

OH 511 Cynthia Evans

Q: This is Jennifer Shea. I am in Edgewater with Cindy Evans. It is June 21st, 2023, and we are talking about Cindy's role as a captain of charter fishing boats for the Her Helm oral history project at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

[break in audio] By introducing yourself, so could you introduce yourself?

A: [00:00:30] I'm Cindy Evans, C-I-N-D-Y E-V-A-N-S, and I was born June 17th, 1961 in PG County, Maryland, and now I live in Anne Arundel County.

Q: So how long have you worked on the water?

A: [00:00:51] I have been on the water for, like, forty -- about 43 years. I started out on the water pleasure boating with my ex-boyfriend. Then we lived on a boat for a few years in the early '80s, and that's how... Then we sold that and got a charter boat, started charter fishing, and that's how I got into it. So I've been doing it a long time. I've had my captain's license 27 years.

Q: Twenty-seven years!

A: [00:01:19] Yes.

Q: What prompted you to get your captain's license?

A: [00:01:22] When I broke up with my boyfriend -- because I made it on the boat, and he was the captain -- I fished

with other friends for a few years, and I just really, really missed charter fishing. And back then a lot of boats wouldn't take a woman on as a mate or anything, so I figured I'd do it myself, and I just got determined to get my captain's license, and... But then it took me eight years to get my guide's license, which you have to have to run a charter boat. And I -- they put you on a list, and there was -- you know, they had stopped giving them out and stuff, so I had to wait eight years. As soon as I got it, I bought my boat, and it came with a guide's license, so then I had two of them. [laughs]

Q: So what do you have to do to get a guide's license?

A: [00:02:08] You have to either be grandfathered -- like, I could hand it down to my -- you know, someone in my family that had a captain's license -- that's what a lot of the fishermen did -- or you have to be put on a list, and once they opened it back up, as people died or didn't renew them or whatever, they would -- they only gave out so many a year. So you can't -- I could've ran, like, a water taxi or something like that, but I couldn't run a charter fishing boat without a guide's license.

Q: What does a guide's license --

A: [00:02:40] It's --

Q: -- mean, basically?

A: [00:02:41] It's for guiding people to go fishing. It's like -- kind of like a hunting guide's license, you know. It's that you can take people out fishing.

Q: And you know where the fish are?

A: [00:02:53] Right.

Q: Uh-huh, okay, so one needs a guide, I guess. [laughs]

A: [00:02:56] Right, you got them over to where the fish are, hopefully. [laughs]

Q: So what do you enjoy about running charter fishing boats?

A: [00:03:05] It's just an adrenaline rush. I just love fishing. I love everything about it. I love meeting the people, just hearing their stories. It's just -- it gets in your blood that you can't live without it. I love being in the rough water. I love being in the calm water. I like -- I love everything about it. I'm just addicted to it, so...

Q: Wow. Who inspired you to...?

A: [00:03:29] Well, it's wild, because I was talking to my brother and he said, you know, a lot of people grow up and they're taught, you know, fishing, or they're taught sailing, but we weren't taught anything, and I learned pretty much everything from my ex-boyfriend. And his name's Chris Lipinski, and he's a captain still, too. But my mom used to take me fishing when I was little with my

Aunt Pat, but we just fished from land, but once I started fishing with Chris, I just became obsessed with it like he was, and still is, so... Yeah.

Q: Do you -- what's your favorite fishing story?

A: [00:04:09] Hmm... My favorite fishing story... Hold -- can... I got to think of that one.

Q: Okay.

A: [00:04:18] Okay, okay.

Q: So what were you doing before you started chartering, being a captain with fishing cruises?

A: [00:04:27] I worked at PEPCO. I'm retired from the Potomac Electric Power Company in Washington, D.C. And I worked there for thirty-- 37 years, almost 38 years. And I drew wiring schematics for substations. We were -- we did all the wiring for the relaying for the transformers and breakers out, and we, we, we drew them by hand on big, huge prints, on drafting boards, and then we got into computers as the years went on. But quite a few years when I first started working there, I -- we drew everything by hand, and they were big, huge prints, and I'd go out in the field and have to fix them and stuff. And there was about 80 people in our department, and only maybe four women. So it was, you know, a different time. That was back in, like, '81. And that's when I started living on a boat with Chris, and

that's how I... We started fishing on the weekends, and we'd run the charters on the weekends, because he was a sheetmetal worker, so...

Q: How would people find your boat to go out with you?

A: [00:05:33] Well, what, with Chris or with me?

Q: With you -- with him first, and then...

A: [00:05:38] Well, back then, you know, there was no Facebook, nothing. It was just all word of mouth, and you just -- you know, t-shirts, beer huggers, whatever. And, you know, you get these same customers that come back every year. And with mine, it was kind of hard, being a woman, because a lot of guys didn't, you know, want to go out with a woman captain, and -- but after a while I guess they figured I'm just like one of the guys.

Q: Well, I was going to ask you what are your challenges in being a female captain.

A: [00:06:13] I guess the -- one of the hardest parts was, like, when I did get my boat, I couldn't find a slip. Like, no one would let me in the marina, because I was a... Well, I could say because I was a woman, because there was a lot of women that had open slips, but none were available. And one little, old man, he let me in at his house, and I would have to pick people up, you know, at his house. And then, after about a week, he said I couldn't be

there anymore because of his insurance, but that really wasn't the reason. But I finally -- another little, old man, Mr. Sherman, I befriended him, and he had a sailboat marina, and I was really upset because I had nowhere to keep my boat, and he said, "Cindy, you don't worry. You can fit in here." And I was the only [laughs] powerboat in a boat full of sailboaters, and right across was Happy Harbor. And they had opened slips, but they -- I wasn't -- you know, they didn't -- they weren't available. And then one day a charter boat captain, Butch G, he stood up for me and told the owners, he said, "This girl is a charter boat captain. She's over there with them sailboats. You got slips. You need to let her in." And then they called me and let me in.

