

OH 482 Daniels, Ted

Q: Is today June 7?

TED DANIELS: [00:00:04] Yeah.

Q: June 7, 2013. It is about 2:35 PM, and overcast, just rained a bunch here on Deal Island, Maryland. And if you could just state your name and where you're from.

TD: [00:00:16] Ted Williams Daniels, Wenona, Maryland, originally.

Q: Okay.

TD: [00:00:20] So... Deal Island, Wenona, everybody's the same.

Q: It's the same?

TD: [00:00:22] Yeah. It's two small towns, but same place.

Q: Same place.

TD: [00:00:25] Yeah, kind of like Smith Island's got Ewell and Tylerton...

Q: [unclear].

TD: [00:00:30] Yeah, but it's the same little island, you know?

Q: Yeah. And did you grow up there? You spent most of your...

TD: [00:00:35] Yeah. I guess until I was 18 or 20, and then moved as far as Salisbury... what? 45 minutes away is probably as far as I've ever lived away from the island, yeah.

Q: Okay. And what took you to Salisbury?

TD: [00:00:49] Work. I worked at a boat plant for eight years, the Maxum plant.

Q: The Maxum plant.

TD: [00:00:53] U.S. Marine, yeah.

Q: Okay. I know that...

TD: [00:00:56] We built some 40-foot boats out there, yeah.

Q: 40-foot boats.

TD: [00:00:59] Big, fiberglass, pretty boats, yeah.

Q: Okay. And when did you start getting into the... when did you first start doing stuff on the water? Crabbing and that kind of thing... or oystering.

TD: [00:01:10] I think I remember being three when my granddad was crabbing with me, and he pushed me over, and taught me how to swim [laughter]... three or four. That's one of my first memories, yeah.

Q: And this is Daddy Art?

TD: [00:01:19] Daddy Art... on the skiff. He kind of bumped me, maybe he didn't mean it, but it was kind of funny to him, so I think... no, I think he taught me how to swim that day.

Q: Wow.

TD: [00:01:29] So that's one of my memories. And that was netting crabs up on the bow of a skiff barely being able

to... you know, be there. But doing crabbing with him, kind of under his tutelage... a lot of people around the island crabbed with Daddy Art first. All different sort of people. And you know, some handicap even. But Daddy Art always worked with those people, and then they would move on, some to other boats and things like that. But he kind of taught a lot of people, and that's why a lot of people call him Daddy Art, I guess, the whole community, you know? He kind of was that for... most children and youngsters started on his boats, yeah.

Q: And then after you started with him, did you... when did you start to...

TD: [00:02:12] I think when I was 14, I went with my uncle crabbing, and then you'd pull crab pots by hand, you know? No hydraulics or anything, and that's where I started. My first salary job.

Q: Right. And you did that all through high school?

TD: [00:02:27] Yeah, in the summertime.

Q: In the summertime?

TD: [00:02:29] Yeah. And in the winter, you know, it would be oystering for the waterman, but you had to go to school, yeah. So I graduated, and the very next day, I think I was working on the water.

Q: Really?

TD: [00:02:41] Yeah, oystering.

Q: Did you ever get your own boat and...

TD: [00:02:45] Yeah, I had the Miss Wenona [?] for two seasons, and was it was a flout, was a failure.

Q: Really?

TD: [00:02:53] Yeah, it's so hard to start and acquire everything, you know? It was kind of a hard season my first season, my debut, but... ended up back on another boat. And I kind of like that now because when I step off the boat, I'm done, you know?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:03:07] And you've got to babysit crabs and stuff all... you got to take care of this and that.

Q: Right.

TD: [00:03:11] That's if you're shedding, you know, peelers in the soft crabs, you got be...

Q: It's like a 24-hour job when you do that.

TD: [00:03:15] Every four hours you're there, yeah.

Q: Yeah, that's really difficult. And so you went back to work for somebody else, and...

TD: [00:03:23] Yep, back on as mate [unclear]...

Q: Right. And how long did you do that for?

TD: [00:03:28]... deck hand. Until now.

Q: Until now?

TD: [00:03:31] Yeah. Well, I've worked here and there off and now different jobs, meat line [?], food line [?], stock shelves, graveyard shifts, worked at the boat plant, you know? But always ended up back on the boats either for... work someplace for a season, and then, you know, come back. But the oysters died out on us I guess when I was about 24, you know? And you couldn't make the money in the winter at all, so we had to go do other things. So I learned how to build houses and stuff, too, and did that. A lot of carpenter work in the winter, crabbing in the summer until the oysters came back. And then now in the winter time, people can make almost just as much money as they can in the summer time.

