

Interview Log

Interviewee: Rick Morlock (RM)

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Interview and Transcribed: Julie Broadbent (1B)

Location: Rock Hall, Maryland

Topic: Working on the water, watermen, rock fishing, pound netting, growing up in Rock Hall

of cds: 1

JB: So today is October 4th. It's Tuesday, yeah, it's Tuesday and we are back here at Rick Morlock's house and it's his turn to be interviewed. It is still Julie Broadbent the interviewer and transcriber. So Rick how are? You we are finally getting to this interview done.

RM: Yeah.

JB: How did you get started out on the water?

RM: Well I started like most people as a child with family and friends and different people and you just you know, twelve, thirteen years old you start going and working alongside, you know, whoever and you earn it, you help out, you just keep going from there basically what happens.

JB: Where you born in Rock Hall?

RM: Yeah.

JB: Okay.

RM: Chestertown.

JB: Okay so just outside.

RM: Yeah.

JB: Did you have lots of family in Rock Hall that worked on the water?

RM: A part of my family came from Rock Hall and part of my family were from other places and some of the older members of the family worked on the water and then my parents of course didn't. I went with my grandfather some and then other people. You start out as a child and then when you get to a teenager you make the decision whether to, you know, follow the water or learn a trade and I stayed on the water.

JB: What did you do with your grandpa?

RM: Crabbed, fished a little bit but when I was twelve, thirteen years old he was like eighty so that didn't go on forever and then by the time I was a teenager I fell in with the Brady's and crabbed and fished with them just whatever was happening on the water at the time I did. You always made a pocketful of money and that impressed me as a kid and I stuck with it.

JB: Did a lot of people in your graduating class stay on the water?

RM: I forgot how many boys we had but maybe half of the boys went on the water or a little over half of the Rock Hall boys. Not my graduating class was in Warton. The entire county was combined so you had a lot of farm boys and a lot of other kids but the kids from Rock Hall about half of them went on the water. Then the other guys went to go get jobs or went to school but that's what we did, we went fishing.

JB: Yea, yea. Did when you were in high school did like everyone in the grades above you and below you did they do the same thing about half went to the water?

RM: There was a couple of grades skipped in there. There's like seven or eight years between generations here on the water right now. There's like my age group and then there's an age group at least five to six to ten years older than I am. There isn't a whole lot in-between I don't know why. Maybe there weren't that many boys in that age range at that time or something because there's a jump from me to the next generation.

JB: What about below you?

RM: There isn't much below me just a handful of people. The general age of watermen in the state of Maryland is probably fifty. I'm one of the younger ones most of the watermen you have now are fifty sixties and the young people are just they see no future in it so they don't get involved in it. You get a handful but it's nothing much.

JB: What do you think will happen to the community when you get into your fifties and sixties and there is no one, only a handful of people below you?

RM: Well our community is changing drastically from a watermen's community, a watermen's town, to a tourist town and we are just getting to be in the way and it is just going to get worse and worse. We are getting ready to loss another piece of property, another group of slips here in Rock Hall. We are just slowly getting phased out is what happening and the town already has such a different face on it then it did years ago. We still have mostly local people in the town council and a local mayor but there's so much demand for different things that serve the tourist industry not the town.

JB: Like what?

RM: Well they are pushing to develop Main Street in a different way. I mean years ago Main Street had a clothing store, grocery store, a bar and restaurant you know stuff to serve local people. Now they are pushing it to have t-shirt shops. They want to make this into a St. Michaels and tourism doesn't to do anything for me or really any local person unless you are up there selling stuff. It's just a hassle but that's what they are pushing this town too. It's just the way things go.

JB: Yeah.

RM: But it's very different then when I was a kid and started on the

water. When I started on the water the entire waterfront was seafood processing plants and now it's you know marinas, restaurants, just totally, totally different. We had it made years ago but it's changing now so.

JB: What do you mean by we had it made?

RM: Well it was just a very nice, quiet community everybody knew everybody, everybody was likeminded. Everybody focused on the water, making money. If you came to shore and had a problem anybody helped you. I mean a welder, a mechanic, anything that you needed you took priority. They'd work on you all night to get you back in the bay the next morning, anything you needed. I mean the whole entire community was focused on getting the guys out there making money because then we came to shore and spent the money. We kept the whole community afloat. We spent a lot of money, we made a lot of money. It's all different now I mean we had two or three welding shops and all they did was fabricate equipment for us. You had all the seafood processing plants. You had the clothing store up Rock Hall carried the boots, the warm clothing. It was just the entire community was based around it and now it's not.

JB: Did the money go back into your boat or did you spend money on other things?

RM: Well what I do is an extremely expensive job. I mean maintaining boats, maintaining engines, maintaining your equipment. You spend a lot of money, on all that stuff, you handle a lot of money but a lot goes back into what you are doing but that's just the nature of being business for yourself. You know your money... it's not yours, very little of it is but-

JB: How much is it well you do pound nets. How much do you think it cost to keep a net in the water for an entire season?