Q: So --

A: [00:07:39] But it was hard. It was a lot. It was, you know, a lot longer story than that, and I don't really want to name names, but, you know, it was tight. And same with, like, getting in the Captains Association. You couldn't go in unless you were brought in, and the -- no one would bring me in. And then one day this Jim Bransfield, Captain Jim Bransfield -- he's passed away since, but he was a character, and he says, "Don't you worry, I'll get you in." So he sponsored me, and I went over to the Elks Club that

night, and I was sitting up at the bar by myself, waiting for the meeting, and I'll never forget Captain Dickie Grimes -- he just passed away -- he came up to me and he said, "Are you here for the captains' meeting?" And I said yes, because they were all sitting together at a big table, all drinking beers, and I was up there alone. He says, "Well, you come sit with us, and you can come sit next to me." And that's when I first started, you know, kind of getting my foot in the door a little bit. So...

Q: Are there many female fishing charter captains?

A: [00:08:49] Not... I know Janet Rupp. She's in *Her Helm*. She fished with her husband for years. There's another girl, Cindy Sheridan, that's a captain, but she doesn't do it anymore. And there was one other girl named Cindy -- something about Cindy -- that ran out of Chesapeake Beach, but I really didn't know her. But other than that, no, I don't really know any that... You know, it's really -- it was a good ol' boy network for years and years, because even when I first started working on a boat in the early '80s, women didn't come on boats. You know, you didn't see people come on boats. You know, it was a bunch of guys come on, drink and get drunk and go fishing and tell their stories, and sometimes I had hard times, that they'd tell Chris, you know, "We don't want a girl on the boat," and

they had never met me, and I'd have to go work on, like, a head boat or something. Someone would have to take my spot for that day, because they didn't want a woman on the boat. Times have changed in the last 43 years. It's a whole 'nother ballgame, because women come on the boat all the time now, so...

Q: Hmm. I was going to ask you about the boat, but let me ask you about that. So why do you think things have changed so much? What helped that happen?

A: [00:10:08] I don't know what... Like, it seems like it happened quick, but it's been 43 years, and it's a whole 'nother world now. You know, it's -- you still, you know, have hardships, but it's not just being a woman. You know, everybody has problems in life, and goes through hardships, you know. Everybody just has different hurdles they've got to handle. But sometimes it is a little bit harder getting into a field that you're kind of unique in, so... But...

Q: Well, you clearly have done that a couple of times.

[laughter] So how did you find your boat?

A: [00:10:49] Well, I --

Q: Tell me about your boat.

A: [00:10:51] I wanted to get a boat right away, because when I went to get my captain's license I had to go up to Baltimore, and I studied so hard, every morning, every

night, everything for this test. It was an eight -- it was over an eight-hour test.

Q: Wow.

A: [00:11:04] It's a four-part test, and --

Q: What are the four parts of the test?

A: [00:11:08] Boy, I don't even know if I could tell you.

Mapping, weather... I can't even remember them now, it's been so long ago. It's been 27 years ago. But I studied so hard. And you had to know clouds. There's so much stuff. You wouldn't even believe the stuff that... Most of the stuff goes out your head [laughs] after. But I went up to Baltimore that day, and I was the only one that passed out of that whole class, and I was the only girl that took it, and I think there was, like, 16 or 18 people in there. And it's four parts, and if -- you have three times to pass it. If you have four parts, you can save them in your pocket. Like, say I only passed two; I could come back two more times to pass it. But I worked really hard, and I studied so hard. I took a week off of work the week before, just to teach myself the mapping and all that, because it's all kinds of mathematical problems and everything. You've got to memorize. And I was so happy. That was one of the happiest days ever, when I passed that test. And... But I forget what you asked me about that.

Q: Just --

A: [00:12:17] Oh, about how I found my boat. But then I couldn't get a boat because I couldn't get a guide's license, because there was a lockdown on them. So I had to wait eight years until I got my guide's license, and I looked at a bunch of boats, but as soon as I found my boat, I knew it was exactly what I wanted. It was an old oyster rig. It's a Deltaville Bay built. They built them in Deltaville, Virginia, and when I bought it, it came with the guide's license. So I sold one of the guide's license to a young kid down in Deale that was looking for one, so...

Q: When was it built?

A: [00:12:53] Where?

Q: When.

A: [00:12:55] God, I'm having a brain freeze with all this stuff.

Q: Okay. Well, it doesn't matter. It just --

A: [00:13:00] I can't --

Q: I wonder how old --

A: [00:13:01] Can I tell you that later?

Q: Yeah, it doesn't -- it's --

A: [00:13:04] I should know all this, but I'm having a...

Q: There's no problem. [laughter] So what was special about her? What was her name?

A: [00:13:14] What, the boat?

Q: The boat, mm-hmm.

A: [00:13:16] The boat was the *Osprey*, and it was -- it's a small world, because it was run by a man in Solomons. That's where I started fishing with Chris. I didn't know it was the same boat. And it was just a heavy oyster rig, and I just -- when I saw it, it had a lot of fishing room in the back, and I just really liked it. It had a small cabin, with a school bus heater upfront, and it just -- I don't know, I just liked it right away. And it was filled with all kinds of crap. It looked like a junkyard. It was dirty. It was nasty. It was all beat up. And I remember my parents coming down. We took everything off it, from tires to ropes, all kinds of crap they just had thrown in there in the water. And I really cleaned it up, and fixed it all up, as it was in bad shape when I first got her. But...

Q: What did you name her?

A: [00:14:12] The *Sea Hag*, because that's what my ex-boyfriend used to call me when we used to fish down Solomons as a joke, and I said, "Yeah, when I get a boat I'm going to

name it the *Sea Hag*, and he would always laugh." And then when I got it, that's what I named it, so...

Q: So how long did you own her?