Q: Really?

TD: [00:04:10] Oh, yeah.

Q: So the oysters have come back again?

TD: [00:04:12] Yeah, and when you catch the oysters, you put them out and you're done, you know?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:04:15] It's not like the crabs.

Q: It's a little bit easier.

TD: [00:04:17] Yep, they go up...

Q: Go ahead.

TD: [00:04:20] No, I was just going to say they go up on the truck instead of in your floats and in your shanties, you know?

Q: And then you have to sit and watch them for long periods of time. Yeah. How... why do you think you always keep coming back to the crabbing and water business?

TD: [00:04:34] It's the Bay. It's not the crabbing or anything like that. It's hard, hard work. The older you get, the harder it gets. It's just the Bay.

Q: What about the Bay?

TD: [00:04:41] You just got to be out there. It's just in my blood. It's got to be. I don't know any way to describe it, but if it's in your blood, you know. And you can't... take a trip cross-country, like Washington state my company sent me and places like that... you see all kinds of bodies of water, and the ocean, and everything, but still, it's just not the Bay.

Q: You think that the Bay is different than any place else in the world?

TD: [00:05:04] Yeah, to me. But that's where I grew up, that's where... so I guess it means different things to different people, but yeah.

Q: Well, the sunrises are pretty hard to beat.

TD: [00:05:15] Yeah. Well, the history, the Native American history and all of that, that's a big thing for me, too. I like to be by a shore where I can just wander off a lot of times, you know? And just find artifacts or just pieces of history. That's what we do a lot.

Q: When did you start collecting the [both speaking - unclear]?

TD: [00:05:33] I think I used to dip out of school in like the sixth grade...

Q: Really? You skipped school [both speaking - unclear].

TD: [00:05:39] Act like I was getting on the school bus, and head down to the beach, and I would find Indian artifacts and different things, yeah. And then my cousins, my older cousins, would go around digging bottles, is what we'd call it. And they taught us how to do it, so... I don't know, ten? I was in the marsh, 10 or 11 year old doing that sort of thing, yeah.

Q: Wow. Yeah, I mean it's a pretty impressive collection, and it's not everything you've collected.

TD: [00:06:00] No, this is... some things that we've kept that we really like, you know?

Q: Yeah. How do you...

TD: [00:06:07] A lot of things you dig, double and triple up.

Q: How do you find it? I know that seems like kind of like an obvious question, but how... because I've tried, and I don't find anything ever. I [both speaking-unclear].

TD: [00:06:17] You got to have tools. You got to have the right tools.

Q: Which tools do you use?

TD: [00:06:20] You got to have a probe. You know what that is.

Q: Okay.

TD: [00:06:24] Did you ever go with a probe?

Q: I don't think so.

TD: [00:06:25] A steel rod and a stick or something like that, anything. See, when we probe, we could tell you if it's an oyster shell, a brick, a bottle, if it's broke, if it's whole.

Q: Really?

TD: [00:06:34] Yeah, that sort of... because we've hit so many different things that... broke so many bottles and done that sort of thing, you know? But if you find a trash pile... and sometimes people threw trash there for 20, or 30, or 40 years, and underneath of that or close to that will be the old original trash pile to the property if you know that the property is old, you know? So we found like 1845, things like that. That's about as old as we've found. Historical [unclear], all that sort of thing made

it's way here to Dames Quarter even over here in these marshes on the old roads because none of these are the original roads, they're kind of off the beaten path. And now they're like the reserve roads to all of the nature, to Deal Island wetlands over here and everything... they're actually the old roads, and the old houses line those roads.

Q: Oh, okay. So there's probably a lot of...

TD: [00:07:25] We've got a couple [unclear] from 1877 National Geographic tax [?]. And the way they would judge a house was how many windows it had in it for to put the... it would say, "Four windows," or, "Two windows," or "Three." But, you know, once you locate the property ditches on maybe... here's a little tip... Google Earth [laughter], you can see them. You can really see them. So plot yourself out a place, take a canoe trip or something to one of the islands or something... but before you go, check out the property ditches and things because that's what they used to dig... ditches around their property. That marked their property, and I guess it was drainage from their land, you know, to have that drainage zone. There always seems to be ditches as property mark in the 1800s.

Q: Wow. That's pretty impressive.

TD: [00:08:08] Yeah.

Q: And so besides the probe, what else... what other tools do you need? I guess...

