

OH 499 Joey Sadler

BRENT LEWIS: My name is Brent Lewis. Today is June 27, 2023, and I'm speaking with Captain Joey Sadler for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Watermen Story Swap Oral History Project. Captain Joey, first of all, do I have your permission to record?

JOEY SADLER: [00:00:18] Yes, sir, you do.

BRENT LEWIS: And will you tell me your date of birth and where you're from?

JOEY SADLER: [00:00:24] Captain Joey Sadler, 11/1/57. I'm from Stevensville, Maryland, here. Grew up right here in town. I lived on Kent Island most of my life until I got married. Now I live here and still in Queen Anne's County, working on the water every day.

BRENT LEWIS: Were you born on Kent Island?

JOEY SADLER: [00:00:42] No. I was born in Easton, but my father and my grandfather were both born here on the island.

BRENT LEWIS: So who was in your immediate family?

JOEY SADLER: [00:00:51] We had, well, my father and an uncle. They were here on the island, and they both worked on the water...

BRENT LEWIS: They both worked...

JOEY SADLER: [00:00:59] ...on my father's side. And my grandfather on my mom's side also worked on the water here.

BRENT LEWIS: What was your dad's name?

JOEY SADLER: [00:01:08] Captain Warren Sadler was my father's name.

BRENT LEWIS: And what was your mom's name, including her maiden name?

JOEY SADLER: [00:01:15] Nancy Louise Lewis. She was a Lewis.

BRENT LEWIS: And do you have any siblings?

JOEY SADLER: [00:01:21] Have one brother. He worked on the water for a while, and then he just got off and took a land job.

BRENT LEWIS: So if it includes working on the water or not, kind of want to go even back a little further. What was your childhood like, and what are some of your oldest memories?

JOEY SADLER: [00:01:40] Oh, I had a great childhood here. I mean, we were... Everybody was poor, but nobody acted like it because, you know, we were surrounded here on Kent Island. It was a beautiful place, and we were always swimming and hunting and fishing. And grew... I grew up here on the island, and it was about 20 other boys right here in Stevensville all around our same age, so it was

always a baseball or football game going on. Great time to be alive here [both speaking-unclear].

BRENT LEWIS: Did you have a lot of freedom, or were your parents pretty strict?

JOEY SADLER: [00:02:08] Nah. We could... You could kind of do what you wanted to do. I mean, parents always knew that we were always watching out for all... Everybody else, and we were always safe, but yeah, we could go and do what we want to do pretty much.

BRENT LEWIS: What was Kent Island and Stevensville in particular like?

JOEY SADLER: [00:02:27] Everybody knew everybody else, so you couldn't really do anything wrong because somebody would recognize you and tell your parents there. But so... we always had a great childhood growing up. May have done some mischievous things but never destructive.

BRENT LEWIS: I want to ask you about... You had mentioned earlier some of the businesses here in Stevensville. What businesses do you remember?

JOEY SADLER: [00:02:53] Well, here on the corner, you had Franham's grocery store, where we would always take Coke bottles in and for three cents apiece, and you could always come out with a bag full of candy if you took four, five Coke bottles in there. Ms. Franham, she didn't like that

because we'd get one of these and three of them and two of them and...but we'd always come in there for the candy. Then you had a bank right here, and the post office was on the corner. Where we lived at we never had mailboxes. We would just come up here to the post office every day and pick up the mail for our parents.

BRENT LEWIS: Grollman's store?

JOEY SADLER: [00:03:27] Yeah, Grollman's store, which was a kind of... You could buy anything in there from shotgun shells or shotguns to boots to muskrat traps to oyster tongs, whatever you wanted in there. And then right around the corner you had Bill Denny's garage, where you could buy anything for your car, boat parts, kind of a catch-all store there. I grew up... I had charge accounts on both of them since I was 12 years old. I could just walk in, and they'd pull their little file cabinet out and thumb down until they hit my name and pull the little card out, and I could charge anything I wanted to. And because of the family name of Sadler, they knew that I would pay my bills there through my parents.

BRENT LEWIS: What kind of things would you purchase there?

JOEY SADLER: [00:04:14] Parts for my minibike or parts for my boat. I had my own boat when I was 12. I started working on the water with my father when I was eight. I really

wanted to start when I was seven, but my mom wouldn't let me go with him until I finished intermediate swimming lessons and passed them, and then she would let me go with him. But... So I didn't start until I was eight, fishing on a charter boat with my father.

BRENT LEWIS: A lot of those older guys actually didn't know how to swim. I've talked to some of them in the past who were watermen all their lives and never knew how to swim.

JOEY SADLER: [00:04:44] That's my mom, she wouldn't let me go until I passed intermediate swimming. So then I started with my father when I was eight, and I said I worked my way up and had my own crab boat when I was 12.

BRENT LEWIS: So that brings us to that, then. I know that you're a fifth-generation waterman...

JOEY SADLER: [00:05:01] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: ...a second-generation...

JOEY SADLER: [00:05:03] Charter.

BRENT LEWIS: ...charter boat captain.

JOEY SADLER: [00:05:05] Yes, correct.

BRENT LEWIS: So tell me a little bit about your ancestors, those that you might not have known first.

JOEY SADLER: [00:05:14] Going back to my great grandfather Sadler, he was working here on the water, and then my grandfather Sadler worked here on the water with him , and

he was born at Cox's Neck down at Old Point. He's told me stories. When I was young, I remember he said that Bodkin Island was so big at that time when that was before motors on boats. They either had to row out to the oyster grounds, or they had to sail. And he said when they went through Bodkin there that they had to pull the oars in to get through the island there because it was so big at that time, which is almost completely washed away now.

BRENT LEWIS: It was so...also because it was so big, it was that much closer to the mainland of Kent Island.

JOEY SADLER: [00:05:53] Correct.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. So what were your grandfather's names again? Will you tell me those?

JOEY SADLER: [00:06:00] My great grandfather was Joseph Warren. My grandfather was Reverdy, and then my father's name was Joseph Warren.

BRENT LEWIS: And did you get to know both of your grandfathers?

JOEY SADLER: [00:06:15] No, just one. Well, I did on my mother's side too, so I had two grandfathers there that I knew.

BRENT LEWIS: That you knew. Both of them were watermen.

JOEY SADLER: [00:06:24] Yes. And, actually, my grandfather Lewis, he actually worked with me several years oystering.

BRENT LEWIS: That's awesome.

JOEY SADLER: [both speaking-unclear]

BRENT LEWIS: What was his full name?

JOEY SADLER: [00:06:30] Rufus. Rufus Lewis.

BRENT LEWIS: Rufus.

JOEY SADLER: [00:06:31] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: Where... Did he live on Kent Island?

JOEY SADLER: [00:06:34] He grew up on Kent Island also. Yes, sir. He went in the navy, and he came out, and he was full-time waterman. And like everybody else, you were waterman, you were carpenter. You did... He did some carpenter jobs and a part-time farmer, you know, because it's... That's all that was here back in that time was you were farming or you were a waterman.

BRENT LEWIS: So both your grandfathers, Lewis and Sadler, were both watermen.

JOEY SADLER: [00:07:01] Yes, yes.

BRENT LEWIS: And you got to... You were able to know both of those men.

JOEY SADLER: [00:07:05] Yes, I did.

BRENT LEWIS: What kind of influence did those grandfathers of yours have on your life, do you think?

