day and said - he told me, I think - I believe he said it was in November about this catch of croakers they had. And he said I weighed them up to seven pounds. I said well thank heavens. And I knew he was telling me the truth. We hadn't even talked about croakers, but he just brought that subject up. I said well, we probably talked about croakers because they were coming back. But when he mentioned that, I said well I'm happy to hear that because I tell the same story, and people look at me with - those who know what a croaker is think I'm lying.

I don't know much other to say about the fishing industry today. We're depleting our resources. There's just no question about it. And the recovery of the rock fish is proof that man can do something. Look what's happened to the cod fish. They have - up there they've limited 200 pounds to the boat or some fool thing. And John, Captain John Smith when he came over here talked about all of the fish in the banks, the Grand Banks, cod fishermen up there, all the Portuguese who came over by sailing. And now they're - I don't think Canada even allows a landing of cod. Maybe the United States has cut them all out too. But why, the problem is, why do they wait, why do the authorities wait until they're on the verge of extinction, like they did the rock, instead of leveling the thing off. They've done it with clams pretty much, sea clams, surf clams they call them. And the bays here now are coming back, there's a lot of grass in the bay.

K.F.: Oh, good.

M.S.: The boat started - the other day, came back, I had an appointment with him here, and he had lift his engine on several occasions to get the grass off of his props because his engines were overheating. And so the bay here is not anywhere near as productive as it used to be. And, again, I think the Federal Government has a great hand in that when they bought Assateague, they immediately started building dunes, which of course the Federal Government tried on the Outer Banks of North Carolina for 30 years and finally decided that they weren't getting anywhere. You build a big dune, and once the sea reaches that dune somewhere and it funnels water through from the bay out, then begin to cut, that's where inlets start. But anyway, on what we call fox sea levels, there's a little level, a lot of levels, fox levels and there's another low spot in the beach down around Pope's Bay. And on the moon tide with a wind, a northeast wind, the bay and the ocean would meet on the beach. And you're driving vehicles down on the beach, there were some times I've driven down at night when the tides were, where the water was almost meeting, so you'd have a very narrow strip to get through. And on this same stretch of beach, as high as 75 to 100 airplanes were known to land there on a weekend when the Jackson Brothers had these weekend fly-ins where the planes would park and they would send people out with Jeeps to bring them back to the clubhouse to have brunch and that sort of thing. And today, you wouldn't believe the same, it's the same beach because the Federal Government built dunes to keep the sea from washing over. And so what does that do? You have a stretch of water here 30 miles long. And the only influx of the ocean water is from Chincoteague Inlet here. And probably the turnover halfway down is a week, if that. And certain times like this you can just imagine what help an influx of millions of gallons of ocean waters would do. And clams down there now are gray. The crabs die, the fish, and as opposed to the Virginia shore where you have

Chincoteague Inlet and Assawoman Inlet and Gargatha Inlet and Metompkin Inlet, what's left of that, and Wachapreague Inlet, and Little Matchabongo, Great Matchabongo and right on down, all of this influx of water in the bay. And it makes a tremendous difference. And it's just a shame that they leave the island like it was, and changed all that. That's my opinion.

K.F.: Well let me ask you about -

M.S.: Yeah, ask me something.

K.F.: Let me ask you about when you had your operation here, and what did it sound like with all those hucksters arriving in the morning to get their fish?

M.S.: In the morning? Oh, dear. Well you see, if they were different sorts of people. Some unsavory. They would, like a bunch of fish hawks, they would always fight over what they wanted, what their customers wanted. And they just would get angry with each other. And then there were times when everything was plentiful. They were nice. And some of them, I used to always like chicken gizzards. And I remember one huckster who always had chicken gizzards from somewhere. And I would buy chicken gizzards from him. And I remember another guy who used to bring down cider that he had - well it as no longer sweet cider, I'll put it that way.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: He always had whiskey with it. And he would get his glass while he was waiting for the boats to come in - for them to be taken out of the boat or whatever, and he'd pour a glass, half of glass of this cider and put a little whiskey in there with it. Help him bide the time. But I think the story that I recall that we were seven weeks without enough fish to pay the crew with. And it was serious. It was really serious. Rather similar to what we have right now -- and there was just no fish. And the hucksters, well of course we were getting some fish from the draggers and some other, buying other places. But as far as fishing the pound - they like it because they come right in almost alive. And the things that they were trying, as I said before, certain kinds of fish that sold very well. And we had three baskets of trout set on the dock out of one of the pound boats. And they were nice trout, about a pound and a half, just the kind the hucksters like. So the hucksters gathered around, and they were a menacing group. And they were, they were in the same situation we were. They weren't getting the fish, they weren't making the money they needed. And my father, who as a fair person but had a terrible temper, was trying to figure out some way to satisfy at least some of these people by dividing them up, and that wasn't fair, and he was going to - he thought the best way was to auction them off Well, of course, then you could hear the hucksters saying well I've been coming here for years, and I ought to be able to get these fish. And another one had some reason why he ought to be able to get them. And this went on until it was really, things were getting out of hand. So my father, as I say, he had a terrible temper, now this is the first fish we had in all these weeks. He just wheeled right around, kicked all three baskets overboard, basket and all. And, of course, then you could hear that son of a bitch is crazy. But he did have, he had a terrible temper. Had a three inch razor strop when I was little, for a straight razor, and I can feel that now. All for the good. My mother used little twig limbs off of a cherry tree, wild cherry. It was like she was cutting the bone when she'd strike you across the bare leg with a piece of that, but it got your attention.

K.F.: Yup. Mom used the back of a brush.

M.S.: Brush? Well, you know -

K.F.: Or whatever was handy.

M.S.: -- always a fine line between abuse and that, but certainly discipline worked in those days. But that was the, the hucksters were, like I say, I don't know whether you've ever seen a group of fish hawks diving on a bunch of fish.

K.F.: No, I haven't.

M.S.: That's how I would relate the fish hucksters, a bunch of fish hawks, ospreys.

K.F.: Right, right.

M.S.: This John Jones that went on my father's honeymoon with him. He told a story one time. He was a lineman on the - in the Coast Guard. And they were putting these telephone lines in on the beach. He was stationed up here at - not Fenwick Island, but the one - not North Beach, anyway, right up here just above Ocean City in one of those Coast Guard stations. I guess it would've been Fenwick Island. Anyway, he was - this is his story, that there was a - they dynamited the holes, and took the poles in, strung with wire. While they were working, this huge school of croakers, the ocean was red with them right outside the break, the fish hawks were solid working on them. He said they would come out of the - the fish hawks would come out of the school - I mean a fish out of the school, and they were heavy, pound and a half, two pound fish probably, and the hawks could barely get up off the water to take them to their - feed the young in the nest. As they'd come across the line, they would holler at them, make loud noises, and they would drop the fish, and he said they picked up a full bushel basket. I always thought that was a story. It was a good story, I liked the story. But my wife and I were fishing here in the inlet one day. I did a lot of fishing those days around the inlet, with my kids and my wife. And we were just leaving the inlet. And there was a fish hawk come right out of the water right here off the point of Assateague with about a two pound flounder. And I raced the boat up, and it was just coming, getting up a distance, and I roared up to him as close as I could get with the boat, and he dropped the flounder on the point of Assateague, and I picked it up and had it for dinner that night. So I realized then that John Jones could very well have been telling the truth.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: Question.

K.F.: I think you mentioned on the phone that your family had several sort of family stories that they told that you had heard throughout the years.

M.S.: Family stories.

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: Well one of the stories which my father told me was having again to do with the bays particularly was the - he called it a red tide. In 19 - he said 1927, because in those days, that was before I was born, but even in my early childhood, I remember what we called - in the saltwater here in these bays, scallops. But it was a very short period of time in my memory that we would have these. And he told me about this red tide and the time of it. And I always wondered about it because it killed the eel grasses in these bays. And now I see that referred to quite often by the scientists that was in the early 30's, when they started actually according to my father, before the 30's. And that grass would come back a bit. And now the bay right down here, if I took you in my little boat as far as Assateague bridge, there's just layers of it. And the bay is really coming back with grass now. And hopefully part of that is due to the reduction of pollution of different kinds. But we still have problems with the chicken manure, in my opinion, that's dumped on the land, not handled properly. Other stories my family might've told.

Nothing is coming to mind other than some stories, stories that I recall from the Outer Banks. But we're not down that far in this particular -

K.F.: But that was part of the things your dad would tell you about?

M.S.: Well, yes, but in the -actually, it was my uncle of one of my relatives on Ocracoke telling about the winter, I think, of 1918, and the Pimlico Sound froze over, and there were a couple of people that used lighthouses out and navigational aids out there where people sent - they starved to death. Couldn't get food to them. And I can recall in those days they ate a lot of robins. And a bush called the Yopon (phonetic) bush with berries on them, and these robins would feed on the Yopon berries. And they had to kill robins to eat. And Nathan Spencer - actually it was Summer Spencer who as telling me this story, is that the canvasbacks would come out of the bay, as the Pimlico Sound was freezing over, they would come out and they would just stand in the yard and shoot them as they come from the sound out going to the ocean, and preserve them for food.

A couple funny stories my father told me about when he was a little boy on the Ocracoke. One of the Grace Line vessels went down in a storm bringing bananas out of West Indies.

K.F.: Oh, right.