A: [00:14:32] Not really real long. I had it... The first year I had it, it took that long just to get it ready and organized and everything, and then I ran it for, like, three years, and then Bobby, my mate, bought a boat, and I was afraid -- not afraid, but if a guy doesn't show, if their mate doesn't show up, they can take guys out on the water without a mate, but back in those days I was, you know, a younger girl, and if the mate didn't show up, which a lot of times they don't -- because I know I could've depended on Bobby, but not -- a lot of these other mates just don't show up in the morning. And I thought, you know, I've got to be on a boat with a bunch of drunk guys that I don't know, you know, out there all by myself, when I can't find someone to depend on. And so I told Bobby, I said, "What if I sell my boat and help you run your boat?" And he said he'd love that, because we just fished so well together. He's real laid back and easygoing, and this is our 20th year fishing together this year, on charter boats, not including fun boats and stuff, you know, when he had a fun boat in between, when I got mine. But this is our 20th year chartering together, and he just always is easygoing

and dependable, and we just fish perfect together, because I'm hyper and high-strung. [laughter] But...

Q: So you ran charters on the *Sea Hag*?

A: [00:16:03] Yes, and I think my -- I think one of my best stories that I'll say is when I was used to fishing down Point Lookout and Solomons with Chris, and then for years after I broke up with him I fished out of Chesapeake Beach and stuff, and I think one of my best stories is when I first got my boat, and I went through a hard time getting a boat slip, and this and that and this, and I had quite a few charters set up for the first week, because I'd take vacation from my real job, and none of the guys were talking to me back then. Now, it could have been because I was new or, you know, whatever, but I didn't know where the fish were, because I was used to fishing down Solomons and everything. Back then we didn't really have fish finders and GPSs and all that -- they were just starting to come about -- so you kind of knew where the honey holes were. And I remember telling Bobby, I said, "Look, Bobby," I said, "I know the boats are going out on open day. A lot of them are going to go south. A lot of them are going to go north." I said, "I'm going to go right out front, and I'm going to fish right out front, and if I see the other boats going up north, or the other boats going down south,

I know they were talking to each other." Because we used to have -- we didn't have, really, cellphones; we'd talk in code through the radios a lot. And I went out front that whole week and spanked the fish right away, and we were sitting at the bar drinking bloody marys early in the morning, and I was getting all the fish, and everybody else was fishing all over and not coming in, and I was already done. And then people started noticing that, hey, you know, she knows what she's doing, and little by little, you know, they started letting me in. And now I'm just -- you know, they're all my friends, all the guys are cool, you know, but it just -- sometimes it takes a while to get your foot in the door, you know.

Q: So what do you think the secret to getting your foot in the door was?

A: [00:18:07] That I knew how to fish. Yeah, that they didn't help me, that maybe they -- that I could tell them something that they didn't know. And we all help each other now. You know, we all work as a network, and, you know... As a matter of fact, I went black sea bass fishing with -- on the *Worm* [*Big Worm*], with Drew Payne, with -- I was one of 15 captains that went out a year ago in November black sea bass fishing, and I was the only girl. We went out of the ocean down with Drew, out of Virginia Beach. So

I'm just -- I've just fit in. I drink beer with them, I cuss just like them, and [laughs] I love to fish, just like them, so...

Q: So what's the secret to finding a honey hole? Is that what you call it, or honey spot? What's the term?

A: [00:18:56] A honey hole. Well, now it's so different. You know, the fish finders, they show you everything. Back then, you just -- you know, you know where the, like, the channel is, and the fish will lay on the channel, and certain times of the year the fish are in where it's more shallow, and sometimes on top of the water. And, you know, in the spring, where it's -- the water's warmer, and in the fall they're deeper. You know, you just learn -- there's just -- there's a lot to learn about, you know, different -- where they are and everything. But it's come a long way with electronics. It's a whole 'nother ballgame now, but you still got to find them, you know.

Q: I was going to ask you what changes you've seen in the whole fishing industry.

A: [00:19:43] Well, back in the early '80s there was a moratorium on rockfish, because they were depleted, and we couldn't fish for rockfish. Like, the first years that Chris and I -- I ran a charter boat with Chris for almost five years, after we lived on the boat for, like, three and

a half years, and we couldn't really fish for rockfish, but we had huge bluefish, we had huge flounder, we had trout, hardhead, spot. We had a lot of fish to pick from, until they opened up rockfishing again. Now, there's not a lot of fish out there like there were back in the '80s. You know, the flounder aren't around. The big blues aren't around. You know, we're pretty much fishing -- believe it or not, we're fishing for catfish, which I never thought you'd ever see in a bay, but they're out in the bay now, so...

Q: Do you -- does your group of captains have a thought about why the fish are so depleted right now?

A: [00:20:41] I just -- I, myself, just think they're overfished. I don't want to say a lot about that.

Q: Interesting. So you're on -- what's the boat you're on right now?

A: [00:20:58] The *Bonnie Sue*, and Bobby was my mate, and then he got his captain's license ten years after me when he bought a boat, because I was in the midst of building my house, and renting that house, and working full-time, and I just thought it's a lot to run a charter boat. When he got a boat, I'm like, hell, I'll just work for you, because there's a lot of paperwork, the insurance, the slip fee, just booking the parties and everything. It's a lot. So

we run it, you know, together, but it's -- you know, he does the paperwork and stuff, which is good. [laughs]

Q: So how do you get clients?

A: [00:21:38] Word of mouth. We've had some -- we've had some people that have been going with us from the very, very beginning, and I -- we have a friend, Frank Manuel. And I remember running into him -- I never met him; I met him with my brother on Valentine's Day -- and he said he fished all the time, and my brother said, "Oh, well, Cindy's got a charter boat." And he goes, "Well, give me your card. I'll go with you." And I said, "Oh, BS. You're not going to go with a girl." And we were drinking and laughing and stuff, and sure as heck, he called me and booked a charter, and he's one of our best friends now. He's been fishing with us for over 20 years. So a lot of our charters are comeback charters. They start to be like family, and then they bring friends who they want to bring their families, and it just -- you know, a lot of them we're just really friendly with now. You know, they're just like a big old -- like, I get excited to see them. So...