JOEY SADLER: [00:07:14] Kind of taught me right from wrong on some things and just made sure that... I always kind of

looked up to them, and they both kind of looked up to me, too, because I was the first grandchild on both... From both their sides there.

BRENT LEWIS: What were their personalities like? What were those... What kind of men were they?

JOEY SADLER: [00:07:35] [laughs] They were both eastern shoremen. One grandfather, he always had a...had tended gardens and said was... You sustained yourself. You didn't go to the store and buy everything you need. You had... You raised hogs and cows and chickens and pigs, and he always had big gardens, and they always did a lot of canning. My mom, she never worked. I mean, she worked her butt off, but she never had a paying job. She stayed home and took care of us boys, and we always had a big garden, and we always ate. We always ate...we always ate good.

BRENT LEWIS: Never went hungry.

JOEY SADLER: [00:08:11] Never went hungry.

BRENT LEWIS: And the independence that working on the water gives you and those kind of skills, obviously, because of your career, you followed up that. But do you also...do you garden and keep a vegetable garden and all those kind of things?

JOEY SADLER: [00:08:29] I used to but not anymore. It's just time constraints you know, running charter all the time.

It just doesn't leave a lot of time to tend a garden at the house there.

BRENT LEWIS: Those are disappearing skills just like a lot of the careers working on the water in the past. So in other words, people don't know how to make hand tongs and those kind of...

JOEY SADLER: [00:08:51] Correct.

BRENT LEWIS: ...things, right?

JOEY SADLER: [00:08:52] Correct. One of our... I'd say he was a mentor here in town of Stevensville was Bobby Aaron, and yeah, he was a full-time waterman, but he also had a shop right up here in Stevensville. And he did a lot of welding and working. He'd fix people's equipment that couldn't fix it themselves. You know, I kind of picked up on my own stuff to make my own stuff, including tongs and... But his shop was kind of the local hangout. And us boys, you know, running around Stevensville here in the wintertime, that would be a stop-off because in the evening we would go in there, and he had a big wood stove going. And many of the other watermen would stop in and have a few adult beverages in the evening as things went on there and... But we always stopped in there to get warm because we'd go over to the stove and warm up a little bit while we were walking around town in the wintertime here. But we'd

go in there also, listen to the stories of all the watermen, and they'd be talking about who had the...who had the fastest boat and who could catch the most oysters or most crabs or, you know, yeah stories, local stories, I guess, about the watermen...

BRENT LEWIS: Who do you remember? What watermen do you remember being in there?

JOEY SADLER: [00:10:04] Oh, it was everybody that was around here on Kent Island that was always stopping by in there: my uncle Reverdy Junior Sadler, Bobby Larry. I could... The Colemans, Joe and Barry Coleman. I could keep going on and on here and...

BRENT LEWIS: Do any stories pop in your mind that you remember hearing as a kid in that setting?

JOEY SADLER: [00:10:26] No. They were just kind of stories about bragging I said, who had the fastest boat and who could catch the most oysters and who could shoot the most geese or who could shoot...who could be the best shot shooting ducks, and you had stories like that.

BRENT LEWIS: When... And that shop was along almost the historical tradition of a blacksmith shop.

JOEY SADLER: [00:10:47] Sure. Yes, it was, like I said. And Bobby, he was one of them that could do anything. So when

somebody had problems with their motor or whatever, he was always, you know, willing to jump in and help them with it.

BRENT LEWIS: And teach... Was he a teacher? Would...could he teach a young guy like you things?

JOEY SADLER: [00:11:05] Showed... He'd show everybody a lot of things, you know, that...

BRENT LEWIS: Right.

JOEY SADLER: [00:11:08]...they were doing wrong. And we would... One of the questions that you were asking me was did I have any one mentor? Not really one mentor. I just kind of picked and choose, and I would look around and see what other people were doing or other watermen were doing and what was working best for them and kind of picked up on, honed on my own skills there on, you know, how to find the edges because at that time there was no electronics on boats. You know, our method of finding an edge or finding an oyster bar was with a sounding pole, so we'd...you'd go along and find the edge, and you would mark it with a stake or leave a pair of tongs there or... So no electronics...

BRENT LEWIS: Do you feel like those are basic skills...

JOEY SADLER: [00:11:53] Oh, yeah.

BRENT LEWIS: ...that watermen knew back then that maybe haven't translated to modern era?

JOEY SADLER: [00:11:58] Right. That's lost skills now because everybody relies on the electronics and the GPS so much, you know? Yeah, they rely on things too much.

BRENT LEWIS: We'll move into your career a little bit and certainly talk about the skills that you developed as a young waterman that help you now in what you do. What were your first jobs working on the water or off the water? Have you ever worked off the water?

JOEY SADLER: [00:12:28] Just for some gas money, I used to work on a farm, the Pennyworth Farm, which is now part of...between the Ellendale and the Bay Bridge Cove. I worked back there just because I was... The guy...gentleman gave me the hunting rights, Mr. Joe Morris. I'd go get to hunt over there. But also for some gas money, when I was in school there, I would always get in my boat and go crabbing after school or go oystering on weekends. But between the seasons there, if I needed some gas money, I'd go over there and work for a couple evenings a week.

BRENT LEWIS: Again, that's kind of a historical tradition for local watermen to find...

JOEY SADLER: [00:13:06] Right.

BRENT LEWIS: ...something to do on... In the other seasons.

JOEY SADLER: [00:13:08] Right. A lot of the watermen that oystered in the wintertime, you know, between the oystering and the crabbing, some of them would work in boat yards in the springtime painting boats and getting other boats ready for the summertime there. So you had to have something to pick up on. I even worked for Lamont Layton down Cedar Point for a couple years between oyster season and crab season after I got married.

BRENT LEWIS: What were you doing for them?

JOEY SADLER: [00:13:32] Working on boats, you know, picking them up out of the water, blocking them, even painting and coppering the bottoms and just all-around maintenance on the boats.

BRENT LEWIS: Marina type work.

JOEY SADLER: [00:13:43] Marina type stuff, yes, until crabbing kicked off, and then we would say adios and I'd go crabbing. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: You started working on the water at a very early age.

JOEY SADLER: [00:13:54] Started with my father on his charter boat, which was called the *Lady*. And then when he had his other boat built, it was called the *Island Lady*, which he named after my mom because he said she was his island lady, so... But, yes, I started with him when I was eight years

old. I would oyster in the wintertime with him. And when I turned 12, I'd saved up some money, and dad helped me get my first crab boat.

BRENT LEWIS: On the fishing parties, what would an eight-year-old kid do?

JOEY SADLER: [00:14:25] I was baiting hooks, taking off fish. At that time, we were using manos, soft-shell clams, to fish with a lot of times. So one of my chores was to shuck the clams because we were using the... You had to take them out of the shell to use them for the bait.

BRENT LEWIS: That was before they really were thought of much of as a dinner item locally. People used...

JOEY SADLER: [00:14:48] Used them...

BRENT LEWIS: ...soft shells for bait.

JOEY SADLER: [00:14:49] Soft shells for bait, that was a big thing. Boats were catching 30, 40, 50 bushel of clams a day, getting two, three, four, or five dollars a bushel, which that's something that's almost become extinct here. I mean, they're catching some. They're called soft-shell clams. They're catching a few of them but not in the quantity that they used to be in the Bay.