M.S.: And he and another boy who'd never had a banana, he said they grabbed one of these pans of bananas and got under a bush or a tree and were eating them until they got sick of them. Because I asked him one time why do you never eat a banana.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: And I could understand that.

(Laughter.)

M.S.: Another story that he told me I thought was -can't tell quite all of it, but he wouldn't eat Irish potatoes, as he called them. I don't know why we called them Irish potatoes when we sent potatoes over there and the Irish were so dumb - I believe you're Irish.

K.F.: No, Scott.

M.S.: Scott. So am I. Believe it or not, they got so dependent on the potatoes they forgot how to plant barley and other stuff that they ate before the potatoes, and they starved with a million people, and half of them came here. I read one time that the average miner would eat seven pounds of potatoes a day to survive. Speaking of potatoes, I don't know why my father called them Irish potatoes, but that's what he always referred to them, but he wouldn't eat them. And I asked him one time why, and again, part of this time, and I don't know exactly what period of time it was, my father had a cousin named Nathan Scarborough, Nathan Scarborough from Ocracoke who was head of the Delaware River engineers, that was his position, he was in charge of that particular division of the engineers on the Delaware River, there was always dredging going on by the Army engineers, and still is, and it's the most self-perpetuating bureaucracy we have in the United States. They do a lot of good, but they don't - keep themselves busy one way or another. And they've surveyed this channel from here to Chesapeake Bay quite a few times. But anyway, a lot of the Ocracokers would go leave the island and go up - Nathan, and get the job as a dredge, as they called it, or whatever other job they could get.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: And kind of a seasonal thing, and the mullet came back in the spring and all that, most of them would return home and go back to work on the water. But my father put some time in on the dredge on the Delaware. And he said whatever time he looked at an Irish potato, it reminded

him of this old cook on there. You know what the ticking is that they covered pillows with and so forth?

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: Well he wore one of these aprons all the way down, this blue and- started out to be blue and white ticking. And he said the whole time he was there, this cook, he never saw him wash his hands after any duty he had to perform, including bodily functions. And he said when he got through, he always wiped his - wiped down until the ticking was black before he started peeling these potatoes. And he said every time I look at an Irish potato, I cannot bear the thought of eating one after watching that cook.

(Laughter.)

M.S.: I thought that was kind of an interesting story. I had some other interesting stories, again family, my cousin Steven Gaskins, Junior, again an Ocracoker. Everybody thinks Buck, what's his name, the country singer?

K.F.: Oh, Buck Owens?

M.S.: Buck Owens was the first, had the first red, white and blue guitar. My father hadn't been back to Ocracoke from the time he left there until 1946. And he and my brother and I went down, took a trip down. And at those days, you had to go to Atlantic, around by Moorehead City and take the mail boat as a passenger. That's the way you got to Ocracoke then. And it was about a five hour trip because they deliver mail then to Portsmouth Island. And that's another big memory of mine, this tall black man, seemed quite old to me then, but very slender and good shape. Seemed to be very tall. I was very short at the time. I can see him now polling out to meet the mailbox in this skiff to pick up the mail, take it to the island. There were still some people living on Portsmouth then. It was a little village on there at one time. I thought that was quite interesting. It was quite an interesting boat trip too. My father had bought three bottles of, not red feather, but whiskey to take down to his uncles who married his -- father's sister who took care of him when he was young. Esy, Lesy and Wamy, they called them, Esther, Louisa and Velma. That's - the kids turned that into Esy, Lesy and Wamy. So but during this trip, it was quite a long trip, by car and then by boat. And by the time we got there, I didn't think - I think the old man had drank most of the whiskey. He was trying to prepare himself, I guess, for this homecoming after like 40, probably 36 years or so, something like that. It was quite an interesting trip to meet all those people. But getting back to my present, Steven Gaskins, Junior, he couldn't read or write. He was very witty and a good thinker, I guess. And one of the stories is - there was a lot of stories, but when he went in the service, the lady went through the line wanted to know where he was from. He says Ocracoke, North Carolina. Ocracoke is pronounced Ocracoke different ways. And she asked him what he did before he came in the service. He was a waterman. And he asked her what she did - no, she asked him how do you spell Ocracoke. And he said, I think she had told him she was a school teacher, or he had asked her. 'Cause he always had a way to get around the fact that he couldn't read or write. So he asked this school teacher, said well you say you're a school teacher. If you can't spell Ocracoke, why do you ask me how to spell it. He also worked on the bridge. And he had a wife. And he heard stories while he was away that maybe his wife was being unfaithful. So he came in one day and she had left a letter for him or sent him a note or something. And they lived - had a little place down near the Delaware River bridge. And she left a note that she needed money to buy food with. So he went up on the bridge and watched the place, and he saw these men coming and going. So he had a sneaking suspicion, found out he was right. So he asked

somebody to write her a letter for him. And the statement in there was, he talked about seeing these men coming and going. And he said, his final statement was as far as I'm concerned, he said, you can eat ham bone and spigot water. He ordered a ax from Montgomery Ward, as he calls it, and a straw hat. And the hat came. And he asked somebody to write a letter for him. And he said I live north of Ocracoke Island, the gunning club called green something gunning club. And as you come down the island, there's some fish camps on the left side, and he described all the island. And he said at some point on the island, there's a coast guard station with a government mule on there.

And he said only thing I have found on this entire island that is - with a hat that would fit is a government mule at the coast guard station. And he says as many straw hats as I have ordered from Montgomery Ward, you should certainly know my size by this time, please send a hat that will fit. But I recall meeting, when I met Cousin Cleve (phonetic) was in 1946, and we were out under one of those oak trees down there, water oak trees. And he and his little group were playing the guitar, playing red, white and blue, and they were drinking out of a quart, clear liquid out of a quart jar. That's Cousin Cleve. There's a lot of other stories about Cousin Cleve.

And an aunt who had stories, a lot of them written down. And other people could tell them much better than I. I'm not a great - but other stories of my family here in this area, I pretty much, as far as my father was concerned, he was pound fishing.

K.F.: Right. Well what about fishing stories? I know all fishermen have -

M.S.: Well those kind of fishing stories.

K.F.: -- great fishing stories.

M.S.: Well one of the stories I like in my own family is that when I came out of the service, I hand lined blue fish for a living, for a spring or summer or two, spring or two.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

M.S.: Of course, in those days, bluefish, sea bass and large butter fish were the three highest price fish. Today you can hardly give bluefish away for some people.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: And they got a bad name because people didn't take care of them. Charter boat were one of the main reasons for that because they just piled all these high metabolism fish in a heat. And when we were hand lining, if the water temperature was under 64 degrees, we had to - I mean over 64 degrees, we had to take ice. And you gutted as soon as you - you were either pulling fish if they were in - drop them in the box, and then the minute they quit biting or you were out of them, you gutted. And if the water temperature was 64 or below, you just bailed salt water on them and separated them in bags, and they were firm when you got out. But today, as I say, the charter boat won't load them up. But my story is, I think my wife and I were married at this time. And we were going offshore, and I was making up lures. First time she'd been on the ocean, if my memory serves me correctly. So I pointed the compass to her and said, you know, keep the needle looking that way and you steer while I'm making up these lures. There was some sea on that morning. And, of course, by this time I well knew that I was a chronic seasick. And before, hadn't been going - in those days, a nine knot boat to go to the jack spot was about a two hour trip, a little more, to the fishing grounds. And my wife who spent - was from Baltimore, spent most of her summers in Mountain City, Tennessee, far from the ocean, and

she's standing there just having a great time, and I'm back there making a face, throwing up, getting seasick, a waterman.

(Laughter.)

M.S.: And that was the time we left, my uncle had heard, thought he was hearing -big boats talk about large schools of bluefish. So I put a few on my skiff, 25 foot open skiff, no radio, just watch, a compass. Started - Ben and I left at 3:00 in the morning. And - it as 25 miles down the beach, so I was about a little over two hours getting there. Daylight came. And after about 30 minutes past the lights, if I didn't see any birds, didn't see any bluefish, and I was beginning to wonder what the heck was going - what happened, where all these bluefish were. And in the meantime, about a 40 foot whale breached right in front of the skiff. By then I'd cut down and was trolling because it as starting to air, breeze up from the southwest, the south. And my wife is up in the bow of the boat. And this whale is like 30 feet in front of us. It was kind of a shock for a girl who spent her summers in Mountain City. It turned out that we turned tail, fleet came in, the charter fleet. By then it was 7 or 8:00 in the morning. Fleet came down and nobody saw any bluefish. Turned out that my uncle had heard ship from these Chincoteague boats, whatever, whoever, about these bluefish, and he thought they were talking about the light ship. What they were talking about was a freighter that was passing by somewhere offshore, talking to each other, they were up there by this ship.

K.F.: Oh, right.

M.S.: But this ship was on the way from God knows where it was. So that was a story that went round and round for a long time because the charter boat would come on and my uncle, he was the one that was in the coast guard, and he ran a charter boat out of Ocean City. Have you seen any fish off the ship lately? But I recall that day when it breezed up, it was really getting sloppy, and I turned tail and we trolled and trolled and trolled. And just 3 or 4:00 in the afternoon, and we never did catch a single fish. But my wife and I went off to the east here one day, she was with me. And she never - she watched me pull fish. And we got into the Atlantic bonitas (phonetic), it was about that long, a heavy little fish, pretty good eating. We used to catch them in the pound nets. Once in the spring maybe one or two times. We'd have a few of those mackerel. And they were the best mackerel that I know of to eat, those little striped. It was foggy, and I got lost kind of because I didn't - somehow or another I got fouled up. Anyway, it was kind of foggy, and a ship came by us very closely, as I recall. Didn't bother me. But then we got into these bonitas, so I let Betty put on two pairs of gloves. I put her in these bonitas. And she handlined like over 200 pounds of them while I as watching her. I got her - let her experience that.