RM: Well if you own the entire net it would take you about five grand in the spring to get it out there. That's with some new poles, the help set it, the dip to dip it which is the new found paint that is supposed to prevent marine growth on it. You can figure maybe four to five thousand dollars a net to get them out in the bay before you make a dime. Then once you get them out there you have to pull your boat up. You have to do all the maintenance on your boat; paint up, fix the bad wood, and any mechanical work. So you have a lot of money out before you make your first cent. Once you get them out there it's not too bad it just, you know, maintenance. The biggest thing that hurts us is boat traffic they destroyed a lot of stuff. So that is an added expense that is totally unnecessary but it's a fact of life. So other jobs on the water like crab potting, clamming they have a lot more consistent expense all through the season. When you clammed you burn a tremendous amount of fuel and you had a hydraulic rig that was all steel which constantly needed welding and working on and it was a lot of moving parts which was always wearing out. So that was a really big expense. Thirty to forty percent went to maintaining your rig. Me, I'm probably at twenty percent, it's a fair estimation, maybe twenty-five percent of my income goes

directly back into just daily expense. Then you have you know you blow an engine or if you have to replace all new net it is more but that's a pretty fair estimation on a daily bases, twenty-five percent of what you are bringing in to keep going.

JB: Ok what did you spend your money on when you hit land?

RM: When I hit land?

JB: Mhm.

RM: Now or years ago?

JB: Years ago then now.

RM: Years ago it all went to liqueur and partying. Now I don't know what I spend it on. Boy when we were teenagers though the Rock Hall boys were the only ones that had any money. We all hung in Chestertown. Of course all the farmers would come in there with five dollars in their pockets and drink all our beer and liqueur. They're a bunch of bums. Now they're all millionaires off the government and we are still out here working but.

JB: What did you mother do?

RM: She was a nurse.

JB: Did she work in Rock Hall?

RM: Chestertown.

JB: Chestertown.

RM: Yeah, just at the hospital then in later years at a mental health institution.

JB: Did a lot of, do you remember when you were growing up a lot of moms working not in Rock Hall but in Chestertown?

RM: Well they were scattered around.

JB: What are some of the things you remember them doing?

RM: Well one boy's, some of the boys, two of the boy's mom I grew up with was a beauticians; one had a shop in Chestertown, one in Rock Hall. One ran a day care here in Rock Hall. Patsy, she was on the water at that time. Some of them didn't work. They were scattered out doing different things.

JB: When you were growing up did you think anything that some women worked and some women didn't work?

RM: Never thought about it.

JB: What about Patsy who worked on the water was she unusual or unique in any way?

RM: No, I mean she was impressive for what she could do but it wasn't out of the ordinary or didn't think anything of it. She really she worked just as hard as any man.

JB: What was impressive about what she did?

RM: Well just everybody in the community looked up to the watermen in those days and just respected them for whom and what they were and she was just, she was in that category so everybody it was just...

JB: Do you remember any other women going out?

RM: Well Aunt Hazel used to work on the water and Hazel Downing. She worked right alongside her husband just as hard, you know, as any man would. He was like twenty-five years older than she was so in later years she did more of the work then he could. She was an extremely impressive woman. I mean she could do carpentry work, she kept a good garden, she kept the house. I mean there wasn't anything she wouldn't do and then on Sunday she looked like a movie star in her, you know, Sunday clothes. Going to church you would never know she was working like a man six days a week and they were very nice people. I guess I was nine or ten when Uncle Hoot died and Aunt Hazel probably lived another twenty years but when he died she never went back out on the water. I guess she just wanted to be alongside him but she could work like any man.

JB: What does that work like any man? What did she do?

RM: Well she physically could do the physical part of work which a lot of women can't. I mean it just their bodies can't take it. A lot of our work is pulling and hauling and lifting and that's not good for a woman. I mean Patsy broke up like she was in a train wreck now but you never knew it then.

JB: Are there any physical side effects for guys from any of that stuff?

RM: A lot of the boys have bad backs. I haven't had any trouble yet I mean I got a torn rotator cuff, arthritis in my knees, I can't see real well but I'm doing alright. [Laughter]

JB: Oh my God. Do you find things like your knees and your rotator cuff those things a lot of watermen have trouble with?

RM: Yea everyone has different issues. My shoulders hurt like hell sometimes, I assume it is arthritis in my knees, I don't know what the hell it is but it's just the way it goes.

JB: Yeah.

RM: You just keep on going.

JB: Right, so can you walk me through what happens when you are out on the water like the average morning?

RM: For pound netting?

JB: Yea for pound netting.