TD: [00:08:12] Your shovel and some know-how. A lot of stuff gets broke, you know?

Q: Yeah.

TD: [00:08:17] And things... there's an art to it. A lot of different tourists... like the phragmites took over everything, you know? All creation. And still growing like some kind of bamboo or something. That gets into the bottles and actually busts them, so...

Q: What is the this? The phrag...

TD: [00:08:32] The phragmites. The phragmites, it grows over. They're even studying it.

Q: Really?

TD: [00:08:37] Yeah.

Q: What is it [both speaking - unclear]?

TD: [00:08:38] Yeah, but that's not a native plant. It was brought here.

Q: It was brought here. And it's kind of messing up...

TD: [00:08:43] You see it when you go out here. It's blocking your view when you go around the corner up there.

Q: Okay.

TD: [00:08:47] Yeah. It's not a cattail, but it's somewhere in that family, too, you know? You can tell. But that was

introduced, and I've actually met scientists out there when I was big-time treasure hunting like every day in my boats and stuff I used to have. And I've actually met scientists and people for DNR out there studying it, you know? Because of the growth is so rapid of it, for one thing. And it takes over.

Q: Takes over everything else.

TD: [00:09:13] Little islands, I've seen them taken over, you know? The whole island.

Q: And so you... but you've also gone and found some of this stuff on other islands like you said Bloodsworth Island and Holland Island?

TD: [00:09:22] Yeah...

Q: I mean [laughs]...

TD: [00:09:24] Holland's Island and South Marsh and places over there.

Q: Oh, South Marsh.

TD: [00:09:27] There's another island called Bloodsworth Island, but it's a naval reserve, and they don't... they don't like you over on Bloodsworth and Dog Island and places. It's an... there's a lot of bombs and things still.

Q: I already... yeah, I talked... Danny was telling me about this.

TD: [00:09:39] Yeah. We actually took some scientists over there with my cousin... or some archeologists were studying the family's relatives that lived there. Dug up the whole plantation and all. We got to see that, too, and the graveyards and all of that. And actually, the place that I stood in some odd 30 years ago maybe... 25 years ago... has eroded almost a football field on that point to the Bay, just a little keynote. And that's right across from the Bay Foundation house there on the end [unclear] in the straits, right across from it.

Q: Okay. And so you... and Holland Island is completely gone now, right?

TD: [00:10:20] Not completely. There's still two graveyards left, and there's a big chunk of land... it would take you two hours to walk around, you know? There's a couple of ditches, you can't really walk around it, but it's in two little pieces. One's a little piece, and the other one's a pretty big piece. But I don't know... ten, fifteen years... [unclear]... I got a lot of pictures of the house as it was falling, and before, and...

Q: And how old are you?

TD: [00:10:47] I'll be [laughs] 45 in July.

Q: Sorry, I was just trying to place the date of when all of this is happening.

TD: [00:10:51] That's all right. That's not too bad, 45
[laughter].

Q: No, just to get an idea of...

TD: [00:10:55] This... 25 or 30 years ago...

Q: ... the time period.

TD: [00:10:57]... we used to go all the time. You could walk
that island. It would take you six hours to walk that
island. There was a big cliff with graveyards and all
kinds of... just a huge island, you know? And the house,
and seven or eight other foundations of houses that were
there. Everything I just told you about is underwater.

Q: Really?

TD: [00:11:14] Just that part of island is gone, underwater.
Yeah.

Q: And how many...

TD: [00:11:17] 25 years.

Q: And in 25 years, or I guess in your lifetime so far...

TD: [00:11:22] The 25 years that you're talking about, then it
was probably 8 or 10 acres that's gone now.

Q: And how many... have you seen any other islands disappear?

TD: [00:11:31] Yeah. The biggest pieces... there's [unclear]
Island and Wenona was a big island when I was young. And
there's all kinds of... the main thing is big forest stands
of trees and stuff where the Indians did live because

that's where I figured they hunted and all because that's where you always find... if you find some big stumps and things like that, then most of the time you'll find artifacts, Native American artifacts and stuff. And if there's no stumps and things, it... there's a lot less activity. That's just something I learned. So it makes sense that they would be hunting in a forest, you know, and not in just marshland or whatever grew then or who knows?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:12:06] But big stands of trees gone. Gone and no trees. Barren islands now that were... used to be fisherman or whatever would say, "Okay, we'll line up that tree or this tree and that buoy," or whatever, you know? Well, all those marks are gone. All the old-timers' fishing marks and all that, they're gone. We even watched the biggest tree on the island leave in Sandy which Sandy really wrecked some trees, some old big trees. We went scouting all through the woods and stuff up the [unclear], and there's just thousands and thousands of big trees. And when I say big trees, like 150 footers, hard woods down in different woods. But it took the biggest tree down that was on the island. It's actually in the pictures when you see the old steamboat wharf and things, that tree was, you know, like a landmark there on the island, but that's gone.