K.F.: Now how do you handline? Explain that to me. Is this rod and reel?

M.S.: No. We used - in those days we used mostly what we call skin tard twine. Came in sizes like 12 thread, 21 thread, 42 thread. And we would use 42 thread, which was easier to get a hold of. And then on the end of that, use a wire, piece of wire leader with a lure. Used mostly lures. Either wooden cedar plugs or eel skins or manufactured artificial lures. And we had a little, we either had some put on little riggers so you'd have a spread of one, two, at least two, maybe three lines over the stem just tied to the boat. So when you put the fish, you just reached out and grabbed that --

(END TAPE 331)

(BEGIN TAPE 332)

M.S.: -- probably this big, this high, a fish box had a thing that looked like this, wood that came up like this, and this. And a wire, heavy wire right across here.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: And the wire was this kind of shape. When you grabbed the fish, particularly small, if it was like two pounds, three pounds. Just throw him down right off of that and knock him right off the hook.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: So you didn't stand there and unhook him with your hand. You just flipped him over there. Now big fish, you just lifted him and then hold down on the line and he'd flop himself off the hook. Then, of course, you'd throw that lure back this way and grab another one. And sometimes you'd bend over for an hour, just solid pulling fish and knocking them off.

K.F.: Wow.

M.S.: Which brings me to another story that I have to tell. But I had been working -we'd leave the dock somewhere around 3:00 in the morning. Most of the time by myself And you, the fleet would generally be working off in the same direction or knew where the fish were by talking when we got in. But there were certain places that you fished the jack spot and the lumps and places where there were rips because of the bottom contour, and that's where we looked for fish. And we roll off that -- little background on the story is that I went off there and it got real foggy, terribly thick. So you're in a world by yourself, unless you run into somebody. And I got into a bunch of fish. And just for an hour, hour and a half, I was catching the nicest bluefish I think I had. That's my catch that day. I was pulling fish. And I heard the steamer vessel going south blowing its horn. You're always a little apprehensive because you're traveling in thick fog. And I had run out of the fish, and I thought well I've got a fairly decent catch of fish. I'm not going to stay out here in this fog. I hadn't seen another boat or this is the first thing I'd heard in the way of a vessel. It was blowing its horn every two or three minutes, whatever, and I listened and listened until I figure this vessel was south of me.

So I started trolling towards the beach by compass. And figured the vessel had gone by and I reached down to the throttle to give her a little more juice so we could pick up speed a bit. Of course, I'm not going to run at full throttle, but even then I wouldn't have been moving very fast. And all of a sudden something didn't sound right at all, and I looked up, and here's this freighter that I thought had gone by right there, and I didn't even have time to hit the throttle. I just - fortunately I had a real hard, about half a turn on the wheel was hard over, and I went right under his counter stem and the wheels of his light, and the wheels coming out of the water - fly past the wheel, and the wheel threw water in my face. After getting over that heart attack, I kept on in shore. And I hit a- an old man named Turner Cropper, who was probably 70's at that time. I say old man. I am 70 myself. But he had a little gray skiff, and she made about seven knots. And when he steered, had a little seat back there and had steered by tiller. And I had seen nobody since except that freighter. And I was finally getting over the shakes. And all the sudden, the sun came through, and all the sudden here's Captain Turner coming the other side of the fog in the open. I said God, it's good to see somebody. So I wheeled around and kind of come alongside. And I said hey, Captain Turner, what's - I assumed he was heading towards the jack spot, because that's where I thought I was in the fog. And I said well if you know where you're going, I'm going to turn around. And I turned around and went back offshore. In the meantime, all the sudden, the fog started lifting, which was normal. And right where I had

thought I'd come from was - it was two or three boats that had anchored out on the jack spot. This older more experienced fisherman. And we're waiting for the fog. They knew if they back up on the jack spot that the ships would either be in shore of the jack spot or off shore, because it's a shoal and a buoy on there. So that's what they had done.

So we, I finished the day and went offshore. Well wasn't very much longer after that, that we were off and I had changed the ground wire on my engine - always kept an extra battery on board and so forth. And went offshore that morning, and it was - I was - Betty -- I was supposed to be in at 1:00. We were going to go get married. We had our license, we bought our license in, I think it was Prince George's County, or the other one, what's the other -

K.F.: Montgomery?

M.S.: Montgomery. I think it was Prince George's County. I met Betty when she was in college. And when I got out of the service, I went to University of Maryland for three semesters. Anyhow, we were planning to get married. And so we went offshore. It's a clear day, a clear morning. And we got out there, and I fished, and I - one of the other boats that we were laying up for lunch, or something, or laying up for a little while, I can't remember. But I asked him, I said - caught a lot of fish the day before, and I said where were you, at Crocker Boys yesterday. And he said no, right where we, right where we fished yesterday, we heard from. Well actually he was on the mark of the jack spot, we were on the south. It was only about three, four miles apart. In the meantime, it was breezing up out of the north quite hard. Or not hard, but enough to wet you running. And I saw Old Man Turner Cropper headed in. I thought I wonder where in the hell he's going this time of the day. Instead of going home by this time. So all of these signals I didn't catch. What had happened was that I had - when I changed the ground wire on the engine, it threw my compass off its little point. And I'm supposed to be in by 1:00 so we could ride up to Prince George's County and find a preacher somewhere, hopefully, a magistrate or something. So we - I started in not knowing that my compass was off. The first thing I saw was North Beach, recognized was North Beach Coast Guard Station or the woods of North Beach, and realized - suddenly dawned on me what had happened. Meantime, I was running in this northern breeze, water flying, I had a line that went all the way around the boat, so anywhere on the boat was fastened to my tiller, I could just take over that line anywhere and steer the boat.

So I was all the way up in the - sitting on the seat, and to get out of the - water was throwing that way and, of course, fishing, getting up early. So I headed north to come to Ocean City, and by then I was pushing my time real close. And obviously, I fell asleep. When I woke up, I was dreaming about this freighter off there that I nearly run into, water was dashing in the face. I come awake and I was headed south on a breaking sea. I had run into the break when I went to sleep. And the boat was, these skiffs fortunately were built for this kind of- maybe not quite -- that. But on breaking sea, she was laid over to the point where water was coming in over the - slamming me in the face.

When I came fully awake, I hit the beach and grounded. And the only thing I could think of at the time was this 400 some pounds of large bluefish, one of my biggest catches at 35 cents a pound in the fish box. So not thinking, I just jumped overboard at the bow of the boat and put my shoulder under and started pushing. Well the sea was not, it wasn't a heavy sea, but it was breaking, of course, on the beach. And I kept pushing until I got her bow offshore, and I never

touched the throttle. And every time the sea would go by, the engine would whine, the propeller was turning, and I had a lot, I had gained a lot of strength in those few moments. And finally, got her bow running, I was in waist deep water probably. And I just held her there until a little larger sea came, and I had felt the propeller grab. She started to move, and she came by the lowest point, and I took my elbows over and was able to pull myself back in the boat, went out through the break, still never touched the throttle.

Of course, my wife, I didn't have no communications. In the mean time, this time had gone by. Not my wife, but my wife to be, wondering where in the hell I was. I got in. By the time I got packed out it was about 4:00 in the afternoon.

K.F.: It's a good drive to P.G. County too.

M.S.: So I got, I see Betty. And I say Betty, there's no way that we can go tonight. Well women have a way of being a lot stronger than men in their convictions, in other ways too. So not to do - we got ready. And one of the main reasons I was marrying her, she had a '35 Plymouth. The only car I'd ever owned was a Model A Ford. I used it on the beach. So I was marrying her for this '35 Plymouth. Anyhow, we got in her Plymouth and headed up the road. When I drove to the Chesapeake Bay- just before we got to the Chesapeake Bay bridge. And I couldn't - could drive no longer. So she took over, and I immediately went to sleep, for a little while. Got across the bridge. And when I came to, my head was going through the ceiling of the car, I thought. Betty had tried to look at a map. I don't know whether she thought she was going to find a preacher on the map or not. But we crossed the median and hit one of the culverts, the - we had to steer - went across the - knocked the thing off the left rear wheel, went in the culvert, busted the tire. We wound up in the oncoming lane on the other side. And a group of people stopped, helped us shove her off in the grass. By then it's getting pretty close to evening. So I asked the guy if they were going in towards Annapolis. I said if you find a garage there, could you send somebody out with a wrecker.