RM: Well the average morning fishing a pound net, it is fairly simple. You know, you try and get down there early in the morning before the heat of the day and you raise the net up and you dip the fish out. It simple and doesn't take a lot of time. A lot of our jobs on the water work your out there from sunup to sundown. It is one job that you are not but all the works in preparations in that job. The first of March we go into the woods and cutting the poles, dragging the poles out of the woods, haul them home, and then we have to take the bark off of them, take all the knots out of them, sharpen them and then we start taking them in the bay and sticking them in the bottom. All that jobs more of a preparation job then the fishing the nets not the challenge. A lot of people like to see that, like to you getting the fish out of the net, man I'd like to see that, I'd like to go with you. The works done when you are taking the fish out of the net, that's the gravy. That's not the job, getting all that crap out there is the job and it takes a lot.

JB: Who do you get to help you to take stuff out there?

RM: I'll grab a couple of guys. It's usually always different; whoever is free that time of year to go out and set the poles. I try and get most of the net ready by myself. I have, you know, equipment that I use to handle it. I have a tractor to lift it and I do the mending and the dipping and all of that. A lot of the times when I take the net out of the bay I get somebody to help my also but...

JB: Where did you learn to do all that stuff?

RM: Well I had done it as a kid one summer with Glenly, Glenly Thomas. He had set one summer I had helped him as a kid and I always remember what a neat job it was and then the year I got out of school fishing was banned. So we went oystering and you oystered in the winter and you crabbed in the summer and then I think when I was twenty-two, like twenty-one or twenty-two, I started clamming with a fellow and ran his boat for him and then ended up buying the boat from him and went on my own and that probably went on six or seven years when clamming was really extremely good in the bay. It had always been good but that's when I got into it. It was a nice job. All of your work was done by hydraulics, you weren't killing yourself physically. You never think it was done mechanically and a lot of money in that job and unfortunately as the bay got more pollution and more polluted the clams couldn't survive out here and they died and they never come back. So at that point I had to start looking for something else to do and I had some friends that were fishing pound nets and I kind of fell in with them. You know helped them and they showed me what to do, worked along with them with some of their nets. They let me fish them on a share and then eventually I bought the nets from them and went on my own and that's

what I've been doing I guess sixteen, eighteen years now. Drift net fishing in the wintertime and pound net fishing in the summer and maybe a little bit of oystering. I haven't crabbed in forever I don't miss it. I meant to get you to ask Patsy about her Trans-am, she didn't talk about that?

JB: Nu-huh [negative]

RM: She had a, do you remember Smokey and the Bandit movies?

JB: I'm not familiar with those.

RM: It was a big movie back in I guess the 70s or 80s with Burt Reynolds.

JB: Okay.

RM: He had this hot ass Trans-am with a big eagle on the hood and all that. She had one of them.

JB: Did she?

RM: Yea she made it from Chestertown to Rock Hall in nine minutes in that car. It was hot. It was gold, bright gold with an eagle on the hood that was neat. We were like twelve or thirteen so that was real exciting to go for a ride in the Trans-am.

JB: Mhm.

RM: Because Donny and I were the same age.

JB: Her son?

RM: Yeah, went all through school together and stuff.

JB: Did you ever work with Pasty out on the water?

RM: Yeah, I used to go with them on weekends and stuff.

JB: Was she a tough person to work for?

RM: No, of course we were children to.

JB: Sure.

RM: I mean they were fun people, her and her husband and Ronald, which was her brother. They were different times everything was easy going and happy. Life wasn't stressful like it is now. You didn't have all these stupid roles and all this pressure and you weren't constantly driving to Annapolis to defend your rights. It was a nice life. Now it is just pure misery. I sit here on the phone at least an hour a night talking to people up and down the bay about the next regulation is coming how we are going to beat it. Can we beat it? What do we do next? I mean who wants to deal with all that shit.

JB: Is that through the waterman's association you do that?

RM: Yeah.

JB: The Kent County one?

RM: No the state one.

JB: Oh, Maryland Watermen's Association?

RM: Yea, I sit on one of the rock fish advisory boards. We meet once a month and try to constantly combat the state over some stupid thing that doesn't make any sense but your whole life is consumed with this anymore. Years ago you worked, you made money, you had fun, and that was it. Now it's just it is pure hell now.

JB: Do you remember when you were in school when the rock fish ban came on what people were talking about then?

RM: Well it devastated people. Well like Patsy and Ronny and them that's all they did. They in the fall of the year they set their nets which were a different type of stationary nets. They were called anchor rigs, very different from what I do but just as far as the set but they started fishing as soon as the water got cool and kept fishing until it was too hot to fish that way and in the summertime they didn't do that much. I mean Ronny would go crabbing, and Patsy would trotline but they hardest time of year was all through the winter and they went from having full-time jobs to having no job just like that. And there's a lot people in Rock Hall like that. Like Donna was talking about Coke had 40,000 dollars' worth of brand new net building that was all of a sudden useless. How do you overcome something like that? The only difference then was there were clams, there were oysters, there were crabs. There was a still a job out there you just had to transition but at that point Ronald had lost his eye sight just about and Patsy was broken up physically and they kind of ended their careers but there was a lot of people lost a lot of money during that ban. There were some big fishing rigs in this that all of a sudden had no income. It wasn't right but they did then. They are going to do it again but this time they are going to do it for good and then I'll be in the same boat but yea that was a bad time. The only thing was there were other opportunities. I mean a lot of the fishermen build clam rigs and went clamming. There were always oysters, crabs were plentiful so you could transition. Now you can't, I mean really there is no oysters, there are no clams, crabbing has gotten too expensive to do. I mean I think the guys doing it are doing okay but to start fresh I don't know I don't think I would, it's just too much money. It's all changed.