Q: So what do you think the secret to being a successful charter boat captain is?

A: [00:22:43] I think the secret is you got to be able to catch fish, first and foremost, but they got -- you got to

have fun. You got to... You know, these people come out on the water. They want to go out with their family. They want to drink beer, tell stories. They want to, you know... It's just such a special day out there, because nowadays with TV, and everybody's on their phone, and everybody's too busy to talk to each other, it's just the day that's -- it's peaceful. It's fun. They don't have to do really anything. We do all the work. And they just drink and have fun. And it's something that a grandfather and a grandmother and a grandson or everybody can have the stories together, and have fun together. It's something that either you love it or you don't like it. [laughs] But yeah, I think it's -- we, you know, have pictures of families, then watch the kids grow up in the last 20 years, and seeing my friends become, you know, grandparents and stuff, and bring their kids on the boat, and it's just... It's just a fun time.

Q: Sounds very special.

A: [00:23:52] Yeah.

Q: So how long do you think you're going to continue doing this?

A: [00:23:58] I don't see stopping anytime soon. It's addicting. I can't -- I'd go crazy if I couldn't be on the water. I'd go nuts, so, yeah. And I do other stuff. I

go, you know, deep sea fishing out Ocean City with that guy that I met the first day, Frank. He has a friend out of Ocean City, and we go black sea bass fishing sometimes. You know, we do other stuff. But, you know, it's just a fun network of people, and it's a whole community like.

Q: Do you think fishing on the Chesapeake is special?

A: [00:24:36] Yes, because the Chesapeake Bay is a very violent body of water, and I don't want to get this wrong but I think it's, like, one of the tenth most violent bodies of water in the world or something. I don't -- I have to look that up, but, you know, that's a... But because its average depth is shallow, so you can be out there and it can calm as a lake, and within five or ten minutes you can be in three and a half, four-foot seas. It's just a whole... You know, it's not like the ocean. It's not like a quiet lake or a pond. It's got a personality all its own, and it can be sweet or it can be wicked. It's, you know, different. One year, I had a thing over there I was going to show you, was a day that I wasn't allowed on the boat because I was a girl, and I went on the boat with my cousin and this little man, Ralph, and all the fleet of boats went down to Point Lookout to fish out of Solomons. We were fishing for trout. And Jack Johnson owned the marina in Solomons, and he called on the

radio and said, "There's 45-mile-an-hour winds blowing. You all better get home." So all the boats either packed up and went back or went and anchored out in creeks. Well, we were only in, like, a little 27-foot boat, and we started back, and it went from -- it went from nothing to, like, wicked, like, six-foot seas. And this is another fact I'd have to look up, but I'm almost positive it was, like, 23 boats sunk that day from there to Ocean City. And Ralph -- I remember Ralph saying to me, "Cindy, put on a lifejacket." And I said, "Oh, Ralph, I'm fine. I'll be all right." And he said, "No, tie that rope around your waist and crawl up front," because our -- the front hatch had opened up, and water was pouring in. And it ended up -- my cousin ended up tying it around, and he ended up going up there for me, because it was crazy. But we ended up rescuing two boys that sunk out there that was, like, our age back in the day, and we got things from the Senate and from Congress for rescuing and saving their life, because the Coast Guard couldn't keep up on all the boats that were sinking. So there's been a lot of stories. It's -- the Chesapeake Bay, there's -- it's nothing -- you know, it's -- it -- people need to respect it, because it's wicked. It can be really wicked out there, so... I'm talking too much.

Q: No. [laughter] Cindy, you're great. You're just great. Do you think there's any other kind of boating you'd like to do? I mean, is there something new on the horizon, a dream of a boat you'd like to try, or an adventure on a boat?

A: [00:27:27] Well, I've been -- you know, I've been on catamarans down in Belize, you know, snorkeling. I love all that, and back in the day when I did live on the boat, Chris's cousins -- he had twin cousins -- were -- I was going to quit my job at PEPCO, and he was going to quit sheet metal, and we were going to run a catamaran out of the Bahamas, but his cousins couldn't get insurance. But yeah, I could -- I would like to, you know, do something like that, but I'm addicted to fishing. I've been offered to, you know, run water taxis and do all different stuff like that, but I think I need to always be fishing. [laughs] I'm on a fishin' mission. It's addicting.

Q: Okay, so why is it addicting?

A: [00:28:14] It's just an adrenaline rush. It's hard to explain. It's just like, when you catch these big fish, or you get your limit, it's just exciting, and it just -- to see, like, even little kids, or even older people, catch their first fish and get excited, it's just fun. It's just -- gets your -- like, when you -- you know, when someone

catches the big fish in the spring -- that's when the big females come up from the ocean, and they spawn in the freshwater tributaries of the Bay -- that's trophy season, and they have -- you know, that's the big fish. And when you see someone reeling in these big fish, and... It's just -- it's just an adrenaline rush. It's a -- it's an actual rush. Like, if you're skiing or something and go down a big hill, and you get that feeling, it's just a feeling. I don't know how to explain it. It's like a drug, but it's legal. [laughs]

Q: I'm going to have to try this. [laughter] Well, I think it was interesting, what you were saying about the Chesapeake being wicked, because I was going to say, is there anything else you'd like to tell people about the Chesapeake, and what it's like to fish on it?

A: [00:29:25] It's just that there -- you know, there's so much history, and so many stories, and, like, on the Maryland network channel, you know, there's so many cool shows that people don't watch, that they take for granted that, you know, the Chesapeake Bay, you know, it's just like, oh, let's go over the Bay Bridge and look at it, but there's just so many interesting stories about it, and that I've watched that -- the water was so much cleaner. And I remember them interviewing, like, this 100-year-old man

saying when he was a kid you could see 20 feet down, and just the struggle of getting it -- trying to get it clean, and the big industries not, you know, paying people off, and it's -- it should be a lot cleaner than what it is. But in my years fishing I've seen osprey come back. You know, back in the early '80s, I never really remember seeing osprey around, and they're everywhere, and it just... But it can -- it's so important that it could be so much better, you know, with the pollution and the runoffs, and, you know, even them allowing people to build houses right on the -- you know, in big apartment complexes and everything. It just should be better protected, I think. But money will -- money's going to rule it, so...