Well went across, bent the tie rod, and both wheels were pointing - I was too tired to be too terribly excited, I guess. But in the mean time, I had changed the back tire. They got out, this guy came out with a hammer and a flashlight, got under there and beat the tie rod straight. And I kept saying well do you think this will get me to somewhere where I can have this fixed? He said when I get through, it'll be fine. I said want me to hold the light? No, I got it. By then it's dark. About 9:30, I guess, that time of the year. So we motored on. And at about, I can remember being in a phone booth for quite a while. And we finally found a preacher's name in there. Said he was a preacher. He was the first of the hippies. When we got to the door, he came out wearing white and black buckwing shoes. I remember that. A coat on, and his hair almost down to his shoulders. So by then it was almost midnight. And his wife stood up for us. My wife had a ring handed down, was made out of a \$20 gold piece by her great-grandfather about 1850 or somewhere along in there. While we were at Maryland, we had had that - I came up with \$2 and a half to have it cut down. Her grandmother was a huge woman, great big woman. So that was her ring. And we got married, we think. And it was a little bit after midnight. And I gave the guy \$5, and we motored on to Baltimore to spend the night with her mother, who had a two bedroom place.

When we got to Baltimore, 2:00 in the morning whatever, it happened that Betty's brother and sister-in-law were there, and they had the other bedroom. And the only other piece of furniture in the place was a couch that didn't pull out. Well I think we sat there for about 30 minutes and dozed. Betty was supposed to be at work at 7:00 in the morning. She was waiting on tables at the Angler Restaurant. I was going to go back to the sea for bluefishing. So we got back in the vehicle and motored towards Ocean City. This is now four or so in the morning. I drove until almost daylight, and then I had to stop for about 20, 30 minutes and rest a little bit. I got Betty back to work by seven, but I didn't go to sea. That was our wedding day and night. And actually on two different wedding anniversaries, I had a Ford pickup that caught fire, and another wedding anniversary, I was coming in Ocean City and a Ford - blue car, whatever you call it, caught fire right at the base of the bridge going in Ocean City. And we were married on the 9' of July. So here it is July, and I've got a car on fire. So from then on, I haven't done much except hovelled in the corner on wedding day, try to forget. What an experience that was.

One of my other - well after we were married - I don't know if that was on July the 9' or not. I never thought about that. I'll have to see if Betty remembers. I was going - it was very shortly after that as a matter of fact because - no, let's see, this was in 1958 that we'd been married. We had two children I think by this time. We were living right across in a little house that's still here, just right on the harbor. And I was hand lining, going offshore handlining fish about 3:00 in the morning. And I was, you know, I was looking to see who's around, what light you could see. And I steered, again, by compass. And in the mean time - the stories getting together. I saw a boat off to my starboard side. Meantime, I put another engine in the boat, and I was running a little faster. And this guy named Jake Downy, he was off to my starboard side, he was a faster boat. And I would check my compass, and find a star, and steer for 30 minutes so I wouldn't have to look at the compass, had a flashlight in my pocket, open boat. And I checked the compass, stuck my flashlight in, and a few minutes later, this boat comes right through the side of my boat, bow of the boat comes right - I'm standing up steering, and it came crashing through the side of my boat.

I put my hand up, and I can remember hollering oh, no. I don't know why I did that. And the bow of the boat hit my engine box, which is what saved me. And my throttle from the engine came through this side of the engine box. So what happened, the throttle cable opened my boat wide open. The throttle - the carburetor was wide open, which gave me a burst of speed to pull away from him, because he busted the whole side of the boat. Only thing saved the boat was at one time or another we used the boat to pull pound net poles off when we were driving poles. And he had a new deck put in and had like a clamp all the way around, which is like a 2 by 6 out of oak fastened to all the ribs in the boat. And she rode up on top of that, about that high out of the water. I got all - ran away from him, and the engine cut off because of overheating, broke all the hoses off and so forth, it was fresh water cool. And he came out, towed me in. And it took about 20 or three 17 or 18 foot board planks to put back. She was a clinker built skiff so we had to put all these splintered and tore up and things. Fortunately, I didn't drown her. It was a pretty bad experience as it turned out.

That was - in those years, after my wife graduated from Maryland, education, but she stayed home, decided to stay home with her children. And she did do that. She substitute taught and

things like that. But generally speaking, stayed home and packed their lunches and was there when they came home until the last one was out of school actually, high school. Which I think worked out quite well. Because we never really had any problems with drugs, and none of them smoke cigarettes. Drink a little bit, but socially. And one of them's an aerospace engineer, and my daughter, Mandy, is a planning director for the City of Laconia up in New Hampshire.

K.F.: Okay. That's where my dad was born.

M.S.: Huh?

K.F.: My dad was born in -

M.S.: Really?

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: Oh, geez. Well you go to Laconia, look her up. She's -just got a promotion as a matter of fact. She has her own staff. And she wandered around up there from the time she got out of school in Arizona, to Michigan, and she likes cold weather. And she was in Meredith, which was on the north, I guess the northwest, at the lake.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: And then she was in Alton, Wolfeboro washer, a beautiful little village, and she bought a house there. That was my - which has now been sold. And has now settled in Laconia, and she likes it there. She really, the town administrator or manager, whatever this position is, they're good to work with, and she's done very well. And it is a nice area, that's for sure.

K.F.: Yeah. It is cold though.

M.S.: Cold in the wintertime.

K.F.: It's very cold. Very cold.

M.S.: Well maybe, do you have any other questions? Keep me -

K.F.: Sure. Can you tell me a little bit about the crew that worked the pound nets?

M.S.: Yes. You're probably looking at one of the very few that's left. My brother, Jerry, my uncle just died, was a young man in Berlin. Who remembers a lot. And I found out, talked to him about it last year, never realized - I knew his father real well. But I didn't realize that he started with pound boats too.

K.F.: Oh. What's his name?

M.S.: His name. Johnny- I'll think of it. I have this terrible thing about remembering names. I can see his face in a picture now, face right now. Willis. Claude Willis was his father's name. And he retired from the Berlin Ice Company, but I think last year he told me he'd gone back, was back there working part time. He's a great bowler, he's in the bowling league. He bowls all over the country. But getting back to the type of people. Well first of all, watermen in those days were pretty much looked down on unless they owned something, unless they owned the company. The people who worked on the water were sort of the other side of the tracks. We weren't all, but that's kind of the way - we were all poor, let's put it that way, very poor during the depression. A lot of people were poor during the depression. Some dumb people took their own lives during the depression. But being on the water, we always had clams and oysters and fish to eat. We always had a garden. My father always bought a couple shoats in the spring, killed them in the fall, pigs. And we had chickens, Buff Rock chickens. My mother, I remember, bought in the early 30's from Sears and Roebuck beautiful -

K.F.: You could buy chickens from Sears and Roebuck?

M.S.: Yes.

K.F.: I didn't know that.

M.S.: Biddies, little biddies.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: They come in a box. And they were -they were called Buff Rocks. And they were about the color of a pretty - the right color of a Labrador dog. And but that's, generally, that was the type of people that were in the pound boats when you - since you've asked me. Because I'd say most of them live in the surrounding country side, rather than in Ocean City, obviously, some of them did live in Ocean City.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: Willis lived in Ocean City. His wife took him Washington, I remember that. Just to survive. And but by and large, that's the kind of people they were. Most of them have gardens, and many of them had found other work because it wasn't a year-round thing. If you remember, my father trapped Bucks during the winter to keep us alive wintertime and sold them at the market. But they would have gardens, and some of them had some piece of a car of some kind, or they got together and there was a little village over here where this marina's going in called Clarktown. And quite a few of them lived in there in very - what would you call, the very, very lowest rent district.

K.F.: Was it like a shantytown?

M.S.: Yeah, it was.

K.F.: So it was a mixed crew, African American?

M.S.: Actually, we only had one - well these were all white people over there. Not all white people. The only man that had the key to - combination to our safe when we were at the height of our business was a black man name - well his name is Charles Smith. But he used to worry me to death. He's a great big black man, and kind of sloppy looking. But he was part of our crew. We pound fished together, worked on the dock. As I say, he had the combination to the safe. When he died, there were more white people at his funeral than there were black. He was, I did payroll for about - at one time, about 14, 16 steady employees. I say steady, at least during the pound net season. There were two crews in the boats, plus some full time dock people. We had a lot of part time people too. Sometimes we had 25 or 30 people working on the dock, sorting fish and doing all the other things. Maybe not that many. Maybe 14 or 16. But anyway, I did the payroll and went to the bank on Fridays sometimes. In those days, we pay off the driver's fish. I was only, say 16, 17 years, pick up \$20,000 in cash because all the boats were paid in cash.

K.F.: Wow.

M.S.: And we didn't takeout Social Security because we didn't do that back then. So that was one of my jobs. And occasionally I would make a mistake. Well this - he looked like a, I don't know what he looked like, but a great old man, had some funny sayings. And he had walked in the net field so long with boots on, that when he walked, he lifted his feet like this, he looked like he was hopping almost. He had a caved in chest. He was just a great old man. But it happened on more than one occasion. On two different occasions, I guess, I shortchanged him somehow. They were paid by cash also. So I had to go get the money and figure out the time and whatever, what their pay was and put it in a little envelope. So from then on, China, I guess, every chance he got, he'd bring this subject up how I cheated this poor old man out of his money. One morning we were in the pound, fishing pound nets. It wasn't rough, just a little bit of sea on it. I'd been out half the night, or maybe all night. So I was bow man. But that particular morning, I jumped the gunnel on the boat, it as only about that wide, and was going to

walk forward to the bow. Only I fell overboard with boots and oil skins on, showing off. China was - he poked at me.