JB: Yea do you think Charlie, your son, is going to have a chance to work on the water?

RM: No, No. They are regulating us out of business. If I make a mistake with the regulations I go to prison. I would never want him to jeopardize his freedom for a job. You know they can step in and take everything you

got and lock you up. It's a half dozen guys on the Western Shore that just got out of prison. They were doing a year, two years jail sentences for selling too many fish. A fish ain't that important, it's really not. It's not worth going to jail over I don't care. There are more important crimes in the world that people should be concentrating on other than putting you in jail over a fish. I would never want him to be exposed to that lifestyle. It's gone, the water's gone.

JB: Does he ever go out with you to your nets?

RM: Not really because I am all tangled up in the net in that little boat which you saw and I would leave him in the big boat and if something happened I can't get to him. So when he gets bigger I'll take him but right now I don't. I mean I take him out on the bat and we do different things but as far as pound netting I haven't.

JB: When you take him out on the boat what do you guys do?

RM: Just hook and line fishing or just riding around or stuff like that. Go out, we'll go out to a beach somewhere and swim or just play on down the shore line, you know, just hangout. The kid's pretty easy, they just want to do something.

JB: That's true. Does his mom ever take him out on the boat anymore?

RM: No, no she doesn't really have access to a boat. She never had any interest in boats or boating, children or me. I think she likes ice cream.

JB: She never went out on the boat with you?

RM: She would go begrudgingly but she never enjoyed it.

JB: Did she ever work with you at all?

RM: No, no, no she wouldn't even travel on the yacht with me and that's pretty nice.

JB: The Bojan?

RM: She'd never go I mean you know all the day trips to St. Michaels, Oxford, Baltimore. You want to go? No, I don't want to go. Hell that's a nice trip and really then we would run back and forth from Virginia you know put the boat up for the winter. You want to go? No I ain't going. Okay. She is pretty miserable.

JB: I remember yesterday we were talking to her mother or her step-mom.

RM: That's her step-mom, Donna.

JB: Her step-mom and she said that Amy used to get sea sick.

RM: She might have when she was a kid, I don't know.

JB: Her older sister I think was-

RM: Lori.

JB: Who was really into...

RM: Lori would go. Lori was my sister's age. They were actually college roommates, went all through school together and were you know college roommates down in Salisbury.

JB: When you were growing you do you remember seeing her out on the water at all?

RM: Not really but we were doing different things I mean her dad was a big clammer and oysterman and as a kid I was crabbing or fishing different areas of the bay, different things. So I never really ran into her and she was a few years older than I was by four years older.

JB: Did any girls who were about your age end up out on the water?

RM: Just for fun nothing serious.

JB: Mhm.

RM: We used to take Becky a lot. She'd helped you, she'd work.

JB: Who is Becky?

RM: Becky, the girl who was sitting at Pasty's that day. I mean she'd go clamming with me and stuff but that was more than just for fun then really for a job.

JB: When you were old enough to go out with your friends, did you guys sell your catches?

RM: Oh yea, yea, I mean that's you'd get out of school you would run down the shore and get in a boat and try and catch some fish or crabs. It was all about making money because we all wanted cars or trucks and you wanted money to go out and have a good time on. It was all about making a dollar.

JB: Is it the same way today? Do you see kids run down to the water catching anything?

RM: No, no, kids are different these days except stand on the street corner and do dope, it's a shame or sit home and play video games but there is nothing going on either out here. I mean in Rock Hall was constantly there was always something going on, somebody going out in the bay and doing something or if you come down the shore at night and load trucks or clean fish that was just, just different.

JB: Mhm.

RM: I mean if you needed money, you could go down the shore and go to one of these processing places and they'd let you load trucks or hack fish or there was always something to do and you were encouraged to do it. I mean, you know, if somebody needed help your father would take you to him and make sure you did it.

JB: Is that what your dad did?

RM: He really didn't have to because I wanted to do it anyway. I didn't need any encouragement I wanted to be in the middle of it all and all my friends did too. I mean we weren't forced to do anything we wanted to be there. A lot of them quit school, like Donny quit school when he was sixteen, a couple of the other boys. I stayed in school and graduated and then started. It's hard to explain to people how Rock Hall was and how much has changed in such a short period of time. It is just totally different.

JB: Do you ever, is there like an apprenticeship program for kids now to get out on the water or?