Q: Are there any other things you think should happen to protect the Bay?

A: [00:30:49] I just really think building is -- it's crazy what they allow, and, you know, even in this area, I've lived in Selby all these years, and just they build and build and build, and there's no end in sight, and there's no stopping it. You know, we've tried to cut down on... I mean, people should be able to build a house, but not, like, townhouses and apartment complexes and stuff. It's all running off into the Bay. Because the Bay's a really

cool -- you know, with the crabs and the oysters, it's just unique, so...

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: [00:31:28] But...

Q: It's special. If you had any advice for future female captains, what would you tell them? What did --

A: [00:31:42] Just do it. You know, just don't let anyone's limitations or expectations stop you from doing it. Just do it. You know, I just got it in my head, and I remember quite a few people when I was going for my captain's license saying, "Oh, you're a girl; you can't do that." And I'm like, that made me more determined. Whatever you want to do, you can do it, period. And don't worry about looking like a fool. I think there was a saying that Gloria Steinem had, I had on my desk at work, and it said, "If -- don't ever worry about looking foolish. That's -- that goes along with achieving what you want." So don't be afraid to, like -- when I first got my boat, and all these guys would watch me dock it, you know, and I'm thinking, oh my God, you know, I'm going to look like an idiot. And I'm just saying to myself, just do it. If they can do it, you can do it. Just don't let anything stop you. If you've got a dream, you can do anything you put your mind to. That's my advice.

Q: That's good advice. [laughter] Very good. Do younger women ask you for advice?

A: [00:33:02] Not... No, not really. No, there are just still not a lot of women that are really in it, you know? Like, I know a friend of mine, Doug, he has a young girl that -- well, she's not real young, but she's married with two kids, but she mates for him sometimes. But a lot of women still aren't, you know, in it that much, so... No, I don't think really anyone's ever asked me much about it.

Q: So why do you think women aren't in the business?

A: [00:33:42] I think some things -- some walls are harder to pull down, or... I don't know. Even, like, when I worked at PEPCO, and I was in an all-male drafting department, sometimes it's tough, you know, being on a new frontier, and it's tough breaking down walls, but if people didn't then no one -- then women wouldn't be getting chances like they could if other ones didn't have the balls to go for it, or the lack of balls. [laughter]

Q: So, for you, what's been the most difficult thing?

A: [00:34:24] What, about running a charter boat?

Q: Yeah.

A: [00:34:28] I guess at the beginning, you know, when people wouldn't like, talk with you or bother with you, but, like I said, that could be anybody, you know, that was new

coming in. But I think the hardest thing was, like, breaking in and proving yourself, but everyone's got to do it, too, so you can't just blame it because you're a woman, you know what I mean? You just got to... Just got to have just determination, because I'll tell you, that test was a tough one, and once I got that, then, you know, finding the boat and everything. But just got to have a dream and go for it.

Q: Mm-hmm. I'm looking at the bandage on your hand.

[laughter] Is there a story that's involved in the bandage on your hand, Cindy?

A: [00:35:21] Yes. You want to see a picture?

Q: Just -- can you just tell me the story? [laughs]

A: [00:35:27] I've been doing this for 43 years, and a couple weeks ago I just slipped and cut the hell out of my hand with the filet knife. I've never cut myself, never got hooked. I had a couple things on my legs, you know, with dorsal fins, but, yeah, I had to be thrown on another boat. I went and told Bobby. I was cutting up bait for catfishing, and I ran up and I told Bobby. I said, "Bobby, I cut myself." And he looked at me like, yeah, whatever. And I said, "No, I cut myself really bad," and it was really bad. And they -- he called Doug, that runs *Backdraft*, and he came over. His boat's a lot faster. And

they zoomed me into the marina, and there was an ambulance waiting, and they took me to Baltimore Shock Trauma, and I got a handful of stitches. And --

Q: How's it doing now?

A: [00:36:22] It's there. [laughs] I'm lucky. The nurse said that she's -- well, I had to wait for the hand specialist to get out of the OR. She said she's never seen a cut so bad that it didn't get one of three things: the nerve, the tendon, or an artery, though I did nick an artery. But she said I really did a number, and I did a number.

Q: So are you still going out on the boat?

A: [00:36:50] Yep, I was up there the next day. Now, the next day I went up there just to get my stuff off the boat and everything. We didn't fish, but the following weekend we had four charters, and, yes, I fished every charter. I just wrapped the hell out of it, put on a rubber glove, put another rubber glove on top of it, and went for it. So...
[laughs]

Q: Bravo, you. So I asked you this before, and we can stop and think about it again, but do you -- when I ask you about memories of sort of favorite times out on the boat, does anything come to mind? Place? Time?

A: [00:37:33] Gosh, I wish I would've thought of this.
There's -- after so many years of doing it, there's so many

stories, but... Gosh. I guess one of them was probably with -- like, on opening day, I would -- we would always take family. Like, I'd take my dad, and Bobby would take his brother, and my uncles, and, you know, just family on opening day every year. And I guess that's probably one of my most special memories is that -- always to have them -- those memories, and pictures of my dad and my uncles and my -- even my nephew and his best friend, and, you know, that is just being able to share that with them, and take them out, you know, take them out. And I think my uncle was proud of me, because he always had a boat, and he taught Chris and I a lot about boats, and he was proud of me. He made me that. So... But I have to think about that, because there are so many stories, and they're all blurred, and I'm having a brain --

Q: Well, one might still come to you while we're talking.

A: [00:38:46] Yeah.

Q: So your uncle made this wonderful model of the *Sea Hag* that Cindy has that I'm looking at --

A: [00:38:54] Yeah.