Q: That's gone. How have you... how much have you seen sort of the community change in the...

TD: [00:13:01] The biggest change around here is you don't know three quarters of the people that are here now, and it used to be everybody was family and everybody knew everybody, you know?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:13:12] But it's just... people's bought all the waterfront land, so...

Q: Right. I've noticed that the waterfront land...

TD: [00:13:17] And it's all private, and it's all mostly [unclear], you know, with routes or whatever... [unclear]. So that changed the whole beach. There's no beaches anymore. It's just [unclear].

Q: Unless you trespass like I do sometimes.

TD: [00:13:32] Yeah. And there's a couple of them [laughter]. You can go to Wenona and Deal Island and there's still one public beach that the state owns, but... I don't know. It just is private property.

Q: Right. It's all private property now. Yeah, it seems like there's a lot of people that have like summer homes and things like that here.

TD: [00:13:52] Yeah, these down here are a prime example.

Q: Right.

TD: [00:13:55] The children [unclear], they were finding all kinds of things on the beaches, and they frowned on a couple of them down here.

Q: Wow.

TD: [00:14:03] So the DNR come talk to me [laughs].

Q: Oh, did they?

TD: [00:14:07] And it was an osprey issue at that point, but I don't think that was the issue, was it [laughs]?

Q: So the DNR has issues with you collecting stuff, or people taking stuff, or...

TD: [00:14:20] No, this guy down here called that the children weren't listening which they did smart mouth him... the neighbor kid... a couple of times, and ours probably were in it, too. But they did smart mouth him... "We're only looking [unclear]." He cussed them and all of this. Well, then he called DNR and said that they were disturbing his osprey which I guess with all that commotion, they were disturbing the osprey [laughter]. But [unclear] disturbing the osprey, actually talks to the ospreys, and calls them right down here in the yard, [unclear].

Q: It just blows me away... I can cut and paste the interview, by the way.

TD: [00:14:52] Oh, I know.

Q: But it just blows me away how much DNR is used as like the policeman of every little thing or that's what it seems like.

TD: [00:15:00] Yeah, it's... well, we're [unclear] California, we're going to do everything California does [laughter]. I'm telling you, it seems to me that we're a militant state, Maryland. I don't know, it just...

Q: Yeah. Well, it definitely seems that way if you're a waterman down here.

TD: [00:15:14] Well, we haven't seen him this year. He hasn't been on the boat. We haven't seen the lawman. Seen him go out to harbor twice... DNR.

Q: Oh, okay.

TD: [00:15:22] So we haven't... he hasn't set food on... nothing like that, just the whole state of Maryland and the governor and all, just, to me...

Q: Yeah.

TD: [00:15:31] I don't know.

Q: It's...

TD: [00:15:33] Some funny ideas I say.

Q: No, it's definitely... it's definitely a pretty sharp contrast to what you hear if you're in DC or something like that.

TD: [00:15:40] Yeah.

Q: As opposed to when you're actually here, and you see it, and you experience it, it's really different because it's kind of like, "Oh, well, there's some sanctuaries and things like that and everything's great."

TD: [00:15:50] Yeah. Now, on the other hand, the guys down on Wenona this year, went down there and just totally [unclear] the sanctuary. Got big fines one day. Second time, got caught, bunch of boats, big fines, you know? They were doing it, they were sneaking out at night. And I still don't think that they're innocent or nothing because there was a lot of them, really... you know, it's the morals of the man, you know?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:16:16] Whatever they're doing, it's the morals. And some of them just don't have morals, so... they're going to steal...

Q: Yeah.

TD: [00:16:22]... and do those things. But they're the ones, the bad apples, that gets all the word up there.

Q: Right. That then it makes everybody else look like it's the same thing.

TD: [00:16:31] Yeah, that's the big issue here. They busted 20 people doing this, "Oh, well, they needed it." We were

working up the river here, catching our limit honestly
where we were supposed to be, you know?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:16:45] We just work five hours longer than them. That
was all.

Q: Yeah.

TD: [00:16:49] Yeah.

