Interview

With

WILLY PHILLIPS

In

Columbia,

North Carolina

Interviewed by Barbara Garrity-Blake

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Transcribed by Mary Williford

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BARBARA GARRITY-BLAKE: Okay. It is December 6th, 2016, and I have the great pleasure of sitting here on a dreary, rainy, lovely December morning, talking to Mister Willy Phillips here at Full Circle Crab Company. So, Willy, thank you for agreeing to be part of this look at the Fisheries Reform Act.

WILLY PHILLIPS: Welcome, Barbara! [Laughs]

BGB: So, Willy, can you take us—well, first just for the record, can you just describe the type of business you're in?

WP: Yeah, I'm a wholesale retail seafood dealer, and we have a retail store on Highway 64 that connects Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill with the Outer Banks, and we have, we buy from a hundred different fishermen and crabbers over the course of the year, and we have another buying station down on the Croatan Sound. We employ fifteen people during the season and, in winter months, it drops down to about eight.

BGB: So, but you're not from Columbia, are you?

WP: No, I'm from New Hanover County. I was raised on Masonboro Sound, right next to a fish house, Alford's fish house, so my early youth was spent over at the fish house with mounds of shrimp and flounder and whatnot coming in; my first job was heading shrimp for a nickel a pound.

BGB: Wow. So, can you describe that first, the first time in your life where you became aware of fisheries politics and decided to really start paying attention and, perhaps, get involved?

WP: Well, in the early days when I was fishing, there were no rules and regulations to speak of. There were—I don't remember a license, even. We didn't mark buoys for crab pots, we had no limits on oysters, and I don't really recall there being a lot of oversight as to what was going on within the commercial fishing world. It was after I came back from, I was drafted for

Vietnam and when I came back, after staying in Europe for three years, I was more politically aware and had been some, I had spent some time in political action before being drafted, and then when I came back to the United States, I desired to get into the commercial industry, but it was not really active until, probably, the water quality issues started to surface on the Pamlico [River] in the late [19]70s and early ‘80s.

BGB: What kind of water quality issues did you notice?

WP: The dead water that occurred. Texas Gulf, or the Death Star, as we called it, was pumping a million pounds of phosphate into the river right at a section of the river where the anadromous fish spawned and it coated the bottom and turned the river dead, and we had massive spells of anoxia, which drove fish right up on the shore, and crabs, and they had lesions on them and upon investigation, we found out that they had an expired permit that they’d been operating under for five years.

BGB: Oh, Texas Gulf?

WP: Yes.

BGB: Wow.

WP: So, we decided to make that known and got involved with the press and started detailing some of our concerns, and the Director at that time, Bill Hogarth, was very supportive and came out and went on the boats with us and declared the waters commercially dead, and that we had—North Carolina Fisheries Association, under Tom Caroon, who was also very active and supportive, and we’d made a lot of headway. In the end, Texas Gulf went to a closed-loop system and removed their discharge from the river. So it was then that we began to pay more attention to some of the fisheries policies that were affecting us, as well as the water quality and habitat issues.

BGB: And when you say ‘in the early years’ when you say ‘we’, was there an actual organization?

WP: No, it was generally my wife and I! [Laughs] There were, we did get help from various groups from time to time but we weren’t really joiners and didn’t, sort of, chafed under the restrictions of having to go through a spokesperson. So when we saw what we felt to be injustice, we spoke about it. Consequently, we became the person to go to for, generally, opinion about water quality issues from a fishing perspective on the river. Which became somewhat uncomfortable, but then when we got into the crabbing industry pretty strong, there was another Caroon brother, Cash Caroon from Southport, who was Chairman of the Marine Fisheries Commission, who came up with the proposal to limit the number of crab pots to 250 pots per person, and that was, I think, mostly out of concerns between trawlers and crab-potters, over competing territory and resources. So when that came about, we decided it was time to get active in the marine policy end of it, as well.

BGB: So, did you oppose that proposal or support it?

WP: We certainly did, yep. Didn’t really feel there was a justification for it; it was just something that he took as his own initiative and we felt as though there needed to be a broader discussion.

BGB: And there was a broader discussion there!

WP: Yes, there was!

BGB: Can you talk about how that unfolded?

WP: Yep. Well, the impetus was that the—I guess proposal—that Cash made for the 250 pot limit was very unpopular within the industry, so we organized a meeting to be held in Belhaven, I believe it was in [19]93? I got all that stuff right here, if you should need it—in

which we had Larry Simms come down from the Maryland Watermen's Association, and we had Mike Orbach speak, who was on the commission at that time, and I'd had a lot of discussion with over some of the effort management techniques that were being used around the country. We had about 500 people that showed up.

BGB: 'We' being--? Did you have an organization at this point?