Q: -- right now. What did your father think of you becoming a captain?

A: [00:39:00] Well, he probably won't like me saying this, but he said -- [laughs] he said, "You can't do that; you're a

girl." And then I remember -- I guess the more I was told that, the more determined I was to do it. But then after I did it and got my boat, he was one of my biggest support system, you know. As a matter of fact, even worked as a mate a couple times on the boat with me, and, you know, to this day he loves it, and he goes out with us a lot fishing, and I think he's probably proud of me. But it was different back then, back that long ago, you know, and that's just how it was. But I showed them. [laughs] I think the more people tell you you can't do something, the more you're determined you're going to do it. But, yeah, he's happy. He loves being on the boat. He loves fishing. And my mom really supported me a lot, too.

Q: Did she fish?

A: [00:39:58] Well, she used to take her and her best friend, my -- I call her Aunt Pat -- they used to take Aunt Pat's boy and her nephew and my cousin Theresa and I down the causeway in Solomons, camping and fishing, when we were kids, just them two, pitch a tent and fish and stuff. But other than that, no. But yeah, they'll go out more. She likes more to get on the boat and go eat crabs and fish and that, so... And Bobby's been a huge support, Bobby and Bonnie, because I work on the *Bonnie Sue*. And Bobby's always had my back, even when he worked as a mate for me,

and his wife, her allowing us to work together like she has, you know, they're two of my best friends, and we've been best friends for years and years. And a lot of women wouldn't let their husbands go out fishing with a girl all them years all the time, because we're fishing all the time, and --

Q: And she's the Bonnie Sue?

A: [00:40:57] She's the Bonnie Sue, and she's great. But...

Q: So do you still -- do you play captain sometimes, or you mate, or is he captain, or how do you do that?

A: [00:41:09] Yeah. Well, I'm still a captain. You've got to renew your license every few years and stuff, and we run it together, but it's mainly Bobby's boat. But, you know, I drive. He drives. I rig -- I -- most of the time, I rig, you know, the rods and the spring and stuff, and, you know, I do a lot of the stuff, but he -- a lot of times, he cleans the fish, mainly, and, you know, I'll clean up the boat. We just work perfect together. We both -- like, a lot of captains never leave the front of the boat. You know, they'll do all the driving, and the mate will do all the back. We call it the pointy end and the square end. But Bobby and I mesh. We do -- both of us do everything, so...

Q: Oh, that's real teamwork. That's great.

A: [00:41:52] Yeah, we're -- it's a team. We do. We're lucky, because a lot of teams don't last out there.

Q: And how long do you think you'll continue?

A: [00:42:02] I think we're just going to keep on going till we can't go anymore. [laughter]

Q: So how did you get involved with the Her Helm project?

A: [00:42:16] You know, that's really a good question. I think... I think Janet Rupp -- she runs the *Lucky Duck* -- I think she told her about me. And at first, I didn't want to do it, because, I don't know, I can talk nonstop, but when I have to, you know, like, get interviewed, or have to do different things, I get nervous. And I thought, oh, I don't... And then she, you know, call-- kept calling me a few times, and my brother, Gary, he said, "You're crazy. Get involved in that. You got some wild stories to tell." And then I met her, and she came over to my house one day, and she told me about you all, and I did give you the runaround a little, but I've been -- you know, we've been real busy.

Q: You're great. You're great.

A: [00:43:09] So...

Q: You're great.

A: [00:43:11] But...

Q: So, some more wild stories?

A: [00:43:17] Mm... Just being out, like... Let me see... I know, like, being out there in really, really, really rough seas, and we run planer boards that are like outriggers, and, like, one would jump up, and we have all these fishing rods hanging off one side, and all these fishing rods hanging off the other, and, like, they would dive under and all go up, and I'd just yell out, like, what -- we had all guys on the boat that day -- like, "Everyone grab a rod and reel it in." And, you know, they're all reeling it in, and we're out, like, three-and-a-half-foot, four-foot seas, and throwing everything on the dock, and I just, like, have to re-rig everything going in, and just being out in some pretty wild weather. And, you know, we always helping tow each other in, different people. I remember one opening -- one opening day, not that long ago, probably about eight years ago, a boat sunk and I think two or three people drowned and died. And one of the guys swam to shore and made it, but the other ones passed away. But I remember looking for bodies out there, from boats, you know, that sunk, that the Coast Guard would tell us, please, you know, check out, you know, with -- you know, on the bodies, and look for stuff like that. And just trying to think... I'm drawing a blank. I have to think and get back to you on

that, because I do have -- I should have thought more about that.

Q: Oh, no, don't worry. So is there something that you would like future generations to know about you, and the water, and your experience?

A: [00:45:00] Um... I just think sometimes when you're offered, like, an adventure in life -- like, I really didn't know anything about fishing when I started dating Chris, and a lot of people won't give things a chance in life, you know, like, oh, I can't do that, or I -- I'll never be able to do that, or I don't like to fish, or anything, I don't like to ski or whatever. Give everything a chance, because you don't know how much you might fall in love with something. You know, just because it's, quote, a guy's sport, or even a woman's sport, or whatever, give anything -- anything you're offered, give it a try. Give - - you know, and not just once or twice. You know, give it a try, and you'll be surprised how much you can learn to love something, because it turned into my life, you know, and when I first started fishing with Chris, I used to rag. I wouldn't even touch these little fish. I was, "Oh, I don't want to touch a worm!" And now I'm like, whatever. You know, you -- it's -- you just got to take any adventure

in life that you can. Live life to the fullest, because there is an adventure around every corner. [laughs]

Q: Especially on the water. [laughs]

A: [00:46:20] Yeah, yeah, yeah, there's a lot of crazy, crazy times out in the water. But none that I can think of right now. [laughs]

Q: No... Are you going out tomorrow?

