

OH 498 Joey Horney

BRENT LEWIS: All right, so this is Brent Lewis. Today is June 26, 2023, and I'm interviewing for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Watermen's Oral History Story Swap Project, and today I'm talking with Joey Horney. Joe, will you tell us your place and date of birth?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:00:21] I was born in Chester, Maryland, right here on Kent Island, and I was born 1958, April 7th, 1958.

BRENT LEWIS: And we have permission to record this interview today.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:00:29] Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed.

BRENT LEWIS: So you're from Kent Island. You're born right here in Chester. Where in Chester were you born?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:00:36] Right across -- right next to Chester Post Office.

BRENT LEWIS: And tell us who your mom and dad were.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:00:41] My mom was Arlene Timms and my father is Joseph Horney. He's, like, four generations of watermen on Queen Anne's County, and my mom's father was a boat builder.

BRENT LEWIS: What was his name?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:00:56] Richard Timms.

BRENT LEWIS: And where did he build boats?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:00:59] He worked for Trumpy boatyard in Annapolis, during the war and all. I think he worked there for 30-some years.

BRENT LEWIS: They built cabin cruisers, yachts?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:09] Cruisers, PT boats, stuff like that during the war and stuff. So, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: So you have how many siblings, how many brothers and sisters?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:20] I have a stepbrother, a stepsister, and I have two brothers.

BRENT LEWIS: Your stepbrother and stepsister are older than you?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:28] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: And what are their names?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:30] Buddy Dennis and April Dennis.

BRENT LEWIS: And then you had two younger brothers.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:34] And Keith Horney is my younger brother, and Scott Horney.

BRENT LEWIS: And we will definitely talk about those fellas a little bit, [laughter] their stories that we all still tell, particularly about Keith. Your mom died early.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:48] Yes, she --

BRENT LEWIS: How old were you when your mom passed away?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:01:50] I was 14. She died of ovarian cancer at 34 years old.

BRENT LEWIS: And so you had 14 years with her, but your younger brothers --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:00] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- Scott, in particular, was little.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:01] Scott was seven years old when she died, and Keith was 10, because... No, I was 12 and Keith was 10.

BRENT LEWIS: So at that point your dad was in charge of raising you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:12] Raising five kids.

BRENT LEWIS: Five kids: the two step-kids --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:15] Working on the water.

BRENT LEWIS: Working on the water.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:17] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: What was that like for you guys?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:20] I mean, it was great. I mean, he done -- far as I'm concerned, he done a hell of a job. I mean, he was raising two kids that weren't really his, but he treated them as -- they know him as their father. They knew him as his father before he died, both the stepbrother and sister. And he just taught us to treat people like you want to be treated, and I feel strongly about that.

BRENT LEWIS: What kind of work did he do on the water?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:02:45] He worked on -- he crabbed, he oystered, and in between seasons he would get a job -- construction job, just to keep, you know, money coming in, because --

BRENT LEWIS: Hardworking guy.

JOEY HORNEY: -- a lot of times it's six weeks, two months between oyster season and crab season where you make any money.

BRENT LEWIS: So tell me what it was like for having a dad who was a waterman.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:03:07] He, most time... Well, the advantage of -- with our family was the two stepbrother and sister -- my oldest brother, stepbrother, he was 18. My sister was 16. And she more or less cooked, cleaned the house, done her laundry, and my father told me when I was old enough to get a workers' permit, which was 14, you get a job, and you pay your sister \$25 a week room and board, and that money went to her. And Buddy did the same thing, the older brother, but the two younger ones never worked, so it was a experience. I mean --

BRENT LEWIS: Sure. I mean, it was a lot on your dad.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:03:46] Yeah. Oh, yeah, believe me. And he's -- he drank a little bit. [laughs] I mean, who wouldn't? Who wouldn't in that situation?

BRENT LEWIS: Sure.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:03:54] And, I mean, he was raising five kids, and he was, I think, 39, and she was 34 when she died, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Were any of your grandparents around at that --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:04:04] My grandmother and grandfather were around. See, [laughs] story about that: they came -- my grandparents were through the Depression. Well, I can remember this like it was yesterday: she came there for two or three days after Mom died and helped out with breakfast and everything, getting us --

BRENT LEWIS: This is your dad's parents.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:04:21] No, my mother's --

BRENT LEWIS: Mom's parents.

JOEY HORNEY: -- my mother's parents, and getting us off to school and stuff. So we had a -- the kids, after she went home to take care of her husband and clean her house, we had a meeting with our father, and we said, "Dad, send her home. Send her home." I mean, she -- like I said, she went through the Depression, didn't believe in wasting nothing. Well, if you ate cereal in the morning, and you

might've had Trix or something like that, with the fruity flavors and the colors and shit, well, she would put the milk back in the carton. Well, you might have pink milk the next morning. [laughs] So we got --

BRENT LEWIS: She wasn't wasting anything.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:04:58] She saved -- she saved a little, teeny pint thing of peas for next night for dinner. They don't - - you know, they didn't waste nothing. They went through the Depression.

BRENT LEWIS: Kids back when we grew up had a lot of freedom, anyway --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:05:09] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- but you guys must've had a particular amount of freedom. You were -- you had to grow up pretty quickly.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:05:15] Yeah, oh, yeah. Had to grow up and, like I say, start working, and when I was 14 I had two jobs. I crab potted during the day, and I worked at Klebber's Exxon in the evenings from four o'clock to ten o'clock at night --

BRENT LEWIS: Pumping gas?

JOEY HORNEY: -- in the summertime, yeah. And I'd go crab potting four o'clock in the morning and get home about four in the afternoon, and drop -- he'd drop me off at the station while he went to sell the crabs to George Hills

down at Dominion, and I'd drop -- he'd drop me off there,
and I'd go work till ten o'clock at night.

BRENT LEWIS: So you guys were expected to go to work.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:05:45] Oh, yeah, we worked at a very early
age, and we were able to work, you know.

BRENT LEWIS: Including your younger brothers.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:05:51] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Which brings me to a story you told me once.

When you and Keith, your middle brother, next-to-oldest
brother, were young, you guys got your first boat.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:06:05] Yeah. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: Can you tell me about that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:06:07] We had crabbed in the summertime with
our father, and he'd pay us filler money, which would --
may have been \$5 a day, and we saved it and saved it and
saved it. We decided we wanted to buy a boat, so we bought
a boat together. Mr. Wesley Roof from Grasonville, we
bought a boat from him. Well, when you pulled -- started
the motor up, it didn't have no transmission; it just took
off. So we were allowed to crab, but we had to crab right
up in Cabin Creek. We couldn't go outside the creek, and
our father and my uncle were crabbing outside the creek.
So we did this for about a week, week and a half, maybe ten
days, something like that, and one day I was -- we would

take turns: my brother Keith would drive and I would dip, and then I would drive and he would dip. So I made a real good haul and line where I caught some crabs. I said, "Steer again. I'm going to try them again." "No, you're not." So he and I are fist fighting in the floor of the boat over who's going to dip and who's going to steer the boat. [laughter] And my father's outside crabbing. Well, he's keeping an eye on us, and the boat's running along and he doesn't see anybody in it, so he throws his boat wide open and catches up to the boat, and he sees us down on the floor fighting. So he's screaming and hollering at us. We get up and we realize, oh, we done screwed up now. So he come up to us. We had to cut the motor out so she would stop running along, [laughter] and he told us, he said, "Take that SOB" -- that was mild words he used that day -- "to shore, take everything out of it, and sit in the truck and wait for me." So that's what we did. We got our lines up, and went on in, and we loaded everything on the boat. And Keith -- we sat there, I know -- it must -- seemed like five hours, but seemed like he crabbed later that day than he ever crabbed all summer. [laughs] So anyway, he come to shore, and I can remember him when we walked in the door. He told my mother, he says, "Boat's for sale. I'll take

one of them with me one day, one the next day. I can't catch no crabs on account of them." So...

BRENT LEWIS: You ruined his day. [laughs]

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:09] So -- yeah. So we had our boat just about two weeks. [laughter] We had to sell it.

BRENT LEWIS: Had to get rid of it.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:16] That was the first one we had.

BRENT LEWIS: That was the first boat. How old were you guys then?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:20] I think I was 12 and he was 10. It was right after our mother died that summer.

BRENT LEWIS: That's crazy, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:24] She died in February, and that was the following summer.

BRENT LEWIS: You mentioned your uncle was on the boat. Who was he?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:29] Phil Horney.

BRENT LEWIS: Phil Horney.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:31] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Was he another one of your mentors?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:33] Yes. A lot.