He said, wasn't a funny story. He was fishing, had a little boat called a Chickadee he bought, after the pound net business went - he got out of that. He was a dragger, and he came to Ocean City on the draggers, matter of fact. And he was working offshore, nets over dragging, with net overboard. Happened to be up on the bow by himself No, maybe he had a man with him. Had to have a man with him. I don't remember that, if he was by himself Anyway, he walked, very small boat, 30 some foot. He walked up on the bow, was doing something up there, and looked up and here comes this vessel steaming offshore, a fishing boat. So it turned out he's on automatic pilot, and where the guy was we're not quite sure because before China could do anything, the boat ran right straight through his boat. So he's left up on the bow, the boat's cut entirely in two. But fortunately, it didn't hurt him, didn't kill him. He lived that time, but it was, it was a bad experience. But then when you looked back, we all kidded him about it. Fortunately, he was up on the bow.

The crew was, and they were from - I was, at one time, the youngest on the boat, up to people who were in their 60's. And it was hard work, and my being chronic seasick, I had another fellow named Bobbie Davis who worked in the crew. Bobbie was a little strange. Hard worker, tough. Tougher than nails. I've seen him get a gash in his hand. Of course, kerosene was a big thing, and he just poured kerosene, tie it up and go on. But he loved to torment me. He could tell when I was getting sick. And he always, I remember it so well, with his lunch, he'd have - if we were changing nets or we'd be out for a while, generally we would be out - so he was eating his lunch. All the guys would take snacks along, coffee. Almost everybody had a lunch pail aboard the boat so that you could eat coming and going or wherever, whenever you had a chance to eat. Well anyway, he had these little, pretty little cupcakes that - I forgot what they're called, chocolate things, they still make them still the exact same way.

K.F.: Oh, okay, okay.

M.S.: And that was - he would be opening -- see me getting sick. He'd open one of them up and want to give me a cake and a Pepsi Cola, that sort of thing. One day he picked up a bunker, a - you know what they are?

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: Oily. And just grab it up, looking right straight at me, and bit the belly out of it with all the blood and guts running down. I tell you he was a little, as I say, a little weird. I cussed him from then to the day he died, only been about four or five years ago. We were great friends. He'd do anything for me. But that - if you've ever been - have you ever been seasick?

K.F.: No, I haven't.

M.S.: I don't know how to describe it really. But it's a terrible feeling. So for a guy to do that to you when you're in the worst possible situation. And then I have, obviously I have my mental, mentality is not great because anybody who worked on the water for 25 years and is chronic seasick can't be just right upstairs. But I - gradually as I got older, it seemed to go away. But the last 13 years I was on the water, I ran a split fishing vessel.

K.F.: Oh, okay. I was going to ask you how that got started here in Ocean City and how that affected pound netting and commercial -

M.S.: Well it was good for the sport fishing men, pound netting was. Pound netting started, of course, much earlier than the sport fishing. Sport fishing started after the '33 storm, when, a wealthy man - men, Jack and Paul Townsend, had the boat built for sport fishing. They went out in other - where the people out here quoted as being the, just a couple years before I came to Ocean City, two or three years. And but this is a nice boat, like a 40 foot boat. I think it was Consolidated Boat Works maybe. And it had a lot of power. She'd run 25 knots in those days, and it was all scotts, she was powered with all scotts. And they hired two men here that one of them later ran a dragger, and packed out some at our dock. That was Engle Martin, and Danny Buel Robinson was the crew. And both of them stuttered so bad they could hardly, well I've see them go - and I'd stutter myself. Not from being beat with that three inch belt - the guy down in the street who stuttered. I think. But Danny Buel and Engle. Both of them drank pretty good, pretty heavily. And I guess Jack and Paul had great sport trying to get the crew to talk to each other. It's bad. But Danny Buel was quite a dancer. He was a dancing fool as they say.

But anyway, that was, they had Ed Hacks, I think his name was, from Miami, come up to show them how to rig out with outriggers and how to present their baits and so forth. But during that period of time around there, Franklin Delano Roosevelt came in the presidential yacht off here and I think fished within, I'm not sure, but he fished for white marlin off here. And they were just, they knew that marlin from the pound boats and other small boats, they bluefished off the beach, so it weren't only the pound nets that came and went off the beach. The small skiffs like I would see, and Old Man Turner Cropper, they would go out through the surf.

Probably even back when they were using oars, but I doubt that. But bluefishing, it would be bluefishing, and something come up behind the bluefish with a big dorsal on it or a dorsal, I don't remember what it was. So but when these boats started working, they knew they were marlin, knew they were - but the jack spot then became a talked about place on the whole east coast because there was, to my knowledge at that time, there was very little of that type of fishing out of our inlet. Mainly done in the south. Well Ocean City became the white marlin capital of the world, in truth. So by the time, I'd say about '37 or 8, they were, I saw a picture the other day which would be interesting. I don't know where in the devil I seen that. It was the Ocean City Yacht Basin probably in the early 40's of different boats that were chartering out of Ocean City, and they were all different sizes. Skiffs that - a little larger skiffs with a cabin. They would take a couple people out. And by 1939, they were just a lot. I think that year probably was over 2000 white marlin caught. In those days, they killed them all unfortunately. But some people, the Scripps Howard organization started a tagging service in Ocean City in 1938 or 9, according to a friend of mine, Ches Gray, who's no longer around, who skippered out of here. He run a clam boat, an offshore clam boat, we stacked everything by hand. I worked with him for a while, when we first - when I first got married. I forget all these things. They start coming back to me. But, of course, during the war, there was a real slow down in this because of the submarine traffic offshore. It was coast guard, we have a lot of dead seamen brought in here from submarine sinking or ship sinkings off here. I say a lot. Several times it happened. And so during that period of 30, I guess by '37, 6, they were, after the Jack and Paul - I don't know what year it was they brought their boat in, but the knowledge became great that there was a lot of fish out there. So there were boats going in to gain quite a lot. And I would guess, just to make a guess - Mathews, and it as probably about 40, must've been 20 or more

charter boats. Actually, I guess more than that because the Chincoteaguers would come up this way.

K.F.: To go charter fishing?

M.S.: Yeah. And rent slips and charter fish out of here. I guess a half a dozen. During the 40's, it was one summer we had a storm going by, laid off here about 11 days straight. Boats couldn't get out, and the Chincoteaguers were going home. My old man, my father, got Leroy Jester, who was running a charter boat, to go to Chincoteague and bring him some nets back, real nets. And we worked out of his boat - net a spot down in the lower bay, fish all night with nets, come back during the day. Reminds me of another story. He and my old man and I were fishing half a mile or more, I guess, a net, we were using one of the pound boats, which was a 38 foot boat, open, with just - going across - tied the boat together and - we kind of tied the boat together. And we were carrying ice, hot summertime, and we had the ice up in the bow of the boat, a little deck up there where you worked from when you were going to the pound nets. And I lay down to usually try to get the nets, we'd start about sundown and run them out. By that time, it would be almost dark. Right after dark, we would underrun them, take a small boat along and underrun the nets to keep them cleaned out, keep the crabs from eating all these fish, and at the same time keeping the nets up. And then we'd fish them again around 11:00 at night. Sometimes we would take them aboard and reset them to move to a different spot to get away from the slip that you created by crabs eating the fish.

This, I think was in the morning, fish the middle of the night. And I lay down oilskins on, just lay open onboard and slept. When I woke up, I couldn't feel my arms. I felt it was just cold. Circulation all going out on my arm. It was rather scary. So I jumped up. When I did, water ran out of my sleeve of my oilskin coat, foul weather jacket. And what I realized was I was laying there like this, and all that ice water was running down my sleeve of my jacket. And I was so tired and worn out and I didn't wake up. But when I woke up, man, that was a frightening thing. I figured what the heck was wrong. My arm had gone dormant.

Where was I? Oh, this summer, talking about the Chincoteaguers coming up here. So by then, that was early 40's. And I don't believe - there was some fishing, obviously, all during the war because we were packing fish, the draggers and all that. But it slowed the charter business down some. But in the 50's, it was very interesting, 50's, I never was in the charter - I was potting crabs. Another fellow and I, I keep saying how old I am, but we set the first rig of commercial crab pots above the bridge.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

M.S.: Everybody in those days was trot lining. You know, running the trot lines. But one old fellow, Hudson, we called him the fog eater. He used to claim he set his trot line Ocean City and run it to Fenwick Island and fish it up in the morning, fish it back in the afternoon. I never known him to do a day's work in my life. Had seven or eight, nine, ten children that worked. I never known the old man to do any work. But anyway, they were all trot liners, and we were shiny cocking in the bay for clams. And went through and, I guess it as probably early, probably February or March, we hit a load of crabs up there that were bedded down in the mud in Isle of White Bay.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

M.S.: And I talked to this friend of mine, name of Quillen, I said we ought to set some pots up there. They were potting down in the lower bay, of course, a lot of pots down that way. So we got, in those days, a license allowed you 50 pots. So we teamed together and worked 100 pots together. We did that for a year, I guess that one summer. And then, of course, we split up. But now when we look back, we were selling crabs for three cents a pound, by barrel, shipped by barrel. And then we got into this - crabbing, putting the male crab - I've - 125 virgin crabs out of one pot. And that's where nobody wants to talk a great deal about. But that's what is helping destroy the crab population. When you catch all the virgins who've never had a chance to spawn, and it's - group of us were fishing on a house on Hog Island - Bill Fernell down there. We owned the place on Cedar, and my wife and I fished - surf fishing there, but then the surf fishing fell off. So I started fishing with - a fellow named Jim Farley and his wife own the Crab Alley.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: You happened to know Big, we call him?