A: [00:46:33] As a matter of fact, I'm leaving for the beach tomorrow, but I'm fishing -- we take a lot of young kids out from camp, this camp in Virginia. It's a camp that the parents send their kids, and each day they do, like, kayaking one day, pier fishing one day, different -- and on the Friday, they go out fishing with us. And we -- you know, it's so exciting to take the kids out, and they, you know, go out, and we catch all these fish, and they get all excited. And we have them next Friday, so, yes, when I get back from that -- I'm fishing next Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. So, you know, sometimes we fish five days a week. Sometimes we fish three. You know, it's different. You know, matters if the fishing's good or whatever. Because we have a website, too, that we post a lot of stuff on, and people can see, you know, if the fishing's good, or we'll call them, say "Fishing's red hot, come on," or, "Fishing sucks, do you want to change the date?" But, yeah.

Q: I saw your website. Who put it together?

A: [00:47:41] Bobby did. Bobby. But it's -- I was looking at it the other day because of you, and it's all outdated.

[laughs] But yeah, I think I'm holding a fish on there. It was the biggest fish we've ever caught together. It was 49 and three quarter inches, almost 50 pounds.

Q: That's really big.

A: [00:47:59] And, yeah, just netting that and getting it in the boat, it's just -- it's like midget wrestling. It's like -- [laughs] trying to get -- you know, trying to get the hook out of the mouth, and get it measured and in the box, and... Yeah, it's a lot of fun. But we're fishing out of Baltimore now. All the fish are way up north, and we moved our boat up to Baltimore. We're fishing out of Dundalk now.

Q: So you have to go to Baltimore to take your charters out.

A: [00:48:25] Mm-hmm. Yep. Bobby and I meet at the Turtle, and it takes us about 45 minutes to get up there, and the charters come up there, but it's a new experience. It's cool, because we've been fishing out of Happy Harbor for, you know, the last 19 years, and I fished in Solomons and Point Lookout before that. But it's an experience. I really like it.

Q: So, for the record here, Happy Harbor is where?

A: [00:48:49] Deale, Maryland, but --

Q: In Dear.

A: [00:48:51] In Deale, but there's Deale Island. It's not Deale Island; it's Deale, Maryland, D-E-A-L-E. It's right -- it's above Chesapeake Beach and below Annapolis, so...

Q: And so where in Baltimore are you?

A: [00:49:07] We're up in Dundalk, and we're at the Hard Yacht Cafe, and eight of us boats went up there. So, as a matter of fact, I was saying, you know, like, when I cut my hand, how many guys helped. You know, Bobby called Doug over, and Doug got me, and Kenny's his mate, and he's a fireman, and he wrapped my hand up for me, and, you know, they had the ambulance waiting. So we're, like, a big, big group now. you know, my best friends now, so...

Q: So is it different, fishing out of Baltimore?

A: [00:49:42] Yeah, fishing's wide open up there right now. We're slamming the fish, yeah. Yeah. It's -- we've been following them. You know, we were going up there last year, too. It changes every year, you know. I will tell you a one...one wild story. We -- when we were going down the Bay, Bobby saw a big tugboat. It had a real big, round tent on it. And Bobby called the tugboat. He said, "Captain, what are you hauling?" And it was the elephants from the Barnum & Bailey Circus. They were bringing them

from Baltimore down to Norfolk for the circus. Yeah.

We've seen some wild stuff out there, like big fleets of the Navy ships coming up for the Naval graduation, and we go up and take charters up to anchor out to see the Blue Angels every year, too. That's fun. So we -- and we do bar hop, and, you know, some -- a group of girls charter us just to go bar hopping some days, and they're wild. That's wild days. [laughs]

Q: Doing that up in the Baltimore area or down here?

A: [00:50:44] All over.

Q: All over.

A: [00:50:45] Yeah. Yeah. So we, you know, do different things, but...

Q: That's interest-- I've never heard of that. That's great.
[laughs]

A: [00:50:53] What, bar hopping?

Q: On a boat.

A: [00:50:56] Oh, yeah. Yeah, we've gone up to the Jetty, Tilghman, Characters. You know, all over the place.

Q: That's great.

A: [00:51:04] Yeah.

Q: So have you taken the boat...? I mean, you're in Baltimore now. Other years, have you found that you had to go other places on the boat?

A: [00:51:13] Only one year. Last year, we came up to my neighborhood. I have a marina down at -- right at the bottom, and we were in here, because the fish were moved up, but it was so long for us to go from Deale up to Baltimore to get the fish, so we moved up there. But, yeah, it's weird how things happen, because back in the '80s, all the fishing, the hot fishing was down Point Lookout and Solomons, and through the years it moved up. You know, it was, like, Chesapeake Beach, and then Deale, and they just keep moving up, and the dolphin are coming up in the Bay and, you know, chase them, and they're just moving. It's crazy. Because I never thought we'd be fishing up by Baltimore. Yeah.

Q: So why do you --

A: [00:51:52] We'll be fishing and look over and there's a cruise ship just passing right by us. It's crazy.
[laughs]

Q: So why do you think it -- any thoughts on why it's happening?

A: [00:52:03] I just guess, I don't know, global warming, or the dolphin, or...

Q: The dolphin are incredible.

A: [00:52:12] I know, and they're really cool to see, but they're just eating up everything in sight. Yeah. Because

back when I lived on a boat -- I lived on a boat in Galesville. I lived on a 36-foot sport fisherman, Chris and I did, and they caught, like, a -- I think it was, like, a 5 or 600-pound bull shark in the nets at Thomas Point Lighthouse when we lived on the boat. So there's sharks come up in -- you know, bull sharks come up into the Bay, too. Yeah.

Q: Yeah. [laughs]

A: [00:52:46] And we've seen turtles. We've seen all kinds of stuff out there. You know, big turtles. But...

Q: Well, that's great. Well, let me see. Is there anything that you would like to add to this conversation, anything about your experience we haven't talked about?

A: [00:53:04] Mm...