Q: That's all [laughs]. Well, I think I only have one other
question. And that is what has been your favorite thing
about being a waterman and being from Deal Island?

TD: [00:17:04] It's the freedom, definitely. The free life.

Q: Is it?

TD: [00:17:08] Yeah. I get off at one o'clock every day, my
work's done. Then I can do something else or I can be home
to do whatever. We got children, you know? But I only
answer to one man right now, my captain when I'm on the
boat, you know?

Q: Right.

TD: [00:17:22] And I've worked for 20 people, I've worked for a
big corporation. Brunswick owned the corporation I worked
for and they flew me out to Seattle last... did all kinds
of things, you know? Was supervisor and all of that stuff,
but inside, in a boat plant, a fiberglass boat plant, nose

bleeding, you know? Chemicals, everything going on for eight years, it's... that's hard, too.

Q: The fiberglass... this is something that I've just heard about.

TD: [00:17:48] Oh, yeah. Ultraviolet light and shine it in there, and right straight across, [unclear] crystal, all the... the whole building sparkled. The whole thing. And OSHA would come, you know, every now and then... OSHA was paid off by this big company easy. We got that on tape... OSHA. But they were paid off because we had a five-day warning before they came in... we vacuumed, hosed the place down, and they would come and go. And then we'd just start all over again.

Q: Right, but the fiberglass...

TD: [00:18:12] Dust flying everywhere... fiberglass.

Q: ... is just really toxic to people.

TD: [00:18:15] And [unclear]. MEKP.

Q: Okay.

TD: [00:18:19] The catalyst in any resin or anything, the most harmful carcinogen known to mankind. Got a shelf life of 1000 years. You were handling that all of the time. They tell you to put gloves on and all of that. Well, you go to the chemical cabinet, and you just mix your chemicals and

go. You're mixing putty, you know, resin... you touched it all of the time.

Q: Yeah.

TD: [00:18:39] So...

Q: Wow. Yeah, I mean I was talking to Jack Willing [?] down...

TD: [00:18:44] Mr. Jack. Worked for him for five years at the boatyard, mostly seasonal just before crabbing.

Q: Yeah. He also worked at Cris-Craft for a while, and...

TD: [00:18:51] Yeah, I worked for Mr. Jack up to three years ago.

Q: Yeah.

TD: [00:18:54] Yeah, he's done a little bit of everything, Mr. Jack.

Q: Yeah, he's the first person that told me about...

TD: [00:18:59] He's a good guy.

Q: ... working with fiber... you know, he worked on wooden boats for a really long time and all the skipjacks, and then he went to Cris-Craft and worked on fiberglass, and that's when he told me about... you know, how it's kind of... it's pretty toxic.

TD: [00:19:06] Did you see some of the boats in the harbor he built?

Q: Yes, I did. It was pretty impressive. It was very, very cool.

TD: [00:19:16] Cool.

Q: So that's definitely...

TD: [00:19:18] He's one of my heroes.

Q: Yeah, he's great.

TD: [00:19:20] I worked with him, and Eldon [?], and Sean [?] for four or five seasons there. And I just left there not too long ago.

Q: Oh, that's cool. Yeah.

TD: [00:19:28] Yeah, that's a good job. And I was good at it, too. I liked the boatyards. It's good work.

Q: Yeah, I like the boatyard, too. It's...

TD: [00:19:34] Good pay.

Q: Is it?

TD: [00:19:35] Yeah. You got to hustle, but it's good pay. I'd run the lift and everything there, so I was getting... you know? And I'm not a Willing, that's pretty good [laughter]. You'll know that inside joke later on.

Q: Maybe. Maybe I'll find out the inside joke a little later.

TD: [00:19:50] Tight-knit bunch.

Q: What's that?

TD: [00:19:53] Tight-knit bunch they are.

Q: Yes, yeah.

TD: [00:19:55] Yeah, family-oriented, I'd say.

Q: Well, a lot of people here...

TD: [00:19:58] And I fit right in the family, so I was kind of proud of that, you know? Because they let me work right beside them.

Q: That's good.

TD: [00:20:03] Yeah.

Q: That's definitely good.

TD: [00:20:05] [unclear].

Q: Yeah, no, I mean it definitely seems like families here are pretty tight knit.

TD: [00:20:09] I've done it all, is what I've done. Everything from building houses to boats to whatever... done it all, but you have to... you have to have some skills because the water's up and down.

Q: Right. It depends. Well, I'm actually going to turn this off real quick.

END OF AUDIO FILE