RM: I don't, there is some type of apprenticeship program but I don't know what it's for or what does. Really if a kid wants to go out on the water he just goes with somebody and if he is good that person keeps him and teaches him and if he is no good they doesn't.

JB: Mhm.

RM: If I get a kid that wants to work I'll keep him working, you know.

JB: Yeah.

RM: And I'll teach him how to do it.

JB: Have you ever done that with a kid while you've been on the water?

RM: Oh I've taken a few yea, took little Wayne Porter. What's her name? I guess it's her grandson, you know Scratch's mother?

JB: Shirley Ashley?

RM: Yeah.

JB: Her grandson?

RM: I took him. He started with me when he was about twelve and probably worked with me until he was seventeen, sixteen in the summertime, you know help me pound net and stuff. That kid was a mess.

JB: Is he still out on the water?

RM: Now not so much. His dad is a bricklayer and block layer and plus worked on the water too but his dad always knew how to do that other kind of stuff and they've kind of got into that heavy.

JB: Do most watermen have a second job?

RM: Well no it used to be that's all we did was the water. Now we are so restricted and we have such short seasons on everything a lot of them do have little sidelines just to fill in but if we were unrestricted we wouldn't. It's just the fact that you have so much free time you got to replace the income.

JB: Mhm.

RM: I mean I work we had a three month fishing season this winter I worked sixteen days that was it. You know how do you support yourself for the entire winter on sixteen day so that is why I am falling on the yacht, doing the catering, all different kinds of stuff but I don't want to. I'd rather be out there doing what I want to do but that isn't reality anymore.

JB: When you were growing up when the watermen that you learned from, did they have another job?

RM: No they worked the water and they had the freedom to do it. I mean there is always something out there to catch and sell, if you are allowed to do it. No, they lived, ate, and breathed the water.

JB: Did a lot of their families have a second income?

RM: Some of the women worked, you know, that hasn't changed much. We had a sewing factory in Rock Hall. We had a tomato packing plant. Most of the women had different jobs helping out.

JB: Do you think now or compared to then more or less families have two incomes coming in?

RM: I think now just about everyone has two incomes coming in, it is impossible not to and that's not just here that is everywhere. I mean economically this country stinks. What are you doing boy?

Charlie: Nothing.

RM: You behaving?

Charlie: Yea.

JB: In thirty years he is going to listen to this and he is going to hear that.

RM: I made him cry when he got from school.

JB: What did he do in school? You don't have to say don't have to say since I am recording if you don't want to.

RM: Something dumb he wrote something on a piece of paper about some girl in the class. And what the hell the teacher had to call home for?

JB: Depends on what he wrote?

RM: He couldn't write anything he is a second grader.

JB: Yea, he writes so many things.

RM: You know probably wrote she looked like a frog or something [laughter]. I mean he is a second grader he doesn't, what could he write [laughter]?

JB: That's funny.

RM: I'm glad you got to talk to Patsy. I know the museum's talked to her before but she is, was a pretty extraordinary woman in her day. That family has withstood more tragedy then it's just...you look at that bunch and wonder why. Her brother was just an all he did was work, he'd drank a few beers that was about it and work. Never hurt any, never bothered anybody and lost his eye site when he was like fifty and of course that was the end of him and Patsy she's almost blind too and it's just. I mean she lost her son, she lost her husband, she lost well she lost two husbands. Donny's dad died of a brain tumor and Charlie died of cancer and she lost her son. I mean you have to look at them and say how much can one family stand. They've been through it and poor Donny, he you know had to accept so much responsibility just as a child on up. He's never had much of a life just work. I don't know, you got to shake your head and say where's the, you know, but their making it.

JB: Yeah, if you could describe for me the stereotypical watermen that you know out on the water.

RM: The stereotypical waterman?

JB: Yea from Rock Hall.

RM: From Rock Hall is a guy, he doesn't say very much, he can do just a little bit of everything, willing to do just about everything that he has to survive. If he likes you he'd do anything in the world to help you. The stereotypical waterman is very underestimated, I think would be a good word. If you listen to the media stereotype of us and then once you meet us, we're a lot different then what you think.

JB: Do you think you fit the stereotype you just described?

RM: I don't know. I got a lot of shit with me.

JB: Ok now describe the stereotypical or I should say the ideal helpmate of the watermen you just described.

RM: A woman you mean?

JB: Yeah.