WP: No, we formed an organization.

BGB: Eventually?

WP: Crabber's League of Aware Watermen.

BGB: The Crabber's League of Aware Watermen, or, N.C. C.L.A.W.

WP: Right, N.C. C.L.A.W. That's right.

BGB: But that hadn't happened yet at this big meeting?

WP: No, I think this was the organizational kick-off, that's what it was.

BGB: Okay, okay.

WP: And it was a good crowd; rowdy as usual, involved. I think people came away energized for the actual prospect of actually making a difference by at least saying no to the current proposal.

BGB: M hm.

WP: So, I think it was Fidel [Castro] that said you always had to have an enemy to have a revolution. So, he had America and we had the Marine Fisheries Commission.

BGB: Alright. So how did that dovetail or, is that the right word? What did that have to do with the beginnings of the Moratorium Steering Committee, which led to the Fisheries Reform Act?

WP: Well, we took the momentum that we gathered at that meeting, and it was basically

Robin Doxie and myself that were pushing all of this forward, even though there were—we had help from various sources, mostly phone calls and organization came between us. We decided to have another meeting up in the Manteo area and involve the legislature. Senator Marc Basnight had been a crabber when he was a kid, and he was a great, is a great proponent for commercial fishing industry and was interested in becoming involved in any way that he could, to be helpful. So we got together with him and he listened to the concerns of the fishermen and made a proposal that there be a moratorium on the licenses, which was of, not necessarily the way we were going, but we felt as though we couldn't turn down any help from somebody as powerful as Marc Basnight. And so we went along with it and he initiated that through the legislature while, at the same time, adding on other provisions for staff positions within the division, specifically for crab biologists and some other things to help us along and develop a crab management plan, if you will, or an idea of what to do.

BGB: Right.

WP: Because there was a lot of concern, at that time, that the industry was basically becoming just, the one that could afford the most gear was the one that was going to become successful, and there was no limit on the resource at the time, that we could tell it, we felt that it was only a matter of time with people piling into it because of the restrictions in the other fisheries, that we would be overwhelmed with effort, and the catch would drop. It's, I mean, we've just gone through probably the worst crab year back-to-back that we've had, even though the numbers say that we've had 30,000,000 pounds or whatever, back in the [19]90s, we were at 60,000,000.

BGB: Oh, you're talking about the worst year right now?

WP: Yeah.

BGB: Oh.

WP: It's probably been the worst year right now we've had forever.

BGB: Oh, my gosh.

WP: In the crab industry. We've had one good month, a month and a half after [Hurricane] Matthew, where the crabs came out of the woodwork; they were everywhere.

BGB: Uh huh.

WP: But I think we made quite a few mistakes here at the beginning; we've continued to make mistakes, but we're pretty naïve, we didn't have any real political experience. We were going on face value, taking people at their word for what they were doing, and that sort of thing. We're babes in the wood.

BGB: What mistakes can you think of that you would change?

WP: I think the mistake, the broadest mistake, was believing that the system, once alerted, would respond. And it didn't, and it would've taken a great deal more work to build the political base to actually enact the changes that needed to be made. I think part of it is just naivety of not realizing that only so many factors can be influenced, that there was a great deal of outside interference from those within the industry and those who have political axes to grind, and those who had political ambition, to jump on the bandwagon and go forward with it. That's certainly what happened with the whole crab effort; it was sort of snowballed into a much more broader Fisheries Reform Act rather than dealing specifically with the crab industry.

BGB: It sure was!

WP: Yeah.

BGB: Do you think that was a mistake? To have management plans for these other species and advisory--?

WP: As it turns out, it was. Yes.

BGB: Why?

WP: I think it was because it looked great on paper, but it was just impossible to accomplish given the restrictions of the staff and the burnout factors of the people that were involved, from an advisory capacity. And the Division [of Marine Fisheries] was very reluctant to accept any advice. So we were operating under the assumption, more or less in a bubble, that we could enact change without addressing the fundamental problems, which are water quality and habitat within our ecosystem, that's limiting everything that we do. We just ignore that fact because we can't influence it, and yet that's the overriding factor that's holding us back from being able to build an industry.

BGB: Do you think that that is the greatest shortcoming of the Fisheries Reform Act, is not really addressing the habitat and water quality issues?

WP: Absolutely. Yeah. The Marine Fisheries Commission has two hands tied behind its back, as does the Division. They can comment on different permitting decisions but they can't really influence it one way or the other, even the recently-adopted C.H.P.P. [Coastal Habitat Protection Plan] program is really a watered-down effort, as has the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study. Every initiative that's come along has run into this insurmountable political force that is not interested in insuring that we can drink the water that comes from these sounds, or that we can eat the fish that come from it, we can swim in them without getting rashes. Just three basic things.