K.F.: No. Somebody recommended that I talk to him, though.

M.S.: People probably recommended you talk to me. We call him Big. Jimbo. He's a big, you don't know him.

K.F.: Huh-uh (negative).

M.S.: He's quite large. But he is interesting. And we were sitting around drinking before dinner down there. And he was the one expounded on this subject because a fellow that works here in the bay, that season had 93,000 peelers. One crabber. When we were - when I was crabbing in the 50's, I guess three or four years in the 50's, virtually all of that, to my knowledge, started here down in Chincoteague Bay, down either - even the Chesapeake Bay was

(END SIDE A)

(BEGIN SIDE B)

M.S.: -- would come over and buy our peelers, start out with a good price, and of course the minute you - I think my biggest catch might've been 11 or 12,000 because I was only using a few pots. Well now you hear these people fishing 4 or 500 pots, 900 pots. And they get around the law different ways. Fish 300 today and 300 the next day, and so forth. And Jimbo, we were sitting around drinking, and Jimbo brought up the subject of this fellow that works in the bay catching 93,000 peelers. Well you multiply. Now they do that in the Chesapeake Bay, obviously hundreds and hundreds. And they do it in New Jersey, and they do it in North Carolina. That and just the take of the large crabs, the mature crabs in itself is destroying the crab population. There's just no other way about it. It's happening right before our eyes. And my uncle bought an island in the Chesapeake Bay in 1968. My youngest son and I leased it for the last seven or eight years. I've spent quite a bit of time out there. Our house in Cedar washed down, but we have a nice little cabin on that island. Wife and I spend some time there. We got it fixed up quite nice. I used to do - it was for duck hunting mostly. Weren't too many ducks in those days. And but you learn, hopefully, some of us. I didn't learn, but - the camaraderie and putting out - that sort of thing. So we do some of that. I did it for three years, but then pin tales begin to come back, so I hunted for the last three years. And a little bay there called, Pomplico Bay as they go out to the island on the high tide. You can bet out to the marshes. The crab pots are so close together that you really have to steer through them like this, and that happens the minute you place in the Chesapeake Bay. And all of those pots are concentrating on the little

virgin crabs that never get a chance to spawn. In the State of Virginia, I just don't understand the State of Virginia. Fish, what the rock fish, you've heard the watermen, then the rock are eating the crabs. All fish, stingrays eat more crabs than anything else, probably. More stingrays back there than codfish in the whole Atlantic Ocean. But the reason that the watermen keep clampering about the rockfish eating the crabs is because they want to open more season on the rock.

K.F.: Yeah, rockfish season.

M.S.: Now they're talking about drift gillnets down the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. But the thing that bothers me, last year, if you recall, if you were around this, about protecting rock, seemed to be stressed out because they weren't getting the proper amount of food.

K.F.: Right, right. And this year too I've talked to a few people, DNR folks -

M.S.: Uh-huh (affirmative). At the same time, 16 - I do a lot of fishing down the mouth of the fishing - things like that. At the same time, 16 to 18 of those - boats as far up as Pocomoke Sound - my wife and I were out on the Chesapeake Bay clean up that far. Kept hearing this horn. Couldn't figure out what it was. And it was hazy, not real foggy, but hazy. And all the sudden this bumper steamer comes steaming south out of Pocomoke, I guess up in Pocomoke Sound. And, of course, they got spotter planes, and they would nearly wrap you up in their net if they spot a school of fish. So every school of-with that many boats working, and that many planes up there, on a clear day, every school of- has got a net around it.

And they get so close together sometimes that they're almost tangled up in each other's nets. Why the State of Virginia would be talking, the scientists would be talking about the lack of food, and of course the little rock eat on - everything feeds on little bunkers. And there's, you know, schools and schools of them. Any of the bunkers get that big, there's 40 pound rock, or 30 pound rock, would love them. Just give - all it wants. And yet they allow the pursers to catch all the bunkers going whatever time of the year it is when they come in the bay to spawn, in particularly to spawn. But they're still up there. Friend of mine was just down a couple days ago. I don't really like fishing in this kind of heat. And he said they were just wrapped up in gill nets all up and down the bay. Well I was a waterman, and but what's happening today is that a few are depleting the entire stock of certain fishes. It's like that big, fat cook down there in Louisiana who started blackened red fish craze. And all the sudden, in three years time, they took millions of pounds, I think it as three million pounds of red fish out of the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf. And were just about to deplete the whole stock. You probably know that story, what Texas has done. Turned 19 million - year before last, I think. And they brought the stock back. But had they let them go, had they not passed laws, just like the mullet when they're feeding - you know, shipping mullet roe to Japan, \$11 a pound, I don't know what they're doing with the carcasses, and they're, you know, we haven't seen black mullet up here enough to look at in years. Fortunately, they've cut that netting out now, and the fish will recover. Why the authorities cater to the commercial people so much, they're obviously - but there's ways to handle this where you can grandfather licenses and you can do certain things.

K.F.: Well what I've heard from most of the commercial crabbers, and also for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, I'm doing a history of the crab picking industry, so I've been talking with picking house owners. And they're concerned that Maryland is the only state that has outlawed the harvesting of sponge crabs. Whereas Virginia and North Carolina, it's still perfectly. And you can always tell when you've got a batch of crabs from North Carolina, and

the pickers will tell you this took they're really small because they don't have, their catch limit is like three inches versus four here. And they're all sponge crabs.

M.S.: And then they dredge them in the mouth of the bay in the wintertime when they're bedded down.

K.F.: Yeah. Now I thought Virginia had outlawed that last year, last - yeah, last winter.

M.S.: If they did, well you may - I wouldn't -

K.F.: Or maybe it was they weren't going to give out any more new licenses.

M.S.: I think that may be more likely. I think there were boats dredging, but I wouldn't swear to that. I don't know. I can't answer that. You may be right. I hope they have. But the number of pots in the bay, there's no hope that the crabs can stand this. To kill the virgins, to kill the sponge crabs, to dredge them in the wintertime. I read a book called Beautiful Swimmer. You have heard of that?

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: Which is a very interesting book. And a lot of it in there, I think, is probably very true. But there are different stages of molt. And the theory that once a she crab spawns that they die. Well we all die too, but according to that book, there's different stages of all of this, and a crab that beds down doesn't necessarily die down there. They may come out and spawn next year. They may have been serviced by a male crab, and then bed down in a dormant state, and come out, whatever, I don't recall the details. But the way this particular guy, the research he had done, and this is my only local knowledge somewhat, made sense to me that it doesn't all just, you know, all this - she crabs that spawn just up and die after they spawn. I don't believe that for a moment.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: And whether they ever shed again, I don't know. Maybe they don't ever shed again. But it's going to be interesting to see in the next five or six years if, indeed they will truly get a system going where you can maintain the stocks on an even keel. But the commercial people are all - and people are eating a heck of a lot more seafood today than they used to.

K.F.: Yeah, they are.

M.S.: Prices are good, and you've got to go out now and catch three bushels or four bushes of crabs, it's still at \$50 a bushel. Get by for a while. But after '57, I think it was, I started operating a sport fishing boat during the summer for a wealthy young man who came to Ocean City on a houseboat, stopped in, a friend of mine took him offshore and he caught a white marlin and became enamored of the sport fishing. Left a lot of money in stock. And he had a boat built in North Carolina. And I worked with him in the summer and Louis went with him south a couple of times in that boat, Willis Craft built in - North Carolina. And then in '62, '611 guess it was, he went south, didn't like that boat, and we went south and found a boat in Miami that I operated for another eight years. I was with him for a total of 13 years, one family. Private boat. And they fished here in the summertime for white marlin. And Hatteras in the spring and fall for blue marlin. And then we went south. We fished the Bahamas, and close to Florida as far down the Keys. And the best year we had, there's a family - little charter, and we had 39, released 39 sailfish, 37 white marlin and 10 blue marlin and killed one blue marlin that was had its tail down so bad he was starving to death, we caught him off -- key in the Bahamas in the tongue of the ocean. Other than that, we kept a few fish to eat, and that was about it.

K.F.: Right.

M.S.: Before the first blue marlin my boss caught in Hatteras, which was a 495 pound fish, but that was it. Never killed another one other than that one that was sick and died. I have a couple nice movies or tapes we put together, or he did and filmed. We did one out of Ocean City. In fact, I showed it on public broadcasting in Owings Mills. I narrated it while it was being shown on t.v. at one time. I also did that in Saulisbury at WBOC, as I remember. We had a couple Eastern Shore programs in those days, what was going on in the Eastern Shores.