Q: Anything that --

A: [00:53:06] I'm the worst interviewer ever. [laughs] I have so many stories, and I'm drawing a blank. No, just that, you know, it's just a whole 'nother lifestyle out there, that, you know, that people don't really realize how much... You know, like, I remember all the old guys when I was a young girl and just starting out, down Solomons, you know. I remember Junior Ward and Captain Langley and stuff, and, you know, they didn't have anything, you know, no electronics or anything. And I remember just them

teaching us stuff, and looking for oil slicks on top of the water, and, you know, you could line up your boat by parts of the land because you didn't have anything but a compass, and just how much it's changed, and how hard people work on the water. Like, when people say to me, "Oh, you're a charter boat captain, that's wonderful," and it is, but it's a job. Like, I work my ass off out there, and, you know, it's not just getting on in the morning, you know, rigging the rods, or restringing the rods, and just getting everything ready. It's a lot of work. Like, the crabbers that are out there in the morning, and, you know, we see them out there ev-- you know, alone, and all the -- you know, the oysters guys and stuff, and how hard that they work, and the really no respect that they get, you know. All the restaurants make all this money for the crabs, and the guys that do all the work really don't get much. But, yeah, fishing's a lot of work. It's addicting, and it's my life, but it's -- you know, there's a lot involved in it. It'll wear you out. [laughs]

Q: So you mentioned the oil slicks. Why is it important to notice the oil slicks?

A: [00:54:58] Well, back in those days, like, if there was a lot of fish, the oil would come up to the top of the water,

like, the trout, and you could tell that the fish were under there, because [off of?] them, you know.

Q: I didn't know that. This is good.

A: [00:55:12] Yeah.

[break in audio]

A: [00:55:16] No, I'm --

Q: Wait a second.

A: [00:55:17] Okay. When Isabel was coming in, a hurricane, I went down to the boat, and, you know, we put plywood up so that the boats don't bounce and get holes in them and stuff, and nobody -- hardly anybody, you know, stayed on their boat. And my boyfriend at the time says, "You better bring your motorcycle helmet, because I'm not coming with you." I said, "Well, what do I need that for?" He said, "If something blows and hits you in the head." And I loaded up my stuff, I went down there, and I spent the night on my boat during Isabel, and there was two older men down at the B dock -- I'm -- we're on the B dock, and the A dock's along [by?], and there was -- a couple guys stayed on that. And as the water rose up, we went out there and we turned all the lines around, and we lifted up the -- you know, loosened the lines so that none of the boats sank. And it was a wicked storm. And I swam through the back of Happy Harbor to get to another boat, to drink beer with

some of the guys on another boat, and that was a really -- it looked like a bomb hit, like, Herrington Harbor, Rod and Reel, all of that. There were boats all over the place. Everything was all crazy. And, yeah, I spent the night on that boat that night. Would I do it now? No, but [laughs] back then -- but back then I was up for any adventure. And we did save boats by doing what we did, because in the morning when I got off the dock I was up to my chest in water. And I did have a couple pictures of...

Q: Did you learn anything about storm preparation from that night?

A: [00:57:01] Oh, yeah. I learned a lot. Well, I learned, you know, putting two-by-fours up -- and now, most of the boats, they just pull them, but back then, you know, we would... Because -- do you know where Happy Harbor is?

Q: It doesn't matter. I can edit it out if you want.

A: [00:57:19] Yeah. No. No, this guy, Rob Scheer -- every year at Christmas, all my girlfriends, you know, we would exchange candles, or just bunch of stuff that we don't need and we don't want and stuff, and I just thought, let's just quit exchanging gifts, worrying about all that, getting bottles of wine and stuff. We don't need all that. Let's just, you know, get together up at the Turtle and have a few drinks and stuff. And then I thought, you know, I saw

on this TV that this -- that they needed pajamas for the homeless shelters, and I started the first year like that. Then I saw something in I think it was *People* magazine. It's called Comfort Cases. And this guy, Rob Scheer, he's amazing, and he started it. He was in foster care all growing up. He was one of, like, eight or ten children. And his life was horrible. And he started this. He said, "I showed up with a trash bag. That's what they gave me when I went house to house. That's all I had was my stuff in a trash bag." And he's gay, and they adopted four little kids. They're white, and the four little kids they adopted are Black, and they went through hell because they didn't want first gay and then being white and a Black... His story is unbelievable. He's got two books out on it. But he started Comfort Cases, and what you do is you get a suitcase or a duffle bag, and there's a list of stuff that you've got to put in there, like pajamas, toothbrush, a teddy bear, a little blanket, a book, a journal, and it goes all the way up to teenagers. And I've done it every year. Gosh, I think it's been, like, eight or nine years now, and I've done, like, thousands, I think, of suitcases that -- and it just keeps getting bigger and bigger at the Green Turtle, and people donate money. And then I bring them back here, and I have all my girlfriends come over,

and we go through to make sure every suitcase has what it needs, because they have to have the same amount, because if it's a brother and sister, you know, the first year people were overpacking them. But he just is unbelievable, and every year, right before Christmas, instead of exchanging friends with -- presents with my -- well, they used to have smaller kids, too -- we just put everything into this Comfort Case drive, and then we bring them up and deliver them to him in Rockville. And he's been on Ellen's show. He's been on TV. And he's trying to change the foster system, that a kid isn't given a trash bag, because when he adopted his kids and they showed up at his doorstep with a trash bag, he says, this has been 30 years and this is still going on. So he's just amazing, so...

Q: It's a lovely way to give back.

A: [01:00:08] Yeah. It is. And word gets out, too. Like, a lot of my charters know about it. And I also save beer tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. One year we gave them 98 pounds of beer tabs, because there's a lot of beer drinking going on in the charter boats. [laughs] But I'll let you know, because Kirsten -- I always say her name wrong. Kirsten? Kristen.

Q: Kristen.

A: [01:00:38] She came to my Comfort Cases last year. She's cool. You and her are really a lot alike.

Q: We've enjoyed meeting each other.

A: [01:00:47] Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

END OF AUDIO FILE