BGB: Yeah.

WP: And they won't even do that, so we continue to use the rivers and creeks as a waste streams, and we can't have an industry trying to operate out of a cesspool; that's what we've got

right now.

BGB: Yeah.

WP: It's pitiful, but that's the long and the short of it. It's, if it hadn't been for people like Jess Hawkins, who virtually attended every meeting of every advisory group and every regional advisory group, it would've faded out long ago. But through his super-human efforts to try and make it work, it staggered on. But really, I don't believe, ever has accomplished much.

BGB: And now he's retired.

WP: Yeah.

BGB: It's just a different ballgame.

WP: It is a different ballgame, and the Division [of Marine Fisheries] really doesn't have the resources to do what it's been charged with.

BGB: Yeah.

WP: There're a lot of good people at the Division, don't get me wrong, they've done great work over the years.

BGB: Oh, I know. Yeah.

WP: I have all of the timelines and everything on this.

BGB: Yeah, okay.

WP: You know, I think that aside from Jess Hawkins, Orbach deserves a lot of credit because, when Orbach came over from California and got on the Commission for the first time, I remember the first meeting in Greenville, I had a discussion with him, it was like the window had been thrown open and fresh air came in.

BGB: Wow!

WP: Because he was so full of what was occurring in other places and what the

possibilities were of fishermen actually managing their own fishery, which is the initial effort that we made, and I had that proposal. I think you were there, the Moratorium Steering Committee meeting in Morehead [City], where I made the proposal for the crabbers, as to what we'd like to see within our fishery? It was basically ignored. But we were the only group, of all the fisheries management planned groups, that came forward with our own proposal, and I didn't realize it, but the politics had already gone on and there was really no way for that to have been included.

BGB: Oh.

WP: And yet, we were the ones that, in good faith, came forward with a license by share and a lot of that was due to Orbach's influence, for good and for bad. But he was the one that brought, I guess, just the confidence to try and accept that we could manage our own fishery rather than have someone else dictate what we needed to do. And that was—

BGB: Refreshing, huh?

WP: --very refreshing, yeah.

BGB: Yeah.

WP: Energizing.

BGB: Why hasn't that happened? What prevents that? Is it just the bureaucratic weight?

WP: I think it's the fishermen themselves.

BGB: Really?

WP: I really do.

BGB: Why?

WP: I don't believe the fishermen are at the stage of their, I don't know how to describe it, self-determination? They're not at the level to where they're willing to do much more than just

complain, and it's easier to complain—I did it for many years myself.

BGB: And there's reasons to complain!

WP: There certainly are! It's so easy to tear down; it's so hard to build back. And most of them don't have the skills to do it, the patience to do it, the time to do it, or the inclination to do it. And they would rather be on some high-and-mighty, if you will, hill and proclaim because they have generations of forbearers that scraped out some sort of a marginal existence fishing, that they have a right to do the same thing, except at a higher level. Fishermen have never, in history, been rich, but we have some rich fishermen in North Carolina that have made a very good lick off of the fishing industry. And they're just unwilling to enter the process; it's not shown them anything other than taking, you know. There's been no give back. All of the efforts to work with the Division for gear and all those things have just—there've been more and more restrictions that've come out of it to where now, there's virtually no gill netting that goes on in North Carolina, quite possibly gonna be a much-reduced trawl fleet, and the number of commercial fishermen that are making a full, 100% of their income off of commercial fishing I would say is probably in the low hundreds, two-three hundred maybe, in the state. And that's pitiful. But they won't engage in a positive manner, and they don't recognize that you can't afford the luxury of being extreme; you've got to compromise, you've got to come together and find common ground in order to make a living. When I was growing up, it was a whole other demographic on the coast, and since the [19]50s, that's completely changed. Now we have a whole lot of people that've moved in here from other places and other values, and commercial fishing is not a viable option any longer. We used to have a whale industry, we used to have a porpoise industry, we used to have a red drum industry, clam factories, we used to have all kinds of things, and those times have gone by.

BGB: Herring cannery.

WP: Herring fisheries and the menhaden fishery and numerous bursts of income and economy that, their time's gone by. And it's happening with commercial fishing right now, but they don't recognize that fact. They're willing to fight to the end and fall off the cliff.

BGB: Do you have any ideas of what could change that?

WP: Yeah, the complete elimination of commercial fishing in the state.

BGB: Yeah, talk about that.

WP: Well, commercial fishing in North Carolina has been going through the slow death throes for twenty, twenty-five years, and what we're ending up with is pretty much the bottom of the barrel. The people that have any sort of initiative, it's like a brain drain in a small community, like ours in Columbia, where all the kids with