RM: A waterman's wife has to be more supportive, more flexible, more understanding, and better have a damn good sense of humor [laughter]. I mean we'd leave here for weeks at a time years ago when you had the freedom to roam the bay and fish. You know you got in your boat and you left and you know you'd get to a pay phone in some port that was before cellphones or anything, you know. You didn't call home every night. You tried to every couple of days or something, hello, how are you? I am still alive. I'll be home a week or so or whatever and it's tough on a woman. I think women like security and worry about security more than men and in our life, you know, what I made today might be the last dollar I make for six months. Your money is different when you work on the water and it's hard like if you and your wife or whatever have joint accounts and you are building up an account and she sees a new living room suite that she wants and you looking at a new diesel engine, it might be a fight. It's a different life for a woman as well. Years ago it was a nice life for everyone and now I mean, just I mean would you want to be married and sitting home and thinking man if my husband messes up he could go to jail for a year. I mean would you want that over your head for the rest of your life? I mean think about it who the hell wants to live like that? And just to constantly have to go to Annapolis and arguing and fighting and carrying on I mean it's just different. Years ago we were the big shot because we had a pocketful of money we always had nice cars, nice trucks. Watermen were impressive, we aren't so impressive anymore [laughter]. Really and we would spend our money. I mean, you know, I rolled into Chestertown in the best truck made when I was eighteen years old. You know all the farm boys were in something of their moms and I had, you know, a pocket full of money and all the best clothes. I mean we spent our money, we weren't tight. I'd like to know how many shoes I left up Crompton. God you'd buy a brand new pair of shoes to go to a dance and you get to the dance, get half drunk and kick your shoes, dance all night and go home with no shoes. Next week you went and bought a new pair. Hell they were a hundred dollars a pair. We lived it up.

JB: So when you were describing your ideal, well the Rock Hall ideal of a female, a watermen's wife, do you know of any females that are like that?

RM: Personally I haven't had a lot of success [laughter] so...

JB: How about in your childhood? Was like your mom like that? I know she wasn't a watermen's wife but-

RM: My mother was the ultimate pain in the ass.

JB: How about any of your friends' moms?

RM: Yea mean the older generation women stuck behind their men. It was different if you think about it seventy, eighty years ago men and women needed each other. Seventy, eighty years ago a woman could not really support herself above the poverty level anyways and a single mother without family really couldn't raise a family. Now a days, you know, women have careers, jobs they'll split in a heartbeat from their kids and they can make it but I think years ago the old people that I knew they

were together because it was just necessity, it was survival. You worked together and you built a life it is different. Now people are just mental where they are at mentally is different now. I don't know what it is but like my grandparents and aunts and uncles and all, some of the little bit of family I had in Rock Hall for older people, they just supported each other. The woman, you know, stood behind her man. Th man took good care of his woman. It's just different now I mean a lot of watermen in Rock Hall were good cooks and stuff they helped right at home, feeding the children and some of them went and sat in the bar every night.

JB: And do you think the ideal waterman and the ideal waterman's wife has changed?

RM: Yea everything has changed I mean two people, I don't know if it is possible for two people to get together and to focus on something and go in one direction. You almost can't, I mean two people have to have their own directions and just make time for each other when they can, which is saying, that ain't there anymore. If I was with someone and had to totally support her and myself I couldn't do it. I couldn't, even if she went on the boat with me I couldn't get enough income out it to thoroughly support us, not comfortably I wouldn't think.

JB: Even if she was helping you out on the boat?

RM: Not consistently I don't think. Life is expensive now I mean it's amazing you got to figure years ago you didn't have that many bills you had a house, a truck, and food. You know you didn't have all these bills. You didn't have cell phones and cable TVs and computers, seven kinds of insurance it was just different it was easy.

JB: Why do you think that now a days that women are working two jobs on land, like being a nurse or a teacher verses working on the water like their husband or boyfriends do?

RM: Well I think women are much more independent now than they were years ago. There are opportunities there for them to make a life for themselves and they do it and they are encouraged to do it. I mean probably 1800s, 1900s, families' raised their children to be wives and mothers and maybe housekeepers and now you know we encourage our children to go to school to go to college, go out and work some. I mean if I had daughters I would be pushing them hard to go to college, I wouldn't be sending them to sewing class. It's just society has priorities have changed and women have the opportunity to, you know, go out and do whatever they want in the world.

JB: Let's say that you had a daughter.

RM: Mhm.

JB: And she comes to you and she says dad I'd really like to work on the water. What would you tell her?

PH: When you get out of college we'll talk about it and then I would encourage her to learn biology or science or something that she could apply to being on the water. I mean if she just loved the water that much, it'd just be a different angle.

JB: If one of you friend's daughters came up to and said, "hey Rick, Mr. Rick, Mr. Morlock I'd like to go on the water with you to learn what you do and help you out. Would you take them on?

RM: Sure, yeah, I mean if they could do what I needed them to do. I mean as a kid I mean as an adult I wouldn't take them I don't think. 'Cause once again I can't support an adult. I make good money for myself but my operation is not big enough to carry other full-time people. It's just not. I mean I made very good money well today I made very good money Tuesday. I probably won't go Wednesday or Thursday then I will make very good money on Friday when I go but you have an employee you have to work, they have to have work every day.

JB: Why aren't you going to go Wednesday or Thursday?

PH: Well one thing the weathers supposed to be bad and I've just about caught my quota so I'm just dragging it out a little bit, just go on really good days to finish up.