BRENT LEWIS: How so?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:08:36] I just spent a lot of time with him in the last 20, 25 years, I mean, down the Shipping Creek,

crabbing, running out of there, and that's where he crabbed at all the time, and he helped me a lot, because I crab potted for 20-some years, and then I went trotline. And he helped my father, helped me out. He helped me out and everything, so...

BRENT LEWIS: So when did you actually get your first boat that you ended up having more than a couple weeks? [laughter]

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:06] I'm trying to think. I bought one, rebuilt one from Medford Thomas at Tom-- down in Grasonville there, and my father and I oystered in it, and then he used it in summertime, crabbing, while I crab potted. But I -- that was my first boat. I think I was... Matter of fact, I got married at 17, and I got the boat the same year I got married.

BRENT LEWIS: Your first job working on the water, was it trotlining?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:34] No, it was crab potting.

BRENT LEWIS: Crab potting.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:35] Well, I mean, I trotlined in the summer with my father.

BRENT LEWIS: Right.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:38] We cut up his bait every evening for -
- to bait his lines up and stuff with him. We baited his lines for him.

BRENT LEWIS: What bait -- kind of bait did he use?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:44] We used eels then.

BRENT LEWIS: What do they use now?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:47] Clams, and clam-- got these, like, onion set bags we put clams in, and you can get -- most time you can get two days out of them. Clams are \$80 a bushel.

BRENT LEWIS: Eel more expensive?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:09:58] Eels, they're probably \$1.50 a pound when you buy them, sell [unclear].

BRENT LEWIS: So back then you were trotlining with your dad, you guys were using eels, but you moved into crab potting.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:10:09] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: How did you get introduced to that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:10:12] A buddy of mine worked for Trent Larry's grandfather, Bobby Larry -- used to call him Big Boy -- and he was a good-sized man, 6'6", 260. Wasn't an ounce of fat on him. And he stopped up to the house. He lived, like, five houses up the road from us. They were looking for somebody to go. The young boy he had with him quit; he couldn't do it. And he asked the old man if I wanted to go, and the old man looked at me and I said, "Yeah, I'm ready. I'll go. I'll try." And I was with him for 27 years.

BRENT LEWIS: So you were still a teenager when you started doing that.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:10:45] Yeah. Oh, yeah, I was doing that when I was 14.

BRENT LEWIS: So what is that job like? What -- tell us what a crab potter's workday is like.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:10:53] There -- they're on -- they got the wire crab pots that the buoys on each one of them at that time. Now they got them on trotlines, like, [that clips on line to it?], but then there were separate buoys on every pot, and we would fish. Starting out we were fishing, like, five, six hundred a day, and then that's when you had to pull them by hand. Then they started to get these electric winches. That's like a car starter: you put your knee against a pad on a washboard, and it would -- you had to keep pressure on the rope around a round head, and that would pull the pot through the top of the water. Then you had to reach over and grab it. But now everything's hydraulic and so much easier.

BRENT LEWIS: How many pots did you work up to if you started with that many?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:11:34] We started out with that many, but when we got done we were fishing 1,000, 1,200 a day.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow, that's a lot of crab pots, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:11:39] When the hydraulic -- when the hydraulics come in -- this is right - we tied in Langenfelder's for probably 30 years.

BRENT LEWIS: So right out of Chester River?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:11:50] Yeah, right up the mouth of the Chester River, yeah, where you go out a bit.

BRENT LEWIS: How deep is it there?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:11:55] It's all different depths. You could go across the border, Chester River. It goes 18, 20, 25 foot. For the year, most of the time that's where you want to crab at.

BRENT LEWIS: So you crab potted for almost twenty--

JOEY HORNEY: [00:12:07] Twenty-seven, 28 years.

BRENT LEWIS: Twenty-seven, 28 years.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:12:09] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: What made you get out of that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:12:14] I crab potted myself for, like, four years, and I couldn't get a crew that -- which be there every day. I mean, I -- we were working six and seven days a week at the time, and nobody wanted to put that time in. I mean, you made good money if you worked. I mean, that - a lot of times you'd make 1,000, 1,500 dollars a week, sometimes 2,000, depending on how many crabs you catch, and you get a percentage. I mean --

BRENT LEWIS: A lot of those guys who are gone, that's -- they were greatly known for crab potting.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:12:43] Yes, yes.

BRENT LEWIS: Billy Schulz [both speaking-unclear].

JOEY HORNEY: [00:12:45] Billy Schulz, one of the biggest ones. He was the main one in Queen Anne's County.

BRENT LEWIS: That's a full-time job.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:12:53] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: That's --

JOEY HORNEY: And that's another thing a lot of people don't do anymore, because back then we had to paint them every six weeks, or brush the barnacles and stuff off of them, and now they got a different system now where they're more or less pressure washing them every day, dipping them in some hot liquid that kills the barnacles, and then they put them right back overboard, and they do that -- like, they do that -- half the rigs one week, half the next week. And that keeps them good, you know, all summer long. That's what they did.

BRENT LEWIS: Are there guys still around who crab potted?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:13:25] Oh, yeah, there's probably eight or ten right here in Queen Anne's County.

BRENT LEWIS: Did you have other mentors? Did you have other older watermen who taught you some of these skills?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:13:37] I mean, some -- the people that I -- you know, watermen, the older fellas of my father's age that I knew that -- they hung around with my father, they hung around with me, and they taught me different things, I mean, working -- we work, and you get -- you get -- you work for what you get. If you don't work, you're not going to have nothing.

BRENT LEWIS: That's a lesson you guys learned early on.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:13:58] Yeah, at a young age. I mean, of course, I got married at 17, had my first kid the same month I turned 18, and --

BRENT LEWIS: How many kids you got, Joe?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:14:07] Two boys. One's --

BRENT LEWIS: Have either of them followed in your footsteps, working on the water?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:14:12] I encouraged both of them to stay off the water, but the one has his own construction business -- he's a builder -- and the other one, he has Buddy's Crabs in Centreville.

BRENT LEWIS: Why did you encourage them to stay off?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:14:23] I just thought it was nothing that -- something that they should be doing the rest of their life, because I didn't see -- I didn't figure I would keep doing it as long as I've been doing it, tell you the truth.

Because there's so many regulations, and the State steps in and does stuff, and you just -- it's limiting to the money you can make anymore.

BRENT LEWIS: You thought you would get out of it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:14:43] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Not early on.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:14:47] No, but I just figured --

BRENT LEWIS: As you got older.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:14:49] I figured if I got 60 years -- you know, when I got to 60, I figured it would be nip and tuck, whether I was going to stay in it or not, and now I just -- I crab in the summer, and I oyster in the winter, and I do [laughs] what I --

BRENT LEWIS: So you still do it.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:15:03] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: For the love of it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:15:05] Yeah, for that, and, I mean, you decent money if you go hard at it, but it's just so many -- it's regulated so much anymore. I mean, oyster season's probably had a month and a half taken off of it. We used to be able to work Saturdays. You can't work any Saturdays anymore. You used to start September the 1st, then it went to the 15th, and now it's October the 1st before you -- and then that's only patent tong season, hand tong season, and

divers can start October the 1st. Dredgers can't start till November the 1st. So it's a lot of... You know, if you -- to me, somebody young buying a house and all, buying a boat and stuff like that, I don't know if I would even recommend it to them.

BRENT LEWIS: It's too unpredictable?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:15:56] Yeah, it's too unpredictable. I mean, plus, you have -- most of the time you have six weeks to two months every year where you're not making nothing, so when you're making money, you better hold onto it.

BRENT LEWIS: Is it also more expensive to get in the business?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:16:10] Now it is, yes, than it used to be, yes.

BRENT LEWIS: Because of the cost of...?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:16:14] Cost of everything. I mean, hand tong prices have -- probably five times higher than they were when I started. Dredges, patent tong rigs... You can't buy a dredge for less than a thousand dollars.

BRENT LEWIS: Where would you get that kind of equipment back in the day? Who made dredges and tongs?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:16:33] A lot of guys around here. Plugsie Thomas, he used to make some stuff, clam rigs and stuff like that. Bobby Aaron was a big guy right here in Stevensville, and then after that you more or less got to

go to Tilghman Island, and there's three or four guys down there that been doing it their whole life. They've got young kids that kept on doing it.

BRENT LEWIS: But those skills are disappearing, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:16:56] Yes, yes, exactly.

BRENT LEWIS: There are fewer and fewer people? Is that one of the reasons that equipment is more expensive?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:17:02] Yes. Plus everything's going up. I mean, steel's gone up. When you have to build a clam rig or something like that, the price of steel's probably triple to what it used to be. I know wood has. We used to buy hand tongs for \$2 a foot years ago; they're 10 and 12 dollars a foot now when you buy them.

BRENT LEWIS: Just for the shafts?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:17:21] Just for the shaft. Then you've got to put heads on them.