K.F.: Yeah. Sort of like the -

M.S.: Yeah, I believe - something like that. I can't remember what it's called. Eastern Shore Sunday or something. I was working in the bay at the time. And I took a shiny cock right over for pictures - whatever it was. We talked about the different methods of crabbing and clamming and so forth. Once we got this new boat, we caught a lot more fish, and we had a lot of fun. And fishing out of here in the early days, we caught fish, white marlins as close as nine miles from the beach. Now most of the fishing is off to 50, anywhere from 35 to 100, 500 fathoms which is a long run. But I've sat off here. And one day we caught six whites looking at Ocean City on a clear day. And the amazing thing that happened, I don't remember what year it was, but it had to be before '69 because that's when I got off the water - or quit earning my living on the water I should say. I still spent a lot of time on the water. We were all fishing, this fleet was fishing west of the jack spot approximately 17 miles from the beach, clear day, beautiful day, water was just as pretty as you'd ever seen it, blue, almost like southern water or stream water. And fish were jumping everywhere. And there had been - it was a heavy, bad storm, and I always think of Agnes, but I don't think it was Agnes. That was later, I think. Had gone up the shore, loads of rain in the different, all inside. Well then, of course, eventually after several days, you know, coming down the Chesapeake, the Delaware. We're always in a situation here that all of our weather and everything is affected by that, those two big bodies of water. And that day that we caught all these fish west of the jackspot, the next day we started offshore, expecting to go right back to this, and we kept running within 25 fathom, which is at least 25 miles from the beach, before we found a -just for the water and caught fish. The next day was 40 fathom. And I don't, I can't say that it happened, a lot of people will verify that it did, but virtually from that day on, all the white marlin had been caught, they were caught offshore in those days for those folks who had faster boats and would run off to the 35 fathom or 40 to catch these fish maybe more fish. As Jake Downy always said about me, I never saw that boy, he said he's dumber than a clam, he'll leave fish to go find fish, which is a bad habit I had, because if I was catching fish that long, I was trying to find a school that was that long. And I was hand-lining bluefish, he made that statement.

But whatever the change was at that time, that muddy water, or what drove the bait - bluefish for enough time - it's like a quail. Their average life is something like 11 months or something, whatever. They learn quickly, you know, if you drive them into an area, cubby into an area, and shoot them two or three times, they learn very quickly to do something else. I have five dogs in my kennel now. Quails are - since '62, a lot of them, too many again. But that's another population that's gone downhill since '91. They just went downhill 80 percent in one year.

Anyway, getting back to the fishing as we were talking about it, but quail hunting has been a great part of the lure of the Eastern Shore also. We've had some of the most coveys of birds here that anybody's ever seen.

K.F.: Well I think, in general, it's been a very big -

M.S.: I could count from where I live on 611 and 707, lived there for 35 years, I could count 100 coveys of quail, pinpointed them, when I hunted by riding 611, or I could walk this side of the peninsula or that side. And now places that I hunted in those days and killed a lot of birds, today there's none. And I think one of the things that happened recently in that area, people who come down to enjoy the scenery, the water and so forth, the minute they get here, they start complaining about something, many of them. And mosquitoes and - well we've always had mosquitoes. And you had a certain time to get - they sprayed against the wishes of a lot of people, including residents down there, promethylene (phonetic). Which the specifications say, I read them very carefully, kills all insects.

K.F.: Good or bad.

M.S.: Good or bad. And a quail, I call them bumblebees when they're about that size, can run through the grass - that's what they have to survive on. They're not eating soybeans or corn. They eat some seed, but mostly during that stage of the game, in order to really grow, they have to have protein, and they feed on insects. They killed all the insects, the little quail can't survive. Those, and now they protect the foxes, they protect the - they protect all of the enemies of the birds. See human beings have this poor sense of thinking a lot of times. They don't realize that man is also part of nature. And we create a lot of the problems. So the environmentalists say oh, don't kill the foxes, don't kill the cormorants that are by the millions out there. And they're eating all of the fish that man is competing for, little fish. And when you overplay one hand in nature, people say well the hawk. The hawks are great because they only pick the weakest birds, and therefore, the coveys stay strong. But when I grew up, people put bait on fence posts and shot the hawk because a hawk got in your chicken or barnyard. That was one of the greatest fears we had when you're depending on your chickens to eat. You don't want hawks. And so people kill the hawks. Now there's more hawks than there are quail. And I've seen them just demolish a covey of birds. Everywhere you find a covey of quail, there's one or two hawks sitting up there. If you kill one of those, you're apt to go to jail. Now you've got the bald eagle in trees look like a bunch of buzzards.

K.F.: Yeah.

M.S.: So where's the balance? See that's what we do, that's what man does. Man destroys to the point where, just like we have crabs and whatever, to near extinction. Then they try to figure out a way to bring them back. In doing that, they can create a situation where one thing over-balances the other. I don't know exactly how you do that. But to spray so that a person doesn't go outside and get bit by a mosquito - my wife and I spent all that time on the barrier islands, you either learn to live with them, and you have certain ways, wear long clothes and long sleeve shirts and go inside at the cocktail hour instead of being out - the mosquitoes come out, and that kind of thing.

But getting back to the Marlin fishing, which has been a great asset to Ocean City, during the - I'm trying to think, in the 50's I guess, late 50's, and particularly during the 60's, the Ocean City Marlin Club which I was president of for seven years, when I got into the organization, you just put \$25 in the till, and after seven years, we had 40 some thousand in the till, and we bought a place in Ocean City when I got out of the club in '76. But now the Marlin club is right out on the highway here. There's been - in the old days, it was a great, had a great influence on the charter industry, which has been, as I say, a big part of Ocean City. But we had a lot of trouble

getting the city involved. You know, you put money in advertising and we - again, I don't remember, early 60's, we started the tournament in September, which was a major tournament then. And the Marlin club's idea was we would extend the season because we purposely, there was very little fishing that went on after Labor Day. They used to say well you can shoot a cannon after Labor Day and hit not a soul. So we scheduled, I think it was the first Monday after Labor Day, or first weekend after Labor Day, whatever the time it was, in order to extend the season, and we had as high as 75 boats in here. It was a great tournament. A lot of people came in. People bought, stayed in motels, and eat out. Well, of course, that now we have a tournament every weekend nowadays, seems like. But during that period of time, the influence of the Marlin club, believe it or not, the boundary at those days was three miles, if I remember correctly. And we managed a campaign from Ocean City Marlin Club, I testified at the Senate hearing during that period of time, made several trips into Washington, for that particular case to have the line extended to 12 miles, which we accomplished. And, of course, during the period of time we were working on it, there obviously were other people out there who wanted to see this happen also.

K.F.: Right, right.

M.S.: So our work, representatives and getting these hearings set up and things like that. Of course, the down east people, the Bedford group - the offshore vessels there, they testified. And at that time, we set a trawl that should be 50, well now it's 200, so where the United States claims jurisdiction. But the interesting thing at that time was the three staunchest defenders of the three mile limit was the United States Navy, the shrimping industry and another government organization which doesn't come to me right now, which I thought was very unusual. I would never have thought that, but I can't think of the other government entity. Of course, the shrimpers, because they were shrimping and under the point of Mexico cleaning out their local shrimp, they were against it. I think it was the tuna, the tuna people too. It wasn't the government organization, it was the tuna fleet, because they were working the orders down off of South America within their - on the shoreline. So they didn't want this to happen here because knowing other countries would take up the - if I'm boring you, you're ready to -

K.F.: No, that's okay.

M.S.: But back to Ocean City and the Eastern Shore during that period of time, the Marlin thing, which was very interesting. We worked closely with Frank Mather (phonetic) - who had introduced a, re-introduced a tagging program here. And I don't know why, over a period of say 10 years, re-tagged, and this also helped to get into the releasing of whites instead of killing them. And during those years, there were many hundreds of whites released every year. And Frank, by tabulating these returns, established the routes that the White Marlin take in this particular area. And they come up, to give you an example, some that I remember, Kippy DuPont, one of the DuPont DuPonts, had a boat here. My uncle ran for Emil (phonetic) DuPont. He ran a sport fishing vessel for 13 years for the old man who was, at that time, head of the clan. And Kippy and Bill DuPont both had boats. They bought this big place where DNR is down here now so he could drive his, so he could drive his boat here without taking outriggers down. But anyway, Kippy released the fish - tagged the fish, released and tagged the fish here. My brother, Jerry, who was also a charter boat captain, and my brother, Albert, who's been in it about as long as anybody. Two guys been in it longest, Danyl Notting and my brother Albert. And he still runs a boat called the M.R. Ducks for Lloyd Lewis down at the - you've probably heard of M.R. Ducks.

K.F.: Yes.

M.S.: They have a bar over in Ocean City. And Albert runs a charter boat for him. But during this tagging thing, he - and my brother, Jerry, had a fish returned from a North Korean, as I remember, longliner, off of Venezuela, which is the longest travel fish that we knew of at that time, 20 some hundred miles, and I had one tagged that was recovered 450 miles east of Jacksonville, Florida, which was the furthest out in the ocean, at that time, that a tag had been returned. We tagged fish here that were caught within a few days up off Georgia's banks. So if we were, in particular, fishing in September, there was a fish school up, in those days, they schooled up and then they just obviously go that way, so he came out with this pamphlet every year showing where the tide took place, the time, the date, whatever, when it was returned. So we established this route for the White Marlin running off Georgia's bank in the open Atlantic drifting southward, as far south as Venezuela, and coming up through the old Bahamas Channel. Some of them, very limited, you seldom catch whites on the - not many whites, on the coast of Florida, lot of sailfish, catch more over towards Bimini. But the bulk of them come offshore of the Bahamas, east of the Bahamas. Catch whites out of Walter's Key and not a whole lot of fishing out of Eluthera and out that way. But they have some more fishing now than there used to be, Blue Marlin in particular. Those whites come up there, and we never caught, you never hear of any whites out of North Carolina, not Wilmington, but - do a lot of fishing offshore. They have to run a long way to get close to the stream there. Morehead City, lot of Blue Marlin, but seldom many whites. Hatteras, lot of sailfish at times, occasional white. And Oregon Inlet becomes the place where now, I guess, gets more White Marlin now than we do in Ocean City. So that meant that when the spinning swings to the east off the point of shoals, diamond shoals off Hatteras, not Hatteras Village, but - Buxton, at the lighthouse. By the way, are you coming to that lighthouse down there?

K.F.: No.

M.S.: You've heard about it, I guess.

K.F.: Probably somebody in North Carolina is -

M.S.: I don't know why I didn't go down and see it. I know the guys that are moving it, Jerry Matique (phonetic), and that group. Can you imagine that? Jacking up something that tall and putting it on a track and moving it?

K.F.: They've moved all the lighthouses out of the bay.

M.S.: Something. Those guys are - they moved houses on Cedar Island, there were five or six.

K.F.: Yeah, and Hog Island too, all those houses came off too.

M.S.: But I mean this particular - they call themselves house experts.

K.F.: Oh, right.

M.S.: Or moving, whatever the heck they do. Expert movers or expert something. Jerry Matique's the guy -- \$300,000 homes on the upper end of Cedar in this craze in the early 80's, as my wife called it, Fantasy Island. And before some of them were finished, they moved, bought more property and moved into the lower end of the island. I watched those guys in three days pick one of them \$300,000 homes up. So they moved the lighthouse up in Maine somewhere, and they moved a building half a city block big in Chicago, I think it was, not long ago. Anyway, how did I get off on that subject? Talking about the White Marlin and the recover of those fish. But those fish evidently crossed the stream between Hatteras and Oregon Inlet, which is about a 40 mile shot there. See at that point, the stream angles more easterly from there - somebody asked, I can't remember his name now, walked the beach and I used to talk to him a

lot at Hatteras, asked him how far, how close he'd ever seen the Gulf stream in and he said in my kitchen, from one of those bad storms. We laid there in fourth worst hurricane of the century at that time was Fred, I believe the name was. And we laid there, I was laying there at Hatteras Marlin Club, it was in about '60, '59 or something like that They had 159 knot winds - it drug a mile and a half off station, which is unheard of - all the power she had and all the anchors. And it was a lot of gulfstream water all over Hatteras at that time, 5:00 in the afternoon, the wind was 95 knots on high water, fortunately.

At 11:00 that night, full force of the storm, we had well over 125 knot winds right on the island, but on the water, otherwise it would've been a real disaster on the village. So those whites have to cross there, otherwise you catch them in volume in other places. So that tagging program proved a lot, helped to get people interested in releasing the - species. It was a great thing. Blue Marlin, Blue Marlin were much scarcer up here. They were caught, which was very unusual. So the tagging program with them didn't take hold because in the early 60's, Hatteras started the international Blue Marlin tournament down there, I believe it was '61. Actually, could've been '61, could've been '60. First year we fished, it was the first boat, and all the fish were brought in and killed. I've got pictures of the thing where they hang them up, 10, 15, big breach - and it was a kill tournament. We had teams from South Africa, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Cuba, West Coast, I mean really had some of the top anglers in the world, and they were competing and killing the fish. And my uncle hit, Barry Hilton, and old man DuPont didn't like that. They fished it. Fished the old man - I fished people from South Africa and wherever. And I think this is an interesting story about fish that migrate up and down the coast. It's important in Ocean City, important to the Delmarva Peninsula as well as it is everywhere else.

Well the old man, he used a lot of film - top photographer. When they brought the fish to the boat, tagged them, and released them. But these are, talking about 3, 4, 500 pound fish. Well, of course, charter boat people scoffed at the idea that they weren't really catching the Marlin, they were just pretending they were catching them and saying they were releasing them. You had to know my uncle and the old man DuPont to imagine how that went off. So he was very instrumental in the Blue Marlin Club there. So he got all the group together and they showed these videos, Blue Marlin up alongside, which is easy to do. You let the angler wear them down, they're knocked dead, bring him up there, take a three foot tagging stick and tag him right up under the dorsal and let them go. And the old man refused after about probably the first year, maybe the second, he refused to fish the tournament any more because they were killing them. And they turned that into a tagging thing - I mean a release thing. So some people can have a great influence on a lot of people at times, like our friend Clinton. Shouldn't mention politics. K.F.: I was going to ask you what it is about catching a Marlin that is so, I mean that like you said hooks people after one time, and repeatedly brings people back.

M.S.: Well let me give you a quote from - I mentioned the name of Skate Redden, I think, at one time in this conversation. I can't remember why I - oh, it had to do with he and my brother sturgeon fishing, the last rig of sturgeon gill nets that was ever set in the Atlantic Ocean was Jerry Simpson and Skate Redden, to my knowledge. These were nets that were built to set and catch sturgeon, other nets - sturgeon. But anyway, Skate once said he was a hard World War II veteran and great poker player and hard commercial fisherman that killed the last duck - stomped the eggs in the nest I remember him saying one time. Had that kind of mentality. Yet

in some ways, he was quite a, I'll say different person. Old man was even different than he was. But anyway, he made the statement one time that of all the things that people do for sport or pleasure, whatever, he thought that White Marlin fishing was the best sport that an average citizen could indulge in. And the reason, from my viewpoint, is that when you hook a fish, the thrill, remember where you're trolling and the baits right there, and this film that I have, White Lightening film would show you all this stuff. And if you're going to be around, I could run it for you. I don't know, have you ever been Marlin fishing?

K.F.: No, I mean the largest thing I've caught is, you know, a large mouth bass about that big.

M.S.: You've probably seen a lot of pictures.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah.

M.S.: So this would be repeating that that was done out of Ocean City by- I was operating the boat and had a couple of anglers. We worked on it for a good part of one summer, put it all together. And I have another film the guy recorded up. To sit there and just all the sudden, this dorsal appears behind the bait and comes rushing up there and sticks his bill out and people think, they say well he's killing him. What they actually do is switch side by side because when they stick that bill up over the bait, they have to turn their head to keep an eye on the bait, and they'll miss it sometimes, come back. And that's a thrill just to see it. It's like being on the beach and watching - 50 pound drum on it. And so the idea of catching the white is you drop the bait. When it gets just right, you release it, what you call let the line, the bait will be in the water and then you can see after that - faster and faster. Put it in gear and start winding, snatching on the rod and setting it in. Pretty much setting it up. And then you can feel the fish. And then all of the sudden, hopefully most of the time, here comes this fish out of the water walking on his tail, tail walking as they say. And just doing all kinds of crazy things in the water. And that is, tome, that's the skill. And, of course, a Blue Marlin doing the same thing, 400 pound, 500 pound clearing the water, it's unbelievable how they can come out of the water and just by thrashing their tail, keep a 4 or 500 pound fish in the air walking on his tail across the water. That's what I miss. I haven't done it in a long time, but that's what I miss. And when we were fishing, for some reason, some people thought the boat captain, the minute they hook the fish, the idea is to get to it and let it go, whatever, how fast they can do. But that's, to me, that's the wrong way of handling it. The thing to do is if you're going to spend the time out there, you've got an Angler, let him see it jump. Keep it on him, then the fish gets tired, before he gets too tired, come around with the boat and bring it to the boat and either tag it or release it, cut the wire or whatever, and leave the hook hanging in the mouth and see him disappear. Iron hook, not stainless. But that's, it's a thrill and it keeps bringing people day after day.

K.F.: Okay.

M.S.: For the average guy, person who's never seen this or fished from hereto that corner - try to stay away from it to take pictures as best as you can. It's just quite a thrill. And I don't know, I believe - Frank Mathers, I would be interested to know if Wood's Hole - I don't know why I don't call there sometime and see if I guess it's still Wood's Hole - Institute. I've been to Wood's Hole in Massachusetts to see if they still have the records to show this pattern of fish. And I had these little pamphlets that they used to put out. I had them for years. I don't know why I ever got rid of them, to show that - but I mentioned standing on the surf. That's an obsession that I've had for a long time -

K.F.: Surf fishing?

M.S.: Yeah, but particularly-when I was first starting on Assateague, I was about 15 years old, and see one of those, to hook a red drum, during the day - you see that, you're standing on the, you fish 20 pound test line, and you stand on the beach. And it isn't like being in a boat where you can go with the fish in the boat. You're man against beast there, because if he runs offshore, they're powerful fish. And it's just, that's a thrill. And that's, my wife and I have done a lot of that when we were at Cedar Island. One week, she caught a fish that weighed 59 pounds, had it over an hour and 10 minutes off the surf, and a 64 pound fish, she caught much bigger, but that was the biggest one. She caught three fish bigger than either one I've ever caught.

K.F.: I've seen drum like at the fish houses, you know, getting ready to be packed away.

M.S.: Well most of those are black drum.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah.

M.S.: Right. They've kind of- used to - the boat caught 15 red, black drum, put them all in the boat. You'd find them laying alongside the road back years ago where people didn't know what to do with them. Had to keep the fish, but - great eating fish. The biggest catch we ever had in the pound nets was 357 out of one net one time. You talk about getting tired of- fillet in the

sun -

(END OF TAPE.)

(END OF RECORDED INTERVIEW.)