JB: You quota is that a weekly quota, a monthly quota?

RM: A yearly quota.

JB: A yearly quota, okay.

RM: Yea I get X an amount of pound to catch in a year and once I catch it I'm done.

JB: You don't want to catch them early in the season, you want to catch them...

RM: Well you try but it didn't work this year. Things were a little bit slower in June than normal. The summer is always kind of slow you just do good not really good and then in the fall you are doing real good and then you get done.

JB: Does that mean the price in the spring per pound is higher?

RM: Yea spring and summer is better so you would like to get done with it but it didn't work this year.

But you can't look at it you just have to look at it at the end of the year which is May but I can't keep a full-time person busy, just too restrictive. I mean there all kinds of things I would like to be doing but I'm not, it is illegal. On my days off and spare time I go varnish on the yacht and travel with them stuff like that.

JB: Okay, part two Rick Morlock.

RM: Part two.

JB: Part two. So you keep mentioning the yacht you work on, how did you get a job on the Bojan?

RM: Well years ago Rock Hall was known for its boat handlers. The watermen of Rock Hall very good at maintaining boats and working on boats so all the wealthy people all around the country would come to Rock Hall and try and get a captain and different watermen would, you know, work as captains. Charlie's great-grandfather on his mother side was captain for different wealthy people and I think a couple of the guys in that family were, the Jacobs, were all captains and a lot of guys in Rock Hall at different time took on captain's jobs and traveled with the wealthy people. I was, my family and the Brady family were really close friends and as a teenager I fished and worked with the Brady's and one of the Brady's was a full-time professional yacht captain. He would get me to help him out and you know travel with him on the yacht and I eventually fell in there as cook when I was in my early twenties. They would travel back and forth to Florida and take different trips and he was the full-time captain and I'd go along as cook, and line handler, and clean the boat, whatever he needed and just any time they went on a trip once or twice a year I'd take off whatever I was doing and go with them. It might be as long as month or as short as ten days. Very nice people just stayed involved with them and eventually got my captain's license which I standing here fixing dinner one night when Wayne pulled in the driveway. He said lets go to school and get our captains licenses. Ok, turned off dinner and got in the truck, made a drink and went to Annapolis. So I signed up in the school and went through the process to getting a Coast guard captains license which you need to run a yacht or charters or do anything where you are carrying guests or passengers and just learned how to handle the bigger boats and kind of have fell in now on paper I am the official captain but Wayne is still the full-time guy and I'm still the part-time guy. It's a nice, you see a different side of life that you would never see coming from where I come from. I mean the people I travel with are multi-multi-millionaires but they are very nice people and it's a fun, fun sideline it really is. I mean you know I'm Mr. Hughes's employee but I was able to invite you and your mother and father on the boat and then we all sat there just like guests. You know he is a nice guy; he really is. I mean how many people would do that of you. I worked on one yacht down in Fort Lauderdale where you sat in the pilot house, you were an employee. You'd never think to do that but everyone is different. But Mr. Hughes is a super guy I wish he was younger 'cause if the water did ever fall you could fall right in there and have a nice life and Wayne is almost seventy he wants to get out of it.

JB: Why on paper are you the captain instead of Wayne if you both have a captains' license?

RM: Wayne gave up his license. He did. You have to renew it every five years and he's just tired and the renewal process is tough. I mean a lot

of the older guys can get them any more there are so many health restrictions. I mean if there is any possibly of you having health issues you can't get your captain license because you are in charge of people. I mean if you have heart problem or any kind of trouble they won't let you get your license. Which makes sense, you don't want to, you know, have a heart attack with twenty men on the boat.

JB: Sure.

RM: He's just tired and he wants to back off.

JB: Do you think that if Mr. Hughes passes away you will still be part of the crew on the boat?

RM: I don't know. The boat goes to one of his sons and his son doesn't like the lifestyle that Mr. Hughes likes. He doesn't like people, he doesn't like entertaining, he doesn't like traveling. He is very, I guess he is very introverted or whatever and I just don't I don't think the job will be there. He'll probably sell the boat. The most you can hopeful is to go along with the new owners. I mean the years ago, the government assed that up to, in the late 70s they changed the law. A captain was a tax right off. Years ago if you were a corporation you bought a yacht to entertain clients and the boat, the captain, everything was, you know, a tax right off then they changed the tax laws. What do you got baby? Oh I have to see if you did it right?

Charlie: Uh-huh [affirmative]

RM: Can we just say you did it right?

Charlie: Uh-huh [affirmative]

RM: Or do you want to hand me a calculator?

Charlie: I have it...

RM: No baby I can do it.

Charlie: I got mom the other day [unintelligible]

RM: Son I think you got it but I will look it over when I am done talking ok? Is that all you have to do?

Charlie: Yep.

RM: Okay what do you want to do now?

Charlie: I don't know.

RM: You want to go outside again or?