BRENT LEWIS: What do the heads run?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:17:24] Heads run about \$200. And you used to be able to get them for 65 and 70 from Melvin Clark.

BRENT LEWIS: What kind of length shafts do you work?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:17:35] I have worked as long as 32s. I was a lot younger. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: Tell us how hand tonging works.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:17:43] It's hard... Well, I remember starting -- I started hand tonging with my father when I was 17, and I got married and had a kid, and we had a boat. So he said -- him and Uncle Phil used to work together all the time. So he said, "I'm -- you and I are going to go together." I think he wanted to make sure I made enough money to pay my -- what I had to do, a kid and all, and rent and all. But I can remember -- I'm going to jump back a little bit -- I can remember --

BRENT LEWIS: Yeah, please do.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:18:09] I can remember the first -- I was paying \$85 a month rent in 1976. Had a nice little house in Grasonville, two bedroom, bath, living room, kitchen. And the first electric bill was \$4.75. [laughs] And I never will forget that. I told my father about it. He said, "Well, if you get through that first year you got it licked."

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. Things have certainly changed, haven't they, man?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:18:32] Yes. Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: In those regards, with your boys, even though you kind of discouraged them from actually working on the water, your youngest son does run a --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:18:45] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- crab buying business. So how does that work?

Does he buy from local crabbers and then transport them, or does he --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:18:55] He's got a --

BRENT LEWIS: Tell me how his business works.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:18:55] He's got a building in Centreville, just outside of Centreville, heading towards Chestertown, and he steams them, he buys from -- I sell all my crabs to him. He's got, I think, four other crabbers that sell to him, plus he buys some from Harris' Seafood, Jason Ruth at Harris' Seafood, and if he needs some for the weekend or something he always goes down to Jason, gets some from Jason. And he steams them. People call him. "You want two dozen, or a dozen extra larges?" He grades them, large, extra large, jumbos, twos, and females. And people tell him what they want, and you give him a time that you want to pick them up, and if you want heavy seasoning on them, light seasoning. He's got them in a bag or in a half bushel box, depending on the amount, and he does pretty good with it.

BRENT LEWIS: That's awesome. How many crabs, bushels can you catch now? Like, what's a typical good day for you?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:19:54] I crab on Sundays. Yesterday, I had three. Three bushel ones.

BRENT LEWIS: Three?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:00] And I'm getting \$185 a bushel for them.

BRENT LEWIS: Compared to when you were younger --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:04] Yeah, younger, I mean, I used to get -
- if you got \$40 or \$50 for your ones, you were lucky.

BRENT LEWIS: And could you catch more than three bushels?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:12] Oh, yeah. I've caught...with a crab pot, and we've caught -- I've caught a hundred and some bushels before.

BRENT LEWIS: That's amazing.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:19] And got, like, eight and ten dollars a bushel for them.

BRENT LEWIS: That's a good day, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:23] Yeah. But if you got them prices now that we're getting now back then, you wouldn't have work but about a year. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: It can't -- it can't be an easy gig, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:33] Yeah, no.

BRENT LEWIS: I mean, it never really has been, but --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:35] I mean, it's like, right now I'm getting up at two o'clock in the morning, and I usually get home 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, after I get done with my lines and everything, and sell my crabs, and I get home,

get a shower, eat a little dinner, might have a mixed drink, and then I go to bed about 7:30, eight o'clock.

BRENT LEWIS: It's a full day.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:52] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: So you work six days a week?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:20:55] Six days, take Mondays off.

BRENT LEWIS: And you're still going to oyster this winter?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:00] Yep.

BRENT LEWIS: Where do you work out of?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:02] Oystering most time of year down here -- anymore, used to be work around here, but most time you're down either Tred Avon in Cambridge, or you're down in Hoopers Island, Deal Island, down that way.

BRENT LEWIS: What kind of boat you have now?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:15] I have a 46-foot Hideaway.

BRENT LEWIS: Will you keep it...? Where do you keep it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:19] I keep it at the county slips at Kent Narrows. I got a slip there, and --

BRENT LEWIS: So if you're crabbing or oystering down Talbot County way, do you --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:27] I usually leave it down there --

BRENT LEWIS: Leave it down there.

JOEY HORNEY: -- in a marina somewhere, get a slip, and --

BRENT LEWIS: So you drive down.

JOEY HORNEY: -- drive down in a truck, yeah. That's what more -- that's what we done all winter. I tied up at Taylor's Island, we drove down, left the boat there, tied up, they worked there for a while, then we end up in Solomon's Island.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that about the furthest you've ever gone to work?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:46] Cobb Island in Crisfield about the furthest I've been as far as crab potting and oystering.

BRENT LEWIS: Mm-hmm. So you did both crab potting and oystering down that way.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:55] Yeah. Yeah. Still do. I mean --

BRENT LEWIS: Do you stay down there when you go down that far?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:21:58] No, no, we drive back every day.

BRENT LEWIS: So that adds --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:01] More expense to... I mean, \$50 a day in a truck to what I was burning this winter.

BRENT LEWIS: And time.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:07] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: You're later when you get home.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:10] Yeah, I mean --

BRENT LEWIS: You have to leave earlier.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:11] Yeah, I was getting up at two o'clock, oystering. Most of the time I don't get up till 4:00 when

I'm oystering, but we were driving to Solomon's Island.

That's a two-hour ride in the morning.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you have a crew?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:20] This year I had two guys work with me.

We were diving. Mike Ever, had Mike Ever dive with me.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow, so you were down there diving?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:30] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: And so you're the captain?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:33] I'm the captain.

BRENT LEWIS: You have --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:22:35] I have a guy helps me cull the oysters and put them in the crates and stuff, and the divers in the water. I've had two guys work with me on the boat, and then one of them helps me cull the oysters. I got a metal culling board on my boat, and I have crates, two crates. When a diver goes overboard, he'll take a crate with him. It's got a line up to it, which I have tied to a cleat. Got a 125 foot of line, so he can go out 125 foot away from the boat. Always try to keep him right on this side of the boat, and stay right there with him. Well, when it's rough, it's -- you know, all I'm doing is driving the boat; I'm not culling the oysters. That's why you got the extra guy on there. But when it's not rough, I can back up a

little bit, and I can help him cull the oysters, and then stay with the diver, too.

BRENT LEWIS: So somebody's got eyes on --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:19] Yeah, always got --

BRENT LEWIS: -- the guy who's in the water.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:20] Yeah, always got eyes on him.

BRENT LEWIS: Did you ever dive?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:23] No. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: That never appealed to you?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:26] No.

BRENT LEWIS: A lot of guys around here got into it, though.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:28] Yeah, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: What about it didn't...didn't you think that you would like?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:33] I figured every diver needed a good captain. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: Right, you'd rather be up above [both speaking-unclear].

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:37] I'd rather be up where I could breathe air. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: So tell -- give me the specs on your current boat. What kind of boat is it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:23:47] It's a Hideaway from Tilghman. It was built in 1995. I bought it seven years ago, and I worked

it, like, four years, and I took it and had it all completely redone: new culling boards. So I had some bad wood in the washboards. Had it all re-fixed. Cost me, like, \$24,000, but it looked good, it done nice. Buddy Hampton ended up doing it up in Centreville.

BRENT LEWIS: How long have you had it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:11] I've had it for going on eight years now.

BRENT LEWIS: And how big is it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:14] Forty-six by 13 and a half.

BRENT LEWIS: And what kind of motor does it have?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:18] Have a 320-horsepower caterpillar diesel in it.

BRENT LEWIS: And you think this is your last boat?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:24] I'm pretty sure it is. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: I guess it's a weird way to ask it, but --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:27] Yeah, I'm pretty sure it is.

BRENT LEWIS: Have you had boats in between?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:33] Not too many, one or two.

BRENT LEWIS: Right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:24:36] Had a small box stern in between, and it just... More room the better, especially if you're out in the Bay somewhere, crabbing, or oystering, run across the Bay, crabbing. You need a bigger boat that can, you

know, go pretty good for weather and stuff. I mean, I went to -- I had another boat, was a Kinnamon, 42-foot Kinnamon. It wasn't very high-sided, and we were crab potting, or trotlining in Patapsco, and the wind broke out about 40 miles an hour out of the east. And, matter of fact, that's the one and only time my son Travis -- has the crab house -- ever went with me. And we had to come back across the Bay that afternoon, so we come back across the Bay, and I just took my time. He was going up and down like this, and one of the canopy poles drove up through the top of the canopy, and the canopy fell down in the back, and my son and I -- he told my wife, [laughs] he said, "I went with him one time; I'm not going again." [laughter] And he never went with -- never got on a boat with me again, other than come down the slips and go fishing or something.

BRENT LEWIS: You didn't have to discourage him after that.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:25:44] No. Unh-uh, no.

BRENT LEWIS: You've had a little trouble with awnings, because

--

JOEY HORNEY: [00:25:48] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:25:48] [laughs] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: You've told me a story. Is this the same story where you fired your brother Keith twice in one day?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:25:55] Oh, that was during oyster season.

That wasn't with the canopy. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: Tell me about firing Keith twice in one day.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:26:01] Oh, we were oystering up in Tred Avon, and my brother Scott and Keith and I, we were tonging, and Keith had a hangover from the night before. I knew that when I picked him up that morning. Feeling bad, he didn't want to go, but I said, "Come on, man. We go down there, we catch our limit in about three hours, and make yourself a day's worth and come home and lay down and sleep good." So I finally talked him into coming with me. So we got down there. We had, like -- we only needed six more bushel, had 24 bushel. And it was a man up the river that come by us every day, and he stopped and talked to us, and was bullshitting with us, and Keith waved him over to him, and he said, "Take me ashore. I'm ready to go home." [laughs] I said, "Keith, we only need six more bushels to catch our limit and we were out of here." "I don't care. I don't want nothing. I'm going home. I feel bad." I said, "Well, I ain't paying you if you don't finish out the day with me." "I don't care." And that's how Keith was. You knew Keith.

BRENT LEWIS: Ah, yeah.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:26:57] If he was in a bar and you had \$300, everybody in that bar had \$300 to spend. But anyway, make a --

BRENT LEWIS: He'd be broke when you got there.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:27:03] Yeah. Make a long story short, Keith gets in the boat with the guy, and I said, "Keith, you're fired. You ain't going with me no more this year." "I don't give a..." I said, "All right." So he went on, he went ashore. I think he beat me home that day. Anyway, [laughter] next morning my brother and I went, and we went and we -- took us about two hours longer because we had to pile up the board, and then he would down and cull, and I would tong all day, until we got our limit. And my brother, younger brother, Scott, looked at me. He says, "When are you going to go ask Keith to come back?" I said, [laughs] "See, I figured [unclear]." So I went back to him, and I said, "Keith, come on. You my...come on." I said, "Come on. Here's your money." I had his money in my wallet, anyway; I didn't not pay him for that day he worked. I said, "Here's your money from the other day." I said, "Come on, go back to work. Let's go back to work, make some money." So he went back to work with me, [laughter] and everything was good after that.

BRENT LEWIS: You guys actually worked good together.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:27:58] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: The three of you, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:00] Yeah. We -- I mean, we grew up together.

BRENT LEWIS: And because of your family situation, you relied on each other a lot.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:07] Yeah, we were close. We were friends. We were brothers. I mean, you wouldn't fool with one of us and not fool with the other one.

BRENT LEWIS: And you took both of those younger brothers under your wing, too.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:15] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: Scott still work on the water?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:17] No. Well, he does pile driving work with Shawn Horney, H&H Marine Construction.

BRENT LEWIS: But he got out of the water --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:22] Yeah, he got out of the boat and all that. He just takes his lunchbox and he works with Shawn and them boys now.

BRENT LEWIS: It's a lot, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:29] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Like, to run your own business --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:30] Yeah. Yeah, it is.

BRENT LEWIS: -- out there.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:33] Yeah. And, like I say, it's -- you never have -- you can't never stop.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. Has it gotten harder to work the water?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:41] I think it has, yeah. I mean, plus, it's a lot of people into it now. I mean, right now, I can remember 25 years ago, I never -- I knew every waterman in Queen Anne's County. I probably don't know 25 watermen in Queen Anne's County now.

BRENT LEWIS: So people are still getting in the business.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:28:58] Lot of younger boys. I mean, parents buy them boats for the summertime, and they -- that's all they do is crab in the summertime. And I don't know, they go to school in the winter, I mean, in the fall, or what.

BRENT LEWIS: Because it's a good way to make money.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:09] Yeah, you can make some good cash money, you know.

BRENT LEWIS: Sure. And it's always been a way for teenage boys --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:14] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- to make a little bit of money.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:16] And, believe me, I've seen the bad times and the good times. I mean, I've seen it where you couldn't make a living crabbing. I was doing carpenter work, but I would never --

BRENT LEWIS: Why couldn't you make a living crabbing in those times?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:25] It got so slow. The crabs were slow. Oystering was slow. I mean, I could make as much money on land and not have to worry about it, just show --

BRENT LEWIS: Have you seen it kind of come and go and back and forth?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:35] Yeah, MSX hit, that was the bad times.

BRENT LEWIS: That was the end, kind of.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:38] That was -- I mean, that was a lot of times when I did carpenter work. I did carpenter work for, like, three years in a row.

BRENT LEWIS: And MSX is a disease of oysters.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:45] Yeah, they brought -- they transplanted some oysters from down the Bay, brought them up here, and they had disease in them. Well, they killed our oysters off.

BRENT LEWIS: Have they come back?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:29:54] Yeah, they're coming back, but they need to -- they need to scrape some bottom, clean the shells up so the spat will catch onto them, because the spat won't catch on -- a baby oyster won't catch on a dirty shell.

BRENT LEWIS: There's a lot of things like that that you would learn --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:08] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- by working out there that the average person -

-

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:11] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: -- would never --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:13] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- take into account.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:15] I mean, you have people that are making decisions that affect our lives that don't have a clue what they're talking about, what they're voting on. I mean --

BRENT LEWIS: Oh, you mean, like, in the State House.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:25] In politics.

BRENT LEWIS: In politics.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:27] In politics part of it, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Do local politicians tend to support --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:31] Most of them guys... Oh, yeah, we have some good county commissioners and stuff here in Queen Anne's that come to all -- we have a meeting every month at the VFW in Grasonville, same Monday -- same morning they have the breakfasts, so we all end up going in for breakfast afterwards. But we have two of the county

commissioners coming to every meeting. We had -- Hershey's been there before with us and everything, so --

BRENT LEWIS: Is -- are the watermen -- is the Watermen Associations -- is that helpful --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:58] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- by binding together?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:30:59] Yeah, yeah. I mean, most -- here on the shore, we're not hooked up as much with the Maryland Watermen's Association, but Talbot, Queen Anne County, Dorchester, and Kent County here on the shore, local, we're all together.

BRENT LEWIS: Politically, you have --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:16] Politically --

BRENT LEWIS: -- some strength --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:17] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: -- as a group.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:18] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: Which has always struck me as one of the difficulties of being a waterman: the independence.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:26] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: On one side, you're very independent, so it's hard for you to come together in groups, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:31] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: But you have learned that that's kind of an important thing to do.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:36] Oh, yeah, and, I mean, a lot of watermen say, "When they cut the prices, go on strike," and stuff. That's a joke. I mean, you can't... Watermen aren't going to go on strike. I've done it twice, and hasn't done nothing but cost me two days of work.

BRENT LEWIS: Because somebody else is going to go out there and work --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:50] Because everybody else is going to go, and you're going to end up getting the same thing you got before you went on strike. That's what happened to me both times, and I swore I'd never do it again.

BRENT LEWIS: Because it's futile.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:31:59] Yeah, only reason we did it was we were tied in Tilghman, and we were bringing our oysters back up here to Harris' Crab House. Well, the guys down there weren't getting -- we were getting \$2 more than they were, and they wanted us to go on strike to get their prices up the same as ours, because they were going on strike. Well, I told my brother, I said, "I'm not leaving my boat here. I'm not going to work and then leaving my boat here so somebody can mess something..." Because you know, they might do... You know, you always got a bad

apple somewhere, might do something to your boat or something like that. So we went on strike with them. Three or four of us were tied in the same marina with them. They appreciated. They thanked us. We've been -- we've good -- we're good friends. But it ended up costing us two days' work. We went back to work and we were getting the same thing, and they got -- they didn't get their raise.

[laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: And so everybody just lost a couple days of work, basically.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:32:44] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: That's hard to strike, when you're in that kind of situation where not everybody's going to be on the same page, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:32:54] Yeah, yeah, exactly. Exactly.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you still have a good relationship with, like, the --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:00] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- guys in Tilghman, and...?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:01] All the guys. I mean, lot of guys in Tilghman are just good of friends as I got right here in Queen Anne's County.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:05] I mean, I have the guy who does the crab survey every year, and for the winter dredge survey, he calls me every year and lets me know what I -- what he's seen up in this area, where he's seen the most crabs at, and all that.

BRENT LEWIS: So there's competition, but there's camaraderie, too.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:19] Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I mean, most of the watermen, if you got something happen to your boat, they're going to jump in and give you a hand.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. Like you said, there's a bad apple here and there --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:28] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- but for the most part everybody looks out for each other.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:30] Yeah, everybody more or less helps everybody out.

BRENT LEWIS: Have you ever been out and needed rescuing, or rescued anyone? Have you ever seen that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:40] We found -- I was crab potting and we founded a drowned girl off of Sandy Point.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. How long ago was that, Joe?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:47] I was probably 30.

BRENT LEWIS: She had...?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:33:50] She had fallen off a sailboat on a Sunday evening. A storm had broke out in the mouth of the Patapsco River, which is Baltimore Harbor, and I heard the mast come around and hit her in the head and knocked her overboard, her and her husband, and they never found her body. Well, two days later she comes floating right there where our crab pots were.

BRENT LEWIS: You were pulling crab pots, and she --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:34:10] And she was right there before us.

BRENT LEWIS: Just saw the body.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:34:12] Saw the body floating.

BRENT LEWIS: What'd you do?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:34:15] I backed up. [laughter] No, Trent's grandfather, Big Boy, he had to call DNR, and DNR come out of Baltimore, and they brought the cage with them and all, and we had to tell them name of the boat, and the people on the boat, and all that, and then they wanted to -- us to help them put the dead person in the cage, and help them roll it up on the Boston whaler.

BRENT LEWIS: Did you do it?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:34:41] I didn't. No, Big Boy said, "Shorty" -- he called me Shorty -- said, "Shorty, go ahead" -- because he was 6'6" and I'm 5'10". [laughter] He said, "Shorty, help them put it out." I said, "No, I ain't

touching that dead body." And he said, "Well, let me use your gloves." I said, "You ain't using my gloves, either."
[laughter] So he got there and helped her.

BRENT LEWIS: Was it bad?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:35:01] Oh, she'd been dead for a couple days.

BRENT LEWIS: Oof, that's tough, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:35:04] Yeah. Yeah, she was only, I think, 27 years old.

BRENT LEWIS: Mm. Which, you know, brings me to a weather question. I know that you have a bad weather story. Was that the Choptank?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:35:17] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Tell us about that.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:35:20] Well, I was crabbing in the Choptank River, and tied up in Tred Avon, Bellevue, and I'd ate dinner home that night, like six o'clock at night, and a storm had went through, and I told my wife, I says, "I'm going to go down and bring my boat up. The storm's already passed." I said, "I'm going to bring my boat up to Tred Avon," and so I can crab up here the next day. It was like six, seven o'clock at night. So I called -- I went and picked up Keith, and I said, "You can drive the truck home; I'm going to bring the boat up." "All right." So he took me in, dropped me off. It was slick cam and everything,

not a puff of wind blowing, and when I got out in the middle of Choptank, I seen the wind coming across the water. Well, I didn't have -- then I didn't have cell -- we didn't have cellphones. And I just headed into it, and I just idled right -- idled along, and when the wind hit, it ripped a -- it ripped a canopy off where it had bolted through the back of my cab, and it -- they clocked the wind at 78 miles an hour on the Cambridge Bridge.

BRENT LEWIS: Damn.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:36:23] And it ripped -- I had two, 12-foot sections of wooden canopy, and the front part sat on the back of my cabin. Well, it ripped it off, and it fell down behind my cabin, and I had a steering valve there, with gears, straining for shifting everything, and it went down on that valve, and it had the boat just turning this way all the time, turning to the right.

BRENT LEWIS: It was locked in.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:36:46] Yeah, and I'm jamming against the door, trying to get the cabin door open so I can get out and straighten the boat up, take this -- get this thing off the controls and stuff. Well, I couldn't get out the door.

BRENT LEWIS: You were stuck in the cabin.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:36:59] Yeah, and these are six-, seven-foot seas, blowing 70, 80 mile an hour, so...

BRENT LEWIS: And you're by yourself.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:37:03] By myself. So finally I got the door open about 12 inches, and I got down on my side, in the floor. Believe me, I had lifejackets on the table, in the cab and everything, just in case. And I crawled through, and I got it up, and the stack of baskets there had fell over. I got the baskets up, and I got the canopy up high enough that I could put the baskets underneath of it. And then I said, "Well, I got to get this canopy off here some kind of way." So one side was already ripped loose, so I headed the boat up into the wind, and then just let her fall sideways like this, a little bit to the right, and I got underneath one side of that canopy, and I picked it up, and the wind got ahold of it, and it just ripped it right off the boat. And we're talking about 12-foot by 12-foot wooden canopy, and it was going through the air, going [exhales four times rapidly], about 25-, 30-foot offside the boat. Well, I looked back, and I got a other section that's still hooked up, and I have a six-inch exhaust pipe for turbocharger going through the canopy to get the exhaust through the cabin -- canopy and stuff. Well, it's going back and forth like this, getting ready to break my turbo off. So I said, "Well, I got to get that one off here, too." So I had two sixes, and I had everything

screwed in. I had hurricane straps on it, to hold it on the two sixes. So I go around there with a clawhammer, knocking all the screws off on one side, and I said, well, I do the same thing, it's going to come off the same way, and I did the same thing, and it went off, and when it went off, it broke to four, four post in the stern, and took the two six off the side of the boat with it. This is out here in about 30 foot of water in the Choptank River.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:38:47] And got the nap snares, which the wind -- when I got the nap snares, the wind was it felt like to, like, 25 mile an hour. And then I got through nap snares, and I had the wind to my stern, and I come in Shipping Creek that night about nine o'clock. My brother Keith was asleep in the truck. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: Waiting on you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:05] And I backed into the slip there, to the dock there, tied the boat. I went over there and knocked on the window. He said, "Man, where's your canopy at?" I said, "Out in the middle of Choptank somewhere." [laughs] I didn't work for two days. I was -- it scared the hell out of me.

BRENT LEWIS: Did it? Is that the scariest thing that --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:20] Yeah, that's pretty much... By
yourself, and I couldn't... It scared me when I couldn't
get out of cabin.

BRENT LEWIS: Sure, you're trapped.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:27] I mean, I'd go out a window, but --

BRENT LEWIS: How long did that all take to happen?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:33] Seemed like it lasted a half hour, but
probably ten minutes.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow, it come off -- so it came off quick?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:37] Yeah. It was just a freak storm that
went through here.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:41] Because it already went through up in
Grasonville, but I figured it was already gone down there,
too. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: So you kind of knew it was stormy --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:48] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- but you were making that run, anyway.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:39:51] But it had passed. I figured -- I
thought maybe time I got down here, but, no, it hadn't got
there yet. That's 45 minutes in the truck, so...

BRENT LEWIS: I bet that felt like forever.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:03] Yeah. Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: But the wind had all died out by the time you got back to Tilghman.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:07] Time I got to Tilghman, it was still blowing about 20 out the south, but it was -- I mean, I had it to my stern, so I was good then.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. And did -- you had to repair your boat, too.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:18] Yeah. Well, I took off the next two days and put another canopy on it. [laughter] But it was a tarp canopy. It wasn't a -- it wasn't a wooden canopy. It was a tarp canopy.

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs] Something that come --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:28] Something light.

BRENT LEWIS: Something come off pretty easy.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:30] Yeah. It'd blow that tarp off of there.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:33] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: What have been your best days out there, man? Like, what keeps you going?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:40:41] It's... To me, it's a challenge. I mean, you can go out there some days, you might catch five, six, seven ones. You might go there another day, the same -- very next day and catch two. But you've got to go.

You've got to try. And they're not going to come up on the boat by themselves; you've got to go look for them, go try them.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that part of the joy?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:41:03] Yeah. To me, it's a challenge, I think. I mean, who's better, the crab or me? Sometimes I get the crab; sometimes he gets me.

BRENT LEWIS: That's really cool, man. I've never heard anybody kind of put it that way.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:41:13] That's the way -- I mean, that's the way I look at it. I mean, I've been doing it since I was -- working on the water since I was about 12 years old, and I'm 65, so I figure I know a little something, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Learn from your experience?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:41:28] Yeah, experience and other people.

BRENT LEWIS: Have you ever mentored anyone?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:41:32] I help some of these young boys out around here the, you know, last eight or ten years that ask me things, and I'll tell them, "Come over here by me and crab," you know, things like that. Get them straight --

BRENT LEWIS: Show them what --

JOEY HORNEY: -- straight them what to do, where to lay out and place, things like that, but --

BRENT LEWIS: Because if you don't [both speaking-unclear] --

JOEY HORNEY: -- you can't show them too much there, because
they'll... [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: Like the lady who doesn't give all the recipe.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:41:52] Yeah. Can't show them everything. We
do help them out.

BRENT LEWIS: But without you guys, without someone helping
[both speaking-unclear] --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:41:56] Yeah. Yeah, man, somebody helped me
out. That's how it all started. Somebody helped me out.
I'm sure somebody helped my father out.

BRENT LEWIS: I'm kind of interested. You said, you know, that
there are so many people who have gotten into it. That's
kind of against the conventional wisdom that it's a
disappearing thing.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:42:13] Yeah, just right now, I mean, a lot of
people do it for the -- in the summertime. I mean, it's a
summer thing, like --

BRENT LEWIS: It's fun.

JOEY HORNEY: -- people from school, got all kids that just
graduated high school, or they got a year off from college.
They might take the boat and go try it on.

BRENT LEWIS: But they're probably not going to go hand tonging
in the winter.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:42:29] No. No.

BRENT LEWIS: What other markets are out there right now for watermen? If you're not crabbing or oystering, what kind of work are you doing?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:42:39] You can -- some of them do charter boat captains' fishing, clamming, razor clamming.

BRENT LEWIS: Did you ever do that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:42:48] No. Too many moving parts for me.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:42:51] It's got two motors to worry about running. You got a whole bunch of moving parts on that clam rig, and --

BRENT LEWIS: That just never appealed to you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:42:57] No. It's hard enough keep one motor running for me. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: So crabbing and oystering have been your --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:43:03] Pretty much all I've done.

BRENT LEWIS: -- pretty much your expertise is in those areas.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:43:08] I guess you could call it that.

BRENT LEWIS: Have you ever done anything other than hand tonging for oysters? Have you ever dredged or anything?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:43:13] Oh, I dredge. Yeah, patent tong, dredge, patent tong. I have.

BRENT LEWIS: Patent tong. What is a patent tong?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:43:17] Patent tong is the -- it's just almost like hand tongs, but everything's hydraulic, and you working with -- you can get five-foot head, six-foot heads, and everything's hydraulic. You work foot pedals, open and close, up and down, four pedals on a patent tong rig, two pedals on a dredge rig.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you need a crew with that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:43:36] You have to take -- most of the time somebody takes one other person with them, just to help them cull. Like, when I --

BRENT LEWIS: And cull is to basically go through the oysters?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:43:43] Yeah, go through the oysters, pick out the legal ones, rig the rest overboard, over in the water. I mean, you -- your patent tong, you throw the heads overboard, they're open, they hit bottom, you close them up, hit the pedal to make them come up. When they come up, hit the pedal, open up. You, you -- they swing right into you, like this, and you open them up, dump everything on the culling board. Same thing again: throw the heads over. While them heads are going down, you're culling, trying to, you know, get everything going, keep going, much as you can.

BRENT LEWIS: What's the benefits of that, compared to hand tonging, to hand tonging?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:44:14] It's easier.

BRENT LEWIS: Yeah, right.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:44:16] On your -- I mean, you're --

BRENT LEWIS: Doesn't take it out of you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:44:17] You're working foot pedals. You're standing down inside the boat. You're not standing up on the washboards. You're working foot -- more or less you're culling most of the time, running the boat. It's a lot different than getting a pair of hand tongs... Believe me, I hand tonged for 30 years, 25, 20-some years. The hydraulic way, to me, is -- the older you get, that's the way to do it.

BRENT LEWIS: Right, because it doesn't take so much out of you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:44:39] Yeah, yeah. I mean, you feel -- you feel like when you got off the boat in the morning -- get on the boat in the morning, you feel like that most times you get off now, other than the rod in the truck.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. But the hand -- by hand tonging, that's a harder day.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:44:56] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: You feel it more.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:44:58] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you feel it in your arms and shoulders and stuff like that. Believe me, I

tonged before we had pullers and everything, and it's just -- it's harder on you.

BRENT LEWIS: Anybody do that now? Like, not use pullers and not use --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:12] No, most everybody's got pullers.

BRENT LEWIS: Even trotlining changed a little bit, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:16] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: You don't dip.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:18] Yeah, they got --

BRENT LEWIS: A lot of those guys aren't dipping.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:19] Yeah, lot of... I got a dipper on -- well, I got dip nets in the roller, and then I have a dipper, too.

BRENT LEWIS: So how's that work, the new kind of way that they set these dippers up?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:28] It's more efficient. I mean, you can crab more line. You get off your line, you can go back the other and jump right on it again. You stand there, steer the boat. You don't have to dip every crab.

BRENT LEWIS: So the line runs into a basket?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:40] Lines run to... No, it's a cage here, and it's got, like, a scoop roller on top of the cage. The line runs through that with the snoods, where the crabs go down in the net, in the bag, in the scoop, in the dipper,

and the line goes right on over top of the roller back overboard.

BRENT LEWIS: So less chance of losing --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:56] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- crabs --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:57] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- that, you know, those are not --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:45:58] And that dipper pretty much catches every one of them: little ones, big ones, everything.

BRENT LEWIS: What's a good day now?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:05] Four or five.

BRENT LEWIS: Four or five bushels a good day.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:06] Yeah, uh-huh.

BRENT LEWIS: What about oystering? What's a good day out there oystering?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:11] Well, here, lately, mostly all the watermen been catching the limit pretty much.

BRENT LEWIS: What is limit now?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:15] Twenty-four for diving and hand tonging, and 20 bushel for dredging.

BRENT LEWIS: And how do you get licensed?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:25] You have to have -- mostly have to had them for a while. I don't think you can go buy one. The average person couldn't go buy one, and now some of the

older fellows have sold their license to other guys, like that.

BRENT LEWIS: What do they get for a license?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:40] It all depends on what you have on your license. A TFL [Tidal Fish License] license with rockfish allocation, where you can catch rockfish and stuff like that in the wintertime, I've seen them go as high as \$20,000.

BRENT LEWIS: No kidding.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:46:52] But just a regular crab license, LCC [Limited Crab Catcher] license, which you're allowed to catch crabs, catch oysters, they're, like, 5,000.

BRENT LEWIS: But that's another investment that the crabber --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:47:01] Yeah. Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- has to...

JOEY HORNEY: [00:47:03] Yeah, and it cost you -- it cost me just about a thousand dollars every year to keep my license.

BRENT LEWIS: So a lot of times the first -- I would imagine first few weeks sometimes is just --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:47:13] Getting your money back, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- getting your money back into your investment.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:47:16] That's like, say, in between oystering, most people are hauling their boats up, getting

them railways for crabbing. You have your license fee and all that, which the license fee comes due in October, I think, which you have to do it every October. But most people in the spring are getting the boats ready, cost them 700 to 1,500 dollars to get the boats railwayed and painted and coppered, zinced, barring any breakdowns or any work you have to the wood or anything. But it's -- you've got to keep -- you've got to keep doing something, keep working, keep money coming in.

BRENT LEWIS: And you also have to be a bit of a jack of all trades, too, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:47:54] A MacGyver, I call it. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: MacGyver. To be able to jury-rig [both speaking-unclear].

JOEY HORNEY: [00:47:58] Yeah, you've got to know how -- yeah, you've got to have a little mechanic-ism into you, be able to be a mechanic.

BRENT LEWIS: Carpentry.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:48:03] Yeah. I mean, that's what helps me out a lot. I -- you know, I've done it enough, I know you have to know about the hydraulics, about the working on motors and stuff, I mean, taking transmissions out and putting other ones back in, stuff like that.

BRENT LEWIS: The equipment's changed --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:48:18] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- since you've started, but you still have to have those basic skills, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:48:23] Yes, you do. You -- I mean, you got to -- you got to know a little bit about motors and stuff.

BRENT LEWIS: And you've got to be able to function without those -- the benefit of, maybe, the fish finders and the --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:48:34] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- the --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:48:36] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- GPS and all that, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:48:38] Yeah, but that's -- that makes it so nice anymore. I mean, like, with my GPS, like, a chart plotter, I got it on track, so everywhere I go, that boat goes, it leaves a track. And if I crab in one spot, that track will just get real big all day long. When I leave there, I follow that track right on back where I came there that morning, and if I want to go back that same place, I go right back to that track, which makes it nice.

BRENT LEWIS: Now, how in the old days would you find that --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:04] Old days, old days you'd -- most of the time you'd leave a buoy there, you get some good landmarks in the dark from lights, or something like that,

and know by your depth finder how deep you are. It's changed a lot.

BRENT LEWIS: So it was more skill in that --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:16] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- in that way.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:18] Yeah. Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Easier now.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:21] Easier now. Anybody can read a chart plotter. Chart plotters, they show you the edges on the depth of the water and all that.

BRENT LEWIS: But that doesn't necessarily make you good at what you do.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:29] No. No.

BRENT LEWIS: What kind of skills does a crabber need? Like, what do you have to have -- what kind of personality do you have to have to be a waterman, do you think?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:42] Can't be lazy, I think. You want to -- you got to fit in with people, be able to talk to people. I mean, you deal with people every day, all day long, really.

BRENT LEWIS: Which a lot of people would think -- you know, that's contrary to what you might think. You think --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:49:58] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- the guys are loners --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:00] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- and independent out there, but you don't --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:01] Yeah, I mean, watermen are talking every day. Believe me, we're worse than women. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: A little gossipy.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:07] Yeah, little gossipy. Yeah, little gossipy. Yeah, exactly.

BRENT LEWIS: That's funny, though, man, because, you know, people do have these preconceived notions of what you guys are --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:19] Yeah, that we're -- that we're loners.

BRENT LEWIS: That you're loners, and that's not really the truth.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:23] Yeah, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: So that brings me to that kind of question, is: what don't people understand about your job? Do you think that the general community sees watermen in a certain way?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:36] I think so. I mean, I probably shouldn't say, but I think they consider us a lower-class person, or something like that. I mean, just some of the feelings I get talking to different people and stuff.

BRENT LEWIS: Because of the type of work?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:50:50] Yeah, type of work we do, or... And most of them, most of them, hearing from the stuff that's

put on the news, if you get somebody that goes... and goes on a sanctuary, well, all watermen are like that guy.

BRENT LEWIS: We're poachers or something like that.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:51:02] Not all watermen -- not all watermen are poachers. Like I said, you got a bad apple in every basket most time, but most of your watermen would give you the shirt off your back if you need it, lend you money. I've lent kids money, people money before. Pay me back when you get crabbing, making good money. People have done that for me. I borrowed a transmission from a guy one time. I said, "Buddy, I can't get straight with you for" -- this was a long time ago -- "I can't get straight with you for a couple weeks." "Go ahead and go to work, make some money, pay me when you get the money." Things like that mean a lot.

BRENT LEWIS: It's kind of almost old-fashioned --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:51:36] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- the way that you guys work together.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:51:40] Yeah, and it's still like that to a point.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. Because most of the people, I imagine, in the business have a traditional connection to it, some way or the other --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:51:50] Yeah, oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- right? Like, the guys that you know from
Tilghman, your dad probably knew their --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:51:56] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: There are connections there.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:51:58] Oh, yeah. Yeah, and, I mean, you got
families that been on the -- Tilghman Island, been on the
water for -- Wilsons and the Lowerys and the Lednams. All
them guys are born and raised. Their families have been
watermen for 40, 50 years, and they're all good people.

BRENT LEWIS: That's awesome, man. I -- what do you think the
future of the industry is? Is -- like, what do you see for
the future?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:52:23] People are going to always want crabs,
so [laughs] where they're going to get them from is
something, you know. I imagine it'll still be crabbers,
and they'll still get crabs out of South Louisiana, places
like that, because the demand of crabs, believe me, is
unbelievable around this area. I mean, I say Kent Narrows
is a resort area now, because of all the businesses that
are opening up: the Crab Deck, the Jetty, Big Al's, all
the places that sell seafood, sell crabs, all your crab,
seafood houses. I mean, it's just such a demand for crabs
anymore.

BRENT LEWIS: People will -- because it's part of summer --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:01] Yeah, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- to --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:02] Set --

BRENT LEWIS: -- the tourists and the local people.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:04] Yeah, set out on their porch on
Saturday or Sunday afternoon, eat crabs, drink a beer.

BRENT LEWIS: So there always, you think, is going to be a
demand for them.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:11] Oh, I think so.

BRENT LEWIS: Will our industry be able to meet that demand?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:18] I think so.

BRENT LEWIS: Yeah?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:19] I mean, I don't see no problem. It's
just certain times of year. I mean, that's why the local
guys around here get crabs from Louisiana. In the
wintertime, they get -- they get crabs from Louisiana,
because they can crab down there 10, 11 months out of a
year, and we can only do it, like, six, because of the
weather and other seasons coming in.

BRENT LEWIS: Can most people tell the difference between a
Maryland crab and a Louisiana crab?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:40] Some can, some can't. I can. I've
tried them before. I --

BRENT LEWIS: What's the difference?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:45] To me, a Louisiana crab's a little -- coarse, it might've been the way it was cooked, but it's a little bit chewier, I think. Good comparison, but it's a little bit chewier than a Maryland crab.

BRENT LEWIS: Not as fall apart --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:53:58] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- as the white crabmeat from up here.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:00] Yeah. Yeah. I'll tell you something that I really liked that I tried about a year or so ago is the snakehead.

BRENT LEWIS: Oh, yeah?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:08] Have you ever tried that?

BRENT LEWIS: I haven't.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:10] We had them at our watermen's meeting. We had some guys from Dorchester County bring us up 200 pounds, filleted up, and we cooked them in a fryer, and we put them on a big tray at the crab feast, and set people, you know, free. And they were eating them, eating them till they found out what they were, [laughs] and they stopped eating them.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you think there's a market for snake head?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:30] Shit. Oh, yeah. And that's good meat. It tastes like a rockfish fillet to me.

BRENT LEWIS: No kidding.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:34] Yeah, white meat. Tall, white meat, and we had them in, like, little chicken nuggets. They were snake head nuggets.

BRENT LEWIS: That's amazing, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:44] And, shit, I ate them.

BRENT LEWIS: So you have to adapt, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:46] Yeah. Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Like, if that's what is available, somebody's going to market it.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:54:50] Yeah, and they got that, and they got the blue cats now they're trying to -- yeah, they're evasives, they -- bottom feeders. They want them -- we want them caught up.

BRENT LEWIS: And when we were young, soft-shell clams --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:04] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- I mean, I kind of remember that not -- people not eating them.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:07] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: They were mainly bait, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:09] Yeah. Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: And then there was a movement toward --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:12] Towards that. I mean, soft-shall white clams in Maryland, we got -- we got our start,

really, from Massachusetts, Maine, because that's -- when school's out, they eat a lot of soft-shell clams up there.

BRENT LEWIS: Which has kind of happened a lot historically --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:26] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: -- where they overfish their market --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:29] Their places.

BRENT LEWIS: -- and they end up down here.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:30] And they import them to the --

BRENT LEWIS: Import, and they open up --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:33] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Because, again, I remember, like, Carnabucci's --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:35] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- and United Shellfish. Like, that was a real -

-

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:38] Yeah, that was a big thing, but the white clam business was a big business for them.

BRENT LEWIS: Shipping them to New England.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:44] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Did you ever get involved with, like, any of those -- I know that some of the watermen in the past have tried to band together and sell up in New England and that kind of --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:55] Nah.

BRENT LEWIS: You never got into that, yeah.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:55] I never did. I know a couple guys who have, but I never did.

BRENT LEWIS: You stayed away from it, maybe. [laughs]

JOEY HORNEY: [00:55:59] Yeah, I stayed away from that. I never really clammed before.

BRENT LEWIS: Right.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:03] I mean, I've been on boats --

BRENT LEWIS: That's right.

JOEY HORNEY: -- been on boats with them and all, and I've picked for them in the summertime a little bit, but I never have --

BRENT LEWIS: That never appealed to you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:10] No.

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

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:15] I wouldn't want to change it for nothing.

BRENT LEWIS: What's been great about it, Joe?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:20] My own boss. [laughs] I mean, it's -- here, lately, I mean, I've been going through a little spell with prostate cancer, but if you don't feel like going to work, you don't go to work.

BRENT LEWIS: Right.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:30] But, I mean, I -- that's one thing that I always -- when I go to bed at night, I can't wait to get up the next day to go crabbing. That's how much I love it.

BRENT LEWIS: Not everybody can say that about their job, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:43] And that's how much, I mean, I love doing it. It's one job that I can't wait to get to next day.

BRENT LEWIS: Have you -- and you've never had any other kind of work, outside of working on the water, that you felt that way about.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:54] No, no.

BRENT LEWIS: But you have done other things.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:56:56] Oh, yeah, I've done carpenter work with both my sons before, and --

BRENT LEWIS: Right, but that doesn't have that same feeling.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:57:03] Nah. I don't like somebody looking over my shoulder, watching, making sure I'm working.
[laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: And it's beautiful out there, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:57:08] Oh, yeah. I mean, it -- and a lot -- I tell a lot of people, a lot of things I take for granted. I've taken some people out on a boat with me, crabbing on a weekend or something. They want to go out and just see how

it's done, and they bring their camera, and I see the sunrise every day, I take it for granted, but a lot of people don't out on a boat like that, and, I mean, I -- like I say, I take it for granted, but -- because I've seen it so many times. I mean, I see ones that'll catch my eye every once in a while, cloudy, and the orange of the sky, but --

BRENT LEWIS: You don't think of that until someone points it out to you.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:57:39] Yeah, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: That's amazing, man. It seems to me that one of the things that appeals the most to everybody we talk to is that sense of independence that you get out there.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:57:54] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: You find that that's a big part of your enjoyment of it.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:00] Yeah, I really -- I like being my own boss, and I'm too old and too stubborn, too hardheaded now, I couldn't work for somebody.

BRENT LEWIS: And you've been doing it, like --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:10] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- 50 years now, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:12] Yeah, yeah. Fifty-three.

BRENT LEWIS: It's really amazing, man. Do you have any superstitions out on the water?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:21] No.

BRENT LEWIS: No? You don't believe in not having bananas on the boat, or --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:24] No.

BRENT LEWIS: -- painting your bottom blue, or anything?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:26] Mine's blue right now. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: It never brought you bad luck.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:29] No, my bottom's blue right now.

That's what everybody tells me. "You don't -- you don't mind having your bottom be painted blue?" I said, "No, I like blue."

BRENT LEWIS: Older people, older guys --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:35] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- say that's a thing, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:36] Yeah. And a lot of people, they -- lightning like that, they won't be out if it's lightning.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you know of any other, like, old kind of superstitions that guys won't...? No bananas, right? I've heard that.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:50] No bananas. Northeast wind.

BRENT LEWIS: What's that?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:52] My old man -- my old man, anytime the wind blows out the northeast, my old man used to say, "A mad dog won't even bite you on a northeast wind."

BRENT LEWIS: So he wouldn't even go -- bother going out.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:58:59] You wouldn't catch no crabs. He'd never catch no crabs on a northeaster.

BRENT LEWIS: You find that to be true?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:59:04] A lot of times, but if you get three or four days of it, then you can -- you can -- you'll go.

BRENT LEWIS: Right, because you've got to.

JOEY HORNEY: [00:59:12] Yeah, you've got to go, but a lot of - - that's an old saying.

BRENT LEWIS: You got kind of any other of those come to mind?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:59:18] Can't think of any right off the head here. You done caught me now. I can't think of none.

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs] And did you ever see anything out there that you couldn't explain? Anything weird or odd or --

JOEY HORNEY: [00:59:31] Yeah, I've seen water spouts. I've seen dolphins, porpoises right beside the boat when I'm crabbing.

BRENT LEWIS: What do you think about the dolphin situation, that there are so many of them off the Bay now?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:59:42] I think the salinity of the water is so much better than it used to be, everything's moving

further south -- I mean, further north. I mean, they have them clear up the Bay, crab potters up the Bay, seeing them up the Bay.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that a good sign?

JOEY HORNEY: [00:59:55] That shows that the water's -- the quality of the water's good.

BRENT LEWIS: But you also have to compete with them --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:01] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- because they eat a lot, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:02] Yeah, they'll -- I tell you, I'll see them... One story, I seen them -- they run the -- they run the fish ashore, and that's what they're doing. They're going there, feeding.

BRENT LEWIS: Like in the Chester River.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:12] Yeah. They run them right to the shore.

BRENT LEWIS: So they're competing with --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:16] Yeah, other things.

BRENT LEWIS: -- humans --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:18] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- for that fish, too.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:19] Yeah, that. You got -- all the fish eat them, the hard edge, the -- shit -- snake heads. They're all bottom feeders. They eat the soft crabs.

There's not the grasses we used to have for the crab to go ashore and shed until they get hard to come out of the grasses. They just go ashore, and they shed their shells, the soft crabs. Well, fish come right along and eat them.

BRENT LEWIS: So soft crabs -- is there a lack of soft crabs?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:49] Around this area, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Around this area.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:50] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Which drives the price up --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:52] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- of course. Now, do those kind of bottom feeders eat spat, oyster spat, that kind of stuff?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:00:57] No, not really. The hard -- the shell part, but they'll eat soft crabs, things like that. But --

BRENT LEWIS: So even though it's a good sign, salinity-wise, it's also --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:05] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- it brings pressures that you didn't --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:07] Yeah, pressures that we never used to have before.

BRENT LEWIS: -- used to have before.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:10] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: That's the same thing as, like, seeing pelicans up here.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:12] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: I don't ever remember seeing them as kids.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:15] Back five, six years ago is when we started seeing them around here, ten years.

BRENT LEWIS: And what do you think, they just follow, too?
They --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:20] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- they follow the food source?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:21] I mean, you see -- you see porpoises and stuff like that up the -- up -- far as up here and all. You see, what, the manatees in the Bay. They've been up here on the -- pushed up by the bow of a boat up this way, and different things like that, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Do you think that the positive circumstances with the salinity in the water is because people have made an active effort to try to fix things, or does -- is it just kind of a natural --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:01:47] I think it's -- lot of it is natural, global warming. The waters are warming, don't get as cold in the wintertime as they used to. I mean, the year I got married, 1976, that's when the Chesapeake Bay froze over, and we didn't work for nine weeks. I got married on a Friday night. I had 1,300 dollars in the bank, baby on the way. [laughs] And I was working with my father and my

uncle, oystering, and it froze up that weekend. We didn't work for nine weeks.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. That's a hell of a way to start a marriage.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:02:17] And that's what I told my father. I said -- I told him what my rent was, and my electric bill was \$4.75. He said, "You'll be all right." [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: So when you're out there every day, it's hard not to acknowledge that there are environmental changes, right?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:02:31] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Like, you've seen it in your lifetime.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:02:32] Yes. Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: You don't know what -- we don't know -- you know, we're not scientists, we don't know necessarily what causes it, but there's no doubt --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:02:39] Yeah, no doubt --

BRENT LEWIS: -- there's been change.

JOEY HORNEY: -- [01:02:40] there's big changes. I mean, the tides run higher than they used to. I mean, I have a brother-in-law, ex-brother-in-law, puts in piers. Every pier he puts in now, he puts it up a foot higher than the old ones because of that.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:02:55] And sometimes they're not high enough, so that tells you something right there.

BRENT LEWIS: Yeah, absolutely, because a pier has, what, maybe a 40-year lifespan --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:01] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- something like that.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:02] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: So that's looking ahead --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:05] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- to --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:06] He puts them at least a foot higher than they used to be.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to touch on, that, you know, you feel like you'd like to say about your career, or, you know, the future of the industry or anything? Anything come to mind that we haven't talked about?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:28] I just wouldn't change a thing for what I've done, far as working on the water. I mean, I've met some great people, got some good friends, and friends that are friends for life. I mean, they'd do anything for me, I'd do anything for them. It's a family. So...

BRENT LEWIS: It's been a good career?

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:46] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: You can't imagine yourself doing anything else.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:03:49] No, I couldn't.

BRENT LEWIS: I can't imagine you doing anything else. I mean, you know, when I talk to you guys, it's obvious how much you love what you do. Not everybody gets that --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:00] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- in this world.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:03] Yeah, like I say, it's the job that when I go to bed at night, I can't wait to get up and do it the next day. I mean, I don't even -- my alarm's set, but I -- most of the time I'm awake before the alarm goes off.

BRENT LEWIS: Excited to get out there.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:13] Ready to go, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: I remember sometimes those late, late nights when I was out, when the bars closed, and I'd see you guys go out to work, [laughter] and we'd be coming in, they'd be going out. And it always [unclear].

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:29] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: Sometimes Keith would be there.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:31] Yeah, oh, sure, like I say, Keith, I guarantee Keith was right in the midst of it.

BRENT LEWIS: Keith would get out of Groman's truck and get in yours and go to work --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:38] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: -- after having been out all night.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:39] Yeah, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: And Keith passed away a few years ago.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:42] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: We should mention that.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:43] Yeah, he died 13 years ago. Don't seem like it's been that long.

BRENT LEWIS: It does not seem like it's been --

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:49] Four days before his 50th birthday.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:52] He'd be 63 right now. He's two years younger than me.

BRENT LEWIS: And like you said, like watermen in general, but Keith was one of those guys who would give you the shirt off his back.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:04:59] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Like I say --

BRENT LEWIS: And told me some of the funniest stories I've ever heard in my life.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:05:04] You know, he died, we had a thing at the Moose for him, and that was one of the biggest things I ever seen.

BRENT LEWIS: People loved your brother, man.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:05:11] I guarantee you it was 300 people there, probably. Party -- he just wanted them to party, have a good time. That's what they did.

BRENT LEWIS: He was a special guy, man. Y'all -- all of you guys are.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:05:19] Yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: And I appreciate you taking time out of your day to come and do this for us.

JOEY HORNEY: [01:05:22] It's no problem. I appreciate it.

BRENT LEWIS: It'll be for -- you know, the Maritime Museum is going to have this stuff forever, man, and it's for future historians, and, you know, the opportunity to get this before it disappears is a big part of why we're doing it.

END OF AUDIO FILE