BRENT LEWIS: Mm-hmm. And on the...on the oyster boat, what does a kid do?

JOEY SADLER: [00:15:18] My main thing was to get muddy.

[laughs] As my father was tonging, you know, the tongs are coming up in front of you there, and you were culling. So I'm constantly digging through the oysters and sorting them out, throwing the small ones back, throwing the oysters into the boat. But sometimes you hit one on the wrong way, and you would be covered up with mud.

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs] And that's the definition of a culler's job, basically, right?

JOEY SADLER: [00:15:45] [laughs] Yes, I'd be standing at a culling board, culling oysters.

BRENT LEWIS: How much you make when... How much did you get paid when...

JOEY SADLER: [00:15:50] When I first started with my father, I was getting a dollar a day for oystering. And when I was fishing with him, I liked it because I would get five dollars a day then because most of the time the charter was five or six people, and most of the time they would give me a dollar apiece. So if it was six people, I'd get six dollars. You know, five people, I'd get five dollars. So I liked fishing. And plus, they brought food. You know, they would give you sodas, and every now and then somebody would bring a cake or a pie or something. And so that was something that we really didn't get around the house a lot

of times, unless it was a special holiday or it was your birthday. We had... You just had the basics, and we never had the luxuries of having all of the food and the sweets and the treats because we just didn't go to the store like people do now. You know, everything was canned and... Or we always hunted rabbits and ducks and squirrels and deer. And so that was... We lived off the land a lot of times. You know, it's whatever was in season. Oysters and clams and crabs and fish, you know, that's... Whatever come home, that's what we had for dinner.

BRENT LEWIS: And your dad's customers were basically going out to celebrate for the day. They're going fishing, but they're out to picnic and have fun.

JOEY SADLER: [00:17:04] Right. Yeah. Most of the time, it was an office outing or outing with the guys or even a family outing. You know, they'd get together, they'd get on a boat, and...or they would charter a boat for the day to take them fishing on the Bay. And we mainly fished for striped bass, which the local name is called rockfish. That's what we fished for most of the time, but it was whatever was biting the hook at the time: bluefish, trout, mackerel, spot, white perch.

BRENT LEWIS: Seems like he was in that business early on.

JOEY SADLER: [00:17:35] Father started with Captain Lewis Kyer, who was a captain here in Stevensville. There was no marinas on the bayfront. They worked out of the Kent Narrows area. Captain Lewis had a charter boat, and my father started baiting for him when he was 14 years old, and he just kind of worked his way up and earned his captain's license. He started with Captain Lewis, so...

BRENT LEWIS: So as we move toward your entry into that career, what other types of working on the water jobs did you do? Did you oyster? Did you crab?

JOEY SADLER: [00:18:12] Oystered, clammed. I was the past president of the Maryland Clammers Association. At one time, I had five or six boats working for me. We were shipping clams to New England several times a week on large trucks. Hundreds of bushels a week going north to New England.

BRENT LEWIS: When was that? What era?

JOEY SADLER: [00:18:36] Forty years ago, 40 to 30 years ago.

BRENT LEWIS: So you were almost a kid still.

JOEY SADLER: [00:18:43] Yes. I started my own clam boat when I was 17. I worked my way up to my own clam boat and learned how to build...build my own equipment. I even got building equipment for other watermen as a part-time fill in job. You know, on windy days, I would go do welding on

their boats, or I would weld my own equipment up and constantly updating and selling some of pro... my clam rigs. And they call it clam rig, clam dredge. I would build equipment to sell to other captains.

BRENT LEWIS: So it sounds like you were always looking to expand your business and your skill levels.

JOEY SADLER: [00:19:29] I always liked doing something. I had to stay busy. And plus, I like doing everything my own self. I don't like other people doing stuff for me because a lot of times some things that I've seen other people do is subpar, so I like doing my own projects.

BRENT LEWIS: When you oystered, hand tonging?

JOEY SADLER: [00:19:48] Hand tonging, patent tonging. Yes. Last couple years, I've worked part time with a gentleman with the power scraping for oysters.

BRENT LEWIS: [thundering] [unclear] I'll let this one roll by. There you go.

JOEY SADLER: [00:20:05] Good to go?

BRENT LEWIS: I think so, yeah.

JOEY SADLER: [00:20:07] Okay.

BRENT LEWIS: So we were talking about some of the jobs you've done on the water.

JOEY SADLER: [00:20:11] Yes. One of the great things about working on the water is I was able to work with my father

and my grandfather on the boat and on the water. And then as I came along, my wife, she worked, so I was the babysitter for my two children, Joey, my daughter Christy. So I'd carry them on the boat in the morning on a clam boat or crab boat with me, and they grew up on the Bay with me, so... That was something that a lot of people don't have the privilege of is taking their...you know, being with their children like that.

BRENT LEWIS: Sure. And one of the things that we want touch base on is... We mentioned that you had... Was it during the big ice freezing of like '76.

JOEY SADLER: [00:20:58] Seventy-six, '77 the bay froze over. We had... Wife and I had just got married, and we had a son and... So I had rent, boat payment, truck payment, and the entire bay's froze up. My boat did not move out of its slip for two months, so we were doing anything we could do to make some kind of money. So we were actually cutting holes in ice with chainsaws and tonging for oysters through the ice.

BRENT LEWIS: Where at?

JOEY SADLER: [00:21:24] We were in the Kent Narrows area here on Kent Island.

BRENT LEWIS: How deep is it there?

JOEY SADLER: [00:21:29] Where we were at, it was only about six foot, so it wasn't bad. It was just... Marshy Creek was one of the areas that we tonged out of.

BRENT LEWIS: How many guys would be out there with you?

JOEY SADLER: [00:21:38] It was a lot of people out there. Actually, National Geographic helicopter... National Geographic landed their helicopter and come out there and took pictures of everybody, and I made the *National Geographic Magazine* that year.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that the worst freeze-up you remember?

JOEY SADLER: [00:21:54] We've had a couple bad ones, but I think that was the worst one.

BRENT LEWIS: As far as being out of work and...

JOEY SADLER: [00:21:59] As far as being out of work.

BRENT LEWIS: ...and having to figure out how to...

JOEY SADLER: [00:22:03] How to make...how to pay your bills.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. Yeah, because that's always the question, right?

JOEY SADLER: [00:22:10] That's the biggest thing with working on the water. You don't know what's coming around the corner there, and the weather is a big, big issue. You might want to go to work, and you might need to go to work to pay your bills. But if it's blowing and... The rain doesn't usually stop you, but if it's blowing and windy and

icy and you can't work certain areas, yes, that's a big thing.

BRENT LEWIS: And it's somewhat predictable, but the weather you can't control as we're showing here today.

JOEY SADLER: [00:22:37] Right. You can't control the weather. You want to, but you can't.

BRENT LEWIS: So that's something you kind of have to get out of your head pretty early on as a waterman, I would imagine.

JOEY SADLER: [00:22:47] Right. We've all...we've all...Anybody that's worked on the water can tell you how cold they've been and beating ice off their gloves, you know, hand tonging for oysters, and trying to break ice just to go to work.

BRENT LEWIS: You've seen the markets change over your career, moving in... You know, before you become the charter captain, you mentioned you clammed, oystered, whatever the market supported.

JOEY SADLER: [00:23:11] Whatever the market supported, whatever we had to do to pay our bills and whatever we thought was the best resource for us to try to harvest to get us through that time. I had my wife, Karen, sitting there with me, and that's a big thing right there. You know, a lot of women can't understand or... It's...

Working on the water's not a 9:00 to 5:00 job. It's 24/7/365 because there's always something to do, and if you're crabbing or crab potting or running charter, you know, you're constantly... You're moving the boat, you're working on the boat, you're fixing something, repairing something. And it always seems like there's a breakdown during a holiday or during a weekend when they have something planned and [laughs] they want to take you somewhere else or you'd like to take them out. And it's always something going on, so you're... And with the charter business, the weekends is when most of our customers have off from work, and that's when they want to go fishing is on weekends and... So it's a seven-day-a-week job.

BRENT LEWIS: So are you telling me that the family support is really important?

JOEY SADLER: [00:24:17] Yes, yes. Family support is everything. They always say behind every good man is a good woman. That's true, especially on the water.

BRENT LEWIS: And that plays in with your kids as well too.

JOEY SADLER: [00:24:31] Oh, yeah. I said my kids grew up with me on the boat. My wife, I have her on the boat with me occasionally now and always had her with me, you know, crabbing. I have pictures of her on a crab boat with me.

I just had her on charter boat fishing with me last week with one of our charters. Of course, I put her to work. I wouldn't let her sleep, so I made her work.

BRENT LEWIS: It's a family business.

JOEY SADLER: [00:24:50] Family business.

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs] So you got your first boat at 12. How many boats do you think you've owned?

JOEY SADLER: [00:24:58] I think I'm up to six now. And this is... The *Independence* the one that we built in our backyard with help from my wife. This is my last...my last one. I'm pretty sure of that.

BRENT LEWIS: So that brings us to the *Independence* and Captain's Pride Charter.

JOEY SADLER: [00:25:14] Captain's Pride Charter. I...

BRENT LEWIS: That's your business.

JOEY SADLER: [00:25:17] Captain's Pride Charters is a business. Years ago, when we were clamming, I was shipping clams, I was Captain's Pride Seafood. So when I started running charter about 30 years ago, I just kept the name on and just changed it to Captain's Pride Charters.

BRENT LEWIS: Tell us about the *Independence*, 42 foot.

JOEY SADLER: [00:25:34] Forty, 42-foot hull that I purchased from Phil Jones down Hoopers Island. It was a five-year project. Of course, I was fishing at the time in my last

boat, which was named *Christy Anne*, after my daughter and my wife. We put up a hot... Well, like a type hothouse in our backyard, and the boat was in that. So I'd say it was a five-year project, and Ms. Karen there, she was my go-to person. I would be... I would have a question on something, you know, what do you think about the bathroom? What do you think about this cabinet height? What do you think about this? And I would get her to give me her opinion on everything as I was building it, so it was...

BRENT LEWIS: So you bought the hull from Phil Jones down in Hoopers Island.

JOEY SADLER: [00:26:18] Phil Jones, Hoopers Island.

BRENT LEWIS: That's the only thing that you didn't do on the boat?

JOEY SADLER: [00:26:21] That's correct.

BRENT LEWIS: What gave you the idea, "oh, I'm going to design and build my own boat?"

JOEY SADLER: [00:26:29] Well, the last boat that we had was called *Christy Anne*, I said, and it was only actually licensed for up to six passengers. Being in the charter business, a lot of times I would get people that would call me, they'd say, "Look, I own an office. I have 10 employees. I want to do a day's fishing on the Bay," which turns into, like, a team-building effort. And being only

licensed... Being able to carry six passengers on the boat meant that I had to break them down and put them on separate boats. And many times they didn't want that, so us running a charter business, we were turning work away to other captains that were able to carry more than six passengers. So that was the biggest thing by us building the *Independence*. So we're licensed to carry up to 18 people right now.

BRENT LEWIS: What's the first step that you take when you start thinking about that big project?

JOEY SADLER: [00:27:24] As far as building the boat or as far as...

BRENT LEWIS: Yeah.

JOEY SADLER: [00:27:25] ...your license? [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: Whichever.

JOEY SADLER: [00:27:29] Well, the license process was... Of course, had the sea time from working on the water, but you had to go back to school, and I took all my classes right through the Coast Guard on...for...to obtain my captain's license.

BRENT LEWIS: What's the test like?

JOEY SADLER: [00:27:49] It wasn't too easy. Yeah. It was a lot of math questions and a lot of memory questions that you had to memorize, everything from safety, from your

first aid through weather questions, chart plotting, you know, the tides, like I said, the currents, the weather. It was a drawn-out process. And you think you know everything, but you never know everything. You learn every day on the Bay. I don't care what you're doing. If you think you go out there and you know everything... I don't care what kind of business you're in on the water out there. If you think you know everything, it's going to make a fool of you.

BRENT LEWIS: Surprises every day.

JOEY SADLER: [00:28:36] Surprises every day. Every... It's always a new situation that comes up.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that part of what you like about this?

JOEY SADLER: [00:28:41] That's part of it, it's a challenge. But everything from working on the boat to the motor work to working your equipment, everything has its own challenges, and you have to figure out what works best for that time.

BRENT LEWIS: That's really interesting. How long did you say it took from conception to completion?

JOEY SADLER: [00:29:03] We were five years on the *Independence* from putting the hull in the yard, which is just the shell of the boat to splash down in the water. We were five years. One little note on top of that. When we were

[laughs] pulling the boat down the road for the very first time, we got about three miles from the house, and the boat was actually sideswiped by a truck. So that's... So I have one of the few boats around that was actually hit by a truck. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: Before it was even in the water.

JOEY SADLER: [00:29:36] Before it was in the water.

BRENT LEWIS: [unclear]

JOEY SADLER: [00:29:38] I don't know who was the maddest, me or my wife, because she was... I think she was glad to see the boat go, and then she knew how much work we put into it. And then it was just cosmetic, but still a truck had broke its mirror out on the side of the boat.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. What kind of upgrades and innovations on the boat are you most proud of, or you think about, oh, that was a good decision.

JOEY SADLER: [00:30:02] Well, I designed the boat to work on the water but strictly for the charter business. I mean, I can make alterations to it and do different things with it if I have to, but it was designed strictly just for the charter business, the way it was set up with the cabin, with the bathroom, with the cover over the top, the canopy, the curtains on the side, the way the electronics were in

the boat. Everything was set up strictly for the charter business and for the comfort of our customers.

BRENT LEWIS: What do you fish for?

JOEY SADLER: [00:30:37] Striped bass is our main fish here in the bay that most of our... It's a big game fish that most people want to go for. The local name is called rockfish, but striped bass is the proper name. We...

BRENT LEWIS: When is the season?

JOEY SADLER: [00:30:50] Season starts early spring and runs through about mid-December right now at this time. We're always faced with the state changing regulations on us from time to time, but this past year it started May 1st, which run us...and will run us through December 10th.

BRENT LEWIS: And how do you fish for rockfish?

JOEY SADLER: [00:31:18] We start out trolling, which means you're dragging lures through the water. This is our method. There's other ways that are fished for, but this is how we pretty much fish for charter all the time. We're dragging lures in the beginning, and right now in the summertime, we're using either cut bait or live bait to fish for the stripers.

BRENT LEWIS: If you're not fishing for stripers, what do you fish for?

JOEY SADLER: [00:31:43] We have other species of fish around.

As the Bay warms up in the summertime, we get bluefish. We get Spanish mackerel. Some of our customers want to go bottom fishing for the spot and perch, and occasionally sea trout will make it up this way in the summertime. The lower Bay, they get some cobia and some different types of fish down that way. But in this area of the Bay up here around Kent Island, you know, stripers are king. That's what most people fish for. Nowadays, we're starting to hear more about the catfish and...

BRENT LEWIS: Really?

JOEY SADLER: [00:32:14] ...and snakeheads, but we don't get the snakeheads out there in the Bay. The snakehead is another invasive species, and they're pretty much confined to the upper tributaries. You know, we're not seeing them out in the main part of the Bay yet.

BRENT LEWIS: Is that a good thing?

JOEY SADLER: [00:32:31] I don't know. [laughs] It's an invasive species that's yet to be determined.

BRENT LEWIS: Which is kind of a historical problem with the Bay bringing in species.

JOEY SADLER: [00:32:41] Anytime you have something, an invasive species like that, they don't know the...what the detriment is going to be to the natural local resources.

You know, are they eating the larvae? Are they eating the smaller fish? Are they fighting for the same food source? So still it studies being going on, and it's going to be determined in the long run.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you think dolphins are like that?

JOEY SADLER: [00:33:10] We are inundated with dolphins this past several years, and more and more it seems like the dolphins, bottlenose porpoises, whatever you want to call them, you know, they're here for one thing. They're here looking for food, and they're.... Right now, at this time, they're driving our stripers and the food up into these tributaries in the shallow water of the bay, just trying to avoid them. You know, years ago, we never fished, you know, where we're fishing. Now we're clean up in these rivers and tributaries, trying to catch our stripers. You know, years ago, it would be out in the open water of the Bay on channel edges and stuff like that, but the dolphin have taken over. Like I said, they're here for...looking for food. It's Mother Nature, and it's nothing that we can do about it.

BRENT LEWIS: So their presence really has changed the way you do your job.

JOEY SADLER: [00:34:00] Yes, greatly. As far as for the fishing, yes.

BRENT LEWIS: And then invasive species... Back in the day, oystering was affected by...

JOEY SADLER: [00:34:12] MSX and dermo, which pretty much wiped them out for a few years there. But the oysters have made a strong comeback, and over the past several years have come back in some pretty good numbers. And, like, in the last 30 years... The last three seasons have been some of the best ones on...in the last 30 years on record here.

BRENT LEWIS: What do you account for that rebound?

JOEY SADLER: [00:34:34] Water quality, I think, is one of them, and the boys work in the areas. That's one thing that you need to do to an oyster bar. An oyster bed has to be worked for it to produce, just like a farmer's field. If it lays dormant, it's not going to produce. But if that area is worked, it turns... There's oyster shells in the bottom everywhere, and that bottom needs to be brought up and washed off and back in it to allow...to have a clean substrate for the oysters to attach to and what they like for the baby oysters to attach to. And what they like is... The main thing they like is an oyster shell. So when you're oystering, you're bringing the shells up out of the bottom, you're dredging them up by hand tongs or by scraping. You're bringing them up, washing them off. They settle to the bottom. And then if you have a set of

oysters, which is called spat, they need something to attach to. You know, they like the clean shell. So that's one of the things I say, working the areas, cleaning the areas off. That's helping bring them back, too.

BRENT LEWIS: Those skills and knowledge that you develop as a young waterman, do they play into your charter boat captain, like those kind of things, knowing where rock piles are...

JOEY SADLER: [00:35:52] Yes, knowing where edges are, oyster bars are, rock piles. Yes, everything plays on something else. Like I stated earlier, you learn every day that you're out there. You may think you know it all, but you don't. You know, every day it's a different set of challenges, different areas, different weather conditions, so it's a constant challenge every day no matter if you're oystering, clamming, crabbing, fishing, whatever you're doing. Every day it's a... Something's different. The winds, the current, the weather conditions, every day something different.

BRENT LEWIS: All those experiences, though, build a wealth of knowledge to maybe not anticipate the next unknown thing but to deal with it.

JOEY SADLER: [00:36:36] To deal with it better, yes. Yeah.

Every... Like I said, every day is different. No two days are alike.

BRENT LEWIS: I want to go back a little bit to your charter boat business. Who are your customers?

JOEY SADLER: [00:36:49] Our customers come from all over.

There's not one area... I draw from the Maryland area here. I had local residents on the boat today here from Queen Anne's County. We draw as far away from Pennsylvania, western shore, western Virginia or Virginia, West Virginia. They're from all over, basically. And then every now and then we'll get somebody that's just passing through here on vacation, and they'll stop, like, at the Heritage Center or something to pick up somebody's information and check to see about availability. And I've had them as far away from Canada, you know, just call up at the last moment, and, you know, we didn't have a day...charter the next day, and they were able to go. So just basically from all over, not one area, but a lot of them are... Like I said, I touched on it earlier. They're families. They're friends. They're a group of guys. They're a church group. They're a work group. It's no one set of people that are our customers. They [both speaking-unclear].

BRENT LEWIS: So how long have you been primarily a charter boat captain?

JOEY SADLER: [00:38:08] About 30 years now that I've run charter full time.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you have any customers that go way, way back?

JOEY SADLER: [00:38:14] I have customers that have started with me right from the beginning, and they're still with me to this day. As time gets on, you know, we tend to lose a few of them, which that's the cycle of life, but... Yes. But it's a constant, ongoing... It's not a battle or struggle, but you have to keep your customers. You keep them happy, you talk to them, you entertain them, and they tell their friends. So word of mouth is your best advertising for the charter business. You can put ads on the Internet all you want, but the word of mouth is...comes from customers...from other customers you had on the boat, you know, just word of mouth.

BRENT LEWIS: What are the best things a customer can tell another potential customer about [both speaking-unclear]?

JOEY SADLER: [00:39:03] That they had a great time on the charter boat and good captain and just liked the boat. Yeah, I've had... Everybody gets on the boat. They like it. They like how clean it is. They like how it's upkeep. So it's a lot of little things that make it enjoyable for

them. So they have a good time, they'll tell their friends and come back.

BRENT LEWIS: What do you provide for the...

JOEY SADLER: [00:39:29] We... Some captains have food and drinks on the boat, but we just ask everybody to bring their own. I have all their fishing equipment just like most of the other captains do. They provide the equipment for the boat...for the customers. The fish are cleaned and bagged up for them that they take home.

BRENT LEWIS: Customers can just step on with their...

JOEY SADLER: [00:39:51] Step on with their food and drinks for the trip, come back in, step off with their fish and go home and enjoy fish dinner.

BRENT LEWIS: Where do you fish out of?

JOEY SADLER: [00:40:02] Kentmorr Marina here on Kent Island is our home port. You know, I travel the Bay wherever I need to go to catch fish or to be close to the main source of the fish. So I'll be anywhere from up the Bay to down the Bay and even been as far round on the ocean before, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Kentmorr gives you good access to...

JOEY SADLER: [00:40:23] Kentmorr is a good local here for Kent Island. Nice owner, nice marina. So...

BRENT LEWIS: And historically it's been a...

JOEY SADLER: [00:40:31] Historically, it's been a...

BRENT LEWIS: ...port.

JOEY SADLER: [00:40:33] ...port for not only charter boats but for work boats in the area. That's how it started out, and now it's mainly a charter boat marina.

BRENT LEWIS: At least at one point it had the largest fishing fleet in the county I read somewhere.

JOEY SADLER: [00:40:48] It probably still does as far as the number of boats and captains that run out of that marina. It's probably 25 in one marina there that run out of that marina.

BRENT LEWIS: That's significant.

JOEY SADLER: [00:40:59] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: What's a typical day like when you take a group out fishing? What time do you start?

JOEY SADLER: [00:41:06] Yeah. Normal leave time, you know, I request that everybody be there somewhere, you know, 5:30, six o'clock. You know, they get out of their vehicle. They bring the coolers and whatever else they're bringing on the boat, get on the boat. I go over a safety spiel about, you know, where the life jackets are, where the fire extinguishers are, trash can, bathroom, how things operate on the boat, tell them where we're going, how we're fishing, and usually back in 12:00 to 2:00, somewhere in the neighborhood, depending on what time you leave. We

usually figure six to eight-hour fishing trip or time on the Bay [both speaking-unclear].

BRENT LEWIS: What's a good day?

JOEY SADLER: [00:41:49] Good day's limit of rockfish and then go bottom fishing for a while. And like I said, most people want their stripers, the rockfish, so we catch our limit on them. Then we can look around for other fish or just different...

BRENT LEWIS: What's the limit?

JOEY SADLER: [00:42:02] Limit right now is two per person for charter boats. In the springtime, it's just... You're allowed one big fish over 35 inches. Here in the summertime, we have a slot limit from 19 to 31, one fish over 28 inches.

BRENT LEWIS: As long as you're certified, your customers don't need fishing licenses.

JOEY SADLER: [00:42:22] Right. We buy everything taken care of for the boat, and the boat's insured. The boat's licensed for the customers, so all they need to do is step on the boat and go.

BRENT LEWIS: What's the maximum amount of people you can take?

JOEY SADLER: [00:42:34] We carry up to 18 on the *Independence*. You know, some boats carry more. Actually, the *Independence* was certified for up to 28 passengers, and we

backed it back to 18 ourself because most of our groups run 6 to 10 customers. So there was no sense carrying all the extra equipment that we would only have a few trips over the 18...maximum of 18, so...

BRENT LEWIS: You told me what a good day is. What's a bad day out there?

JOEY SADLER: [00:43:01] Bad day. Well, it's never really a bad day for fishing.

BRENT LEWIS: Right. [laughter]

JOEY SADLER: [00:43:06] That's what they say anyway. Good day fishing is better than a bad day in the office.

BRENT LEWIS: That's the good answer. You also offer other services [both speaking-unclear].

JOEY SADLER: [00:43:16] We offer other services. We offer sea duck hunting in the fall, which is you hunt right off the back of the boat. Several...

BRENT LEWIS: What's a sea duck?

JOEY SADLER: [00:43:24] Several types of sea ducks, what we call sea ducks. These ducks stay right out in the main part of the Bay throughout the winter. It's a big sport, a lot of shooting at them. And in the summertime we also offer crabbing charters, you know, where we're taking people trotlining. We use some of the same gear that, you know, the fulltime commercial watermen would use, and we

show them different things about the Bay and the crabs, and they learn different things instead of just going to a restaurant and ordering a crab. This way, they understand and learn about the crabs and about the Bay and how the watermen harvest the crabs.

BRENT LEWIS: That sounds like an innovative concept, and I've always wondered why more people didn't offer that.

JOEY SADLER: [00:44:11] It's a few more here recently that do that, but I enjoy... It's a break from the fishing, and the people, they like the crabbing so it's a...[both speaking-unclear].

BRENT LEWIS: I've never taken anyone trotlining who didn't love it, you know, that first time. Cast and blast, what's that?

JOEY SADLER: [00:44:27] Cast and blast is a half hunting, half fishing charter. We would start out in the morning sea duck hunting for a while, and depending on where the fish are, we would finish out the day fishing.

BRENT LEWIS: So how do you hunt for sea ducks...

JOEY SADLER: [00:44:41] Sea...

BRENT LEWIS: ...out on the water?

JOEY SADLER: [00:44:41] Sea ducks on the water. The way we do it, where we go to an area where the ducks are using. You know, we know from being out there every day, you know,

where the ducks are, so we will go put out about 100 decoys right off the boat and shoot. So the boat is anchored right close to the decoys and you're shooting from the boat itself.

BRENT LEWIS: Your customers are on with you when you put the decoys out?

JOEY SADLER: [00:45:02] Customers are on the boat with me. I don't put them off anywhere. That way, we have heat on the boat there in the wintertime, so they can stay warm. They can go get a cup of coffee. They can eat a sandwich and watch other people shoot and miss at the ducks.

BRENT LEWIS: They can see the process and be educated, right?

JOEY SADLER: [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: Sounds like you...

JOEY SADLER: [00:45:23] Right.

BRENT LEWIS: ... educate your customers.

JOEY SADLER: [00:45:24] Right. Well, you have to talk to them.

You talk to your customers all the time, and I enjoy talking to them. You know, where are you from? What do you do? So over time, you actually build a rapport with many of your customers, which become friends, which Karen will tell you. We spend time with some of our customers away from the boat, you know, going to dinner, going away with them. We actually have one customer that they have

moved to Florida, so we spend time with them in the winter. It's... Like I said, you build up a friendship with many of your customers.

BRENT LEWIS: We're going to switch gears a little bit. Close calls, dangerous situations.

JOEY SADLER: [00:46:09] Close calls, dangerous situations.

The one time that I was only really shaken up was the day that my... Day that my son sunk his boat. It was a wooden boat, and he was running and just lost a plank. When you have a wooden boat, you have planks every 12 inches or so on the bottom, which run crossways on the boat. Actually, he was running and went up on a wave, and just like you take a glass of water and put in the sink and turn it upside down and try to lift it up, it has a suction to it. Well, when the boat went up on a wave, it just sucked one of the boards right off the bottom of the boat. He had a charter on board. My father was behind him in his boat with a charter. I was in front of him, and to... [clears throat] Excuse me. To get that kind of call on the radio is not a good call. Give me a second.

BRENT LEWIS: Yeah.

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:09] "You know, Dad..."

BRENT LEWIS: Take your time.

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:09] "Dad, get to me quick. I'm sinking."

BRENT LEWIS: It's a tough thing to hear. You were able to get there.

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:18] Got to him. It was all good. You know, we hooked on to him. The boat didn't submerge completely. My father was right behind him. He picked up his customers and had them on safely out of the water.

BRENT LEWIS: How many people were on board?

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:30] He had six on board and himself and a mate, you know? Nobody got hurt, no loss of life, nothing like that. Just damaged the boat some. So we were able to get a hold of Sea Tel. They got to the boat pretty quick and put airbags under it, lifted it up out of the water. We were towed in, and it was able to be repaired within a, you know, few days. And he was back in action again...

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs] Back at it.

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:52] Back at it again. [laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: Brings home how dangerous...

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:55] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: ...it is, though, right?

JOEY SADLER: [00:47:56] Yes. How quick things can happen.

You know, people just don't realize, you know, but things can happen pretty quick out there.

BRENT LEWIS: Ever see anything amazing or unexplainable out on the water?

JOEY SADLER: [00:48:09] Never seen Chessie swimming out there.

Never seen aliens or any kind of strange life form.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you ever find...

JOEY SADLER: [00:48:16] [both speaking-unclear]

BRENT LEWIS: ...anything interesting?

JOEY SADLER: [00:48:18] When I was clamming... Well, you see this stuff here on the table? You know, you would see the Indian artifacts. That was a big thing. The airheads, the spear points. They would come up on the clam dredge.

BRENT LEWIS: What's the most interesting thing you ever found?

JOEY SADLER: [00:48:33] Just, like I said, the Indian artifacts, the axe heads, the spear points, the old clay pipes, old jugs. That was a big thing. Old bottles.

BRENT LEWIS: Do you keep any of that stuff?

JOEY SADLER: [00:48:44] Have some of it around the house that we have different places for, for sale.

BRENT LEWIS: That's cool. Have any superstitions on the water?

JOEY SADLER: [00:48:56] Well, a big superstition with a fishing boat is bananas. You know, that's something that you always give your customers a hard time about too is you never bring bananas on board a fishing boat.

BRENT LEWIS: Any idea where that comes from?

JOEY SADLER: [00:49:07] No, not really. You can google it, so it's got to be true.

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs]

JOEY SADLER: [00:49:12] That's all I can say about that, but it's just something to give one of your customers a hard time about.

BRENT LEWIS: Sure. If they bring a banana on, do you allow it, or do you get...you can't bring it?

JOEY SADLER: [00:49:23] Well, it depends on the person.

BRENT LEWIS: [laughs] Right.

JOEY SADLER: [00:49:25] If they bring them on the boat there, you know, sometimes I... I've grabbed them and thrown them overboard because I've known the temperament of the person. And other times I've just kind of let them go and eat and just...

BRENT LEWIS: It's funny in the moment.

JOEY SADLER: [00:49:36] It's funny in the moment there, so...

BRENT LEWIS: That's great. Ever rescued anybody out there?

JOEY SADLER: [00:49:43] Several times. Yes, it's always something going on that you watch out for other people. And we had one incident with a kayaker a couple years ago that we had plucked out of the Bay. He wasn't hurt. He just... The kayak was sinking. We got him up and got him on board, called 911, told him where he was. So he was

safe and took him to Rock Hall Harbor and dropped him off where they were on shore waiting for him, but he wasn't hurt. He was okay, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Mainly exhaustion.

JOEY SADLER: [00:50:19] Mainly exhaustion, yeah, and scared.

BRENT LEWIS: Oh, right.

JOEY SADLER: [00:50:22] And scared. He shouldn't have been out there in that kind of vessel. I mean, that's what you run into is people out there without the knowledge, and they don't know their limitations on what they can do or where they should be. And that's what happens. It's usually not one thing that... When you have a catastrophe or something happens, it's not...it's a series of things. And he was where he shouldn't be, the boat was leaking, the weather was bad, so I said it wasn't just one thing. But he was...he got inshore safe, and to my knowledge, he's not kayaking anymore. [laughter]

BRENT LEWIS: What do you think the future of working on the water or the seafood industry in...on the Chesapeake here on the eastern shore is?

JOEY SADLER: [00:51:07] Well, as you know, we've lost all our oyster packing houses, which in the summertime shucked the clams also. But all the waterfront...all the shucking houses have become waterfront restaurants. You can't blame

the owners of the restaurants because, you know, they're making more money as a restaurant. But for us, with a market, you know, we have lost all our market in that way with the shucking houses. Going through all the legal battles through the changes, through DNR on the regulations, that's a big thing that we fight with all the time too, the changing of the seasons, the changing of the times, the changing of the limits of what you're allowed to catch and win. You almost need to be a lawyer to keep up on the changes that are made all the time in the rules and regulations.

BRENT LEWIS: Are you required to update your license in any way?

JOEY SADLER: [00:52:07] For... Well, for the...like, the crabbing, oystering, fishing, you know, you have a license through the DNR but also through the Coast Guard. You know, I have to have that license renewed every five years.

BRENT LEWIS: Is it just a renewal process, or do you have to...

JOEY SADLER: [00:52:22] That's just a renewal process, but you have to keep up on your CPR, so you have to keep your CPR and first aid updated. But the license, it's just a sea service form that you have to prove that you were on the

sea so many times in the last five years to keep your license.

BRENT LEWIS: So practical experience is measured.

JOEY SADLER: [00:52:42] Right, right. I wanted to reach back and touch on... Out of my...out of four of my immediate grandparents, my grandmother and grandfather on both sides, only one of them ever drove a vehicle. The other three...but the other three held commercial licenses.

BRENT LEWIS: Wow. What's the difference between the way you are able to do business and the way they did business? Your dad as a charter captain, for instance.

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:11] Like I said, they... Well, the Internet's played with...into things more now, you know, where people are doing a lot more advertising that way, but still, the word of mouth is your best way to get...to pick up on your charters.

BRENT LEWIS: So interaction with your customers, that has not changed.

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:29] That has not changed from then until now.

BRENT LEWIS: Was your dad good at it?

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:32] Dad was good at it. He liked talking to the people just like me. You know, where are you from?

You know, about your kids. You know, what do you do? So that means a lot.

BRENT LEWIS: So the skill sets are both occupational. You know, you got to catch a fish.

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:49] Got to catch fish.

BRENT LEWIS: But you also have to be...

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:51] Have to be...

BRENT LEWIS: ...kind of a public persona...

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:53] Right.

BRENT LEWIS: ...a little bit.

JOEY SADLER: [00:53:54] And you're also educating the kids. I love seeing kids on the boat, you know, because I grew up on the boat, and I was... My father, you know, he was the person I idolized all the time, and he showed me different things and as you grow up. And I did the same thing with... Well, I did the same thing with my kids. You know, this kind of crab, this is a horseshoe crab, this is a male hard crab, this is a female hard crab? So my kids learned that kind of stuff at a young age growing up on the bay. And now when I get kids on the boat, you know, I love seeing that because I always love kids, and I show them different things and...about a crab and about different things on a fish, how the stripes are different on the rockfish and, you know, this is an oyster, and this is a

mussel and the...showing the difference. So it's educational too.

BRENT LEWIS: That sounds like a very fulfilling part of your job.

JOEY SADLER: [00:54:47] Yes. Like I said, I love the kids on the boat. And you show them the ospreys. You show the baby ospreys, the eagles, the seagulls, the different types of gulls, different types of fish, crabs. You know, it's a learning... It's just like being on a farm, you know? You're learning something different all the time. You're seeing mother nature, where when you're out there on the bay, it's not all about catching a fish, you know?

BRENT LEWIS: Mm-hmm.

JOEY SADLER: [00:55:09] It's about being out with your family, being out with your friends, you know, seeing the sights, you know, looking at the bay from a different perspective, showing them a lighthouse, you know, that's been there for 150 years, just teaching them.

BRENT LEWIS: That's really awesome, man. So if you're... If they're learning from you, what have you learned from your career working on the water, maybe about life in general, or what has it taught you?

JOEY SADLER: [00:55:41] Every... Like I said earlier, every day is different. You know, you have to go with whatever

works for that time or for that day. We always say this. Don't stress the small stuff. You know, it always work out. But, you know, you're always... You have charters lined up, and something happens. You have to do boat repairs. Or not charters. If you just worked on the water, you know, you're making money. You're working hard, trying to pay your bills, and something happens on the boat. You know, you break down. So it's a constant, ongoing... Any business has it. But like I said, working on the water too, you have to stay on top of your equipment, changing oil, working on the motors, working on the boat.

BRENT LEWIS: Has it been a good career?

JOEY SADLER: [00:56:30] Yeah. I can't say it hasn't. Yes, it's been good. It's tough. You know, like I said, you don't have that steady income all the time. You know, you think you're getting ahead, and all of a sudden something breaks down, tears up, and you have to replace several thousand-dollar part or you're out of work for a little while while you're waiting for a part to come in or... So it's a challenge. It's not like a 9:00 to 5:00 job and you get a paycheck at the end of every week. It doesn't work like that. You're fighting the weather, the elements, the markets, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Can you imagine doing anything else?

JOEY SADLER: [00:57:05] Not really. The way I grew up here on the island, you know, with my father and grandfather, and it's kind of all I know. You know, we weren't taught to get a job and get a paycheck every week. We were taught, you know, there's your boat, son. If you want a car, if you want anything, you...it's out there, you know? So things have changed. When I grew up, you know, the oystering was sun up to sundown, six days a week. The crabbing was get whatever you could get. Like I said, I'd come home from school and get in my boat and go crabbing in the afternoons after school or go oystering after school and...for gas money. And it was sunny. It was out there. There's your boat. Go get it.

BRENT LEWIS: You're a fifth-generation waterman, second-generation...

JOEY SADLER: [00:57:53] Charter captain.

BRENT LEWIS: ...charter captain. What does that mean to you?

JOEY SADLER: [00:58:02] I guess it's a legacy here on the shore. Like I said, relatives, family. You know, uncle worked on the water. Cousin worked on the water. My brother worked on the water for a while. Just one of those things. Family tradition, like Hank Williams song.
[laughs]

BRENT LEWIS: Do you feel like something, part of something bigger through those connections...

JOEY SADLER: Well...

BRENT LEWIS: ...a lineage, a history?

JOEY SADLER: [00:58:27] Well, yeah. I mean, here on the shore, yes, you have to. I mean, even into your background, your family worked on the water and same kind of thing. You know, you feel a connection through your family and through the Bay. And you look at the Bay different than some people do because that's your livelihood out there. You know, you treat it with respect. You treat it differently. You know, you got to respect it because, you know, it can hurt you. But also, on the other hand, we've been struck by lightning before. The boat's been struck by lightning, just damaged all the electronics on it.

BRENT LEWIS: What was that like?

JOEY SADLER: [00:59:07] [laughs] That was a little bit of an ordeal. I was close to a harbor, actually, and we had just had one lightning bolt that struck the boat, struck the antenna. Nobody was hurt, but like I said, from the electric shock, it just wiped out all my electronics on board. But nobody on the boat was hurt. You know, it didn't damage anything else, so...

BRENT LEWIS: Was it loud? Was it...

JOEY SADLER: [00:59:28] Real bright light, you know?

BRENT LEWIS: Real bright light.

JOEY SADLER: [00:59:29] What I seen was one real bright light flash in my face. And after that, it was just... You could smell the electronics burning like a fried radio and fried depth finder and... A little...

BRENT LEWIS: [both speaking-unclear]

JOEY SADLER: [00:59:43] ...costly, but nobody... The main thing is nobody got hurt, nobody... Nothing else was damaged, so that kind of stuff could be replaced.

BRENT LEWIS: So my final question for you, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to talk about or anything that's popped in your head while we've been talking that you'd like to follow up on?

JOEY SADLER: [01:00:03] Like I say, we've covered...you know, we've covered a lot of things here from growing up. One of the things, you know, as being one of the boys here, which here in Stevensville we were called "town daisies", [laughs] and we mainly... Well, everybody worked out of either Kent Narrows or Thompson Creek Landing. One of the things in the summertime there we'd... Out of the... Many of our parents were watermen, and so that meant their sons had boats. So all of us boys, we would kind of make our

way back down to the shore there several week...several days a week in the afternoons and get on our boat or my boat or one of our friends' boats. And so it would be... Always be 6, 8, 10 of us sometimes out swimming in the afternoon for a couple hours on one of the boats. So we were always doing something...

BRENT LEWIS: Outside a lot.

JOEY SADLER: [01:00:56] Outside all the time. There was no such thing as coming home and staying in the house. You know, we were either outside playing baseball, football, swimming down the shore. And then, like I said, I touched on it earlier, Bobby Aaron's shop in the wintertime when everybody was in there for the heat and listened to the stories there. Well, Thompson Creek boat landing down here, that was kind of an afternoon spot for boys to gather, and then some of the men would roll back down in the afternoons and hear the same stories. They'd be talking about, you know, who caught the crabs, who had the fastest boat. We... Several times I've even seen...go out there and watch them untie their boats and race right in front of the dock there...

BRENT LEWIS: To prove their point.

JOEY SADLER: [01:01:41] ...to prove their point, yes.

BRENT LEWIS: So I actually will ask one last question. How thankful are you to growing up where and when you did?

JOEY SADLER: [01:01:51] Couldn't have been better as far as childhood growing up here. You know, we never locked our doors on the house. You know, you never took your keys out of the boat. You know, most boats didn't even have keys. You know, you had a push button starter switch, and it was just a good time here on the shore. You know, you knew everybody and everybody's families, you know, so we were always busy doing something with friends and family. And it was nice place, nice time to grow up.

BRENT LEWIS: Good life.

JOEY SADLER: [01:02:23] Good life. Things are changing now. Got more busy here. More of a bedroom community for the western shore. Things have changed. Used to be able to go anywhere and hunt all the farms, which all the farmland is disappearing and becoming communities. One thing you asked about was about the communities now, how they looked at the watermen. My wife here, Karen, she started with the idea of a crab basket Christmas tree, so that's taken off in the last several years to benefit our local Watermen's Association. But we've had great support from some of the communities around here that they're looking at the water business, and they're doing their Christmas trees. Also,

where you take a crab basket, you paint it on...paint something on it, which mainly has been some kind of family history, you know, something about somebody's boat or somebody's literature about their family. It could be a Crabby Claus. [laughs] [both speaking-unclear]

BRENT LEWIS: Some kind of connection.

JOEY SADLER: [01:03:36] Some kind of connection with the water. It could be Santa Claus in a boat, you know? So we're seeing a lot of that come up on the town and the people, you know, what they reach back and remember and put on a...paint on a basket, which we build into...our local watermen's association builds into an annual Christmas tree out of the crab baskets. Like I said, a couple of the communities around here are supporting the watermen, and they're doing...they reached out and they're doing their own community crab basket Christmas tree, and they're donating funds from that to the local watermen. So it's been...

BRENT LEWIS: So it helps the awareness of...

JOEY SADLER: [01:04:10] Helps the awareness, yes.

BRENT LEWIS: ...of you guys.

JOEY SADLER: [01:04:12] Yes.

BRENT LEWIS: That's awesome. Joey, thank you very much for...

JOEY SADLER: Oh, thank...

BRENT LEWIS: ...spending the time with me on this.

JOEY SADLER: [01:04:17] Thanks for having us here. It's...my wife, Karen, is right here with me. That's my support right there. Yeah. I couldn't do it without her.

END OF AUDIO FILE