Charlie: I want to go in my playroom.

RM: Ok... Where were we?

JB: The Bojan.

RM: Oh yea I don't know if there will be any future there or not. Danny is just different boy.

JB: Do a lot of watermen have a second jobs like you do working on a yacht or?

RM: Well in this area, yes, in the lower bay the water business is still thriving more and there is more opportunity. So those guys are living the way we lived twenty-five years ago. So more so in this area of the bay then the lower bay.

JB: What are some of the differences in the water business, the upper and lower bay?

RM: So many of the variety of fish don't come here, don't come up the bay. We don't catch many hardheads or menhaden. You still have oysters in the lower lower bay and there's still more opportunity and your communities are still watermen based communities. Like I said they lived the way we did twenty-five years ago; Tilghman's Island, Hooper's Island, Deal Island, Crisfield. Crisfield not so much it is getting touristy but they have more opportunities then we do.

JB: Do you think they would agree with what you just said?

RM: Yea I mean the proofs in what they're doing. They are still out there six, seven days a week and were not. We are just up here in the polluted water where everything is dead.

JB: Are watermen thinking about going south and working those waters down on the lower lower bay?

RM: Well we did to some degree when we winter fish we go south we traveled the bay we went south when we have to. A lot of our crabbers do they'll go down the bay when the crabs are down there early and then follow them and some of your oystermen if they want oysters they have to cause we don't have anything up here and we are never going to have anything up here. It's a shame so if they want to do it they are going to have to. There is just no... I mean you have to, but we don't have a fleet we used to have a fleet that traveled. Ten boats fifteen boats that left here in November and didn't come back until March. They just lived on their boat and fished out of Solomon's or further south. You don't have that as much anymore, you don't have the freedom to fish. I mean I can't leave Rock Hall and live on my boat with a crew and work away from home for three hundred pounds of fish. You know I got to have the freedom to fish and people never understood. You might in the wintertime you might go three weeks without catching a fish and then you hit the fish and you might catch a ton a day for three or four days and that made for up all the time you didn't make any money. Now they want you to catch three hundred or five hundred pounds a day and you go two weeks without catching any and the day you can catch them you can only catch five hundred pounds which doesn't make up for everything you lost. It's

just the regulations are killing us. They really are, you know, people sitting in an office don't understand our lives at all but they are making the rules.

JB: So are a lot of people getting off the water by fishing but they are trying to stay in the industry so they are now selling the fishing wholesale or retail?

JB: Yea people, you know people do whatever they can to survive and a lot of people have gotten off the water. More and more that are just forced off. Fortunately I have been lucky every time one thing I do fails I fall right into something else but I am running out of options if they cut, take rock fish away from us I don't know what direction to take next because really there is no place to go.

JB: So on the brighter side of things, think of your favorite memory of you being on the water.

RM: Rum, rum might have been involved. I had so many wonderful times on the water. Just it is hard to explain when you go out on this water it is up to you. It is entirely up to you if you make it or not and I guess the most fun was like when we were all teenagers and all started on the water. We were all highly competitive and so you were always trying to out catch each other and outsmart each other. Just you could go out here and load the boat with something and you totally did it on your own with just your hands and your mind and a lot of luck. That's a good feeling. You know you work somewhere you go, you do what they tell you do to and the money is their problem they have to pay you on Friday. With us if we don't go out there and make it happen it doesn't happen and it's just a very satisfying feeling when you can go out there and load the boat with something and make a whole bunch of money and you do it all by yourself. It's just different but I have a lot of good memories. I mean, you know, you go out there with a bunch of goofy kids and do something stupid and catch a ton of fish and you are like all excited. I mean we did some crazy stuff. We left here the first year out of high school in a little twenty foot boats with clerical engines and went clear to Tilghman's Island oystering. You know no cabin, no heat, and had trucks that you shouldn't have drove across town. We just went and you didn't think nothing of it. I think it was Donny and Willy and myself were in a twenty foot open boat the first year out of school like a twelve force airport down in Tilghman's Island and we hit oysters up Broad Crick and put forty bushel of oysters in a twenty foot boat. And the cops came to us he said, I think I remember that cop he was an old man, I should just arrest you for being stupid you are about ready to drown in that little boat. And man we just laughed, we didn't give a damn. We were just so excited to catch something. We had some fun times. Hey it's a fun life I mean you are out there doing what you want to do, enjoying what you're doing, well now you are restricted right to death but you never were. You know you got up and you went. I always enjoyed clamming because you were by yourself and I always clammed away from home. I was down the bay all the time tied in Kent Island, Annapolis, or Tilghman's Island and you worked all day. You came ashore I always stopped two or three places had a couple of drinks on the way home, hang out with people it was just nice. You did what you wanted to

do and you had the money to do it. The freedoms gone is the worse thing. They've taken all our freedom but it was all nice.

JB: Well thanks for speaking with me I appreciate it to have an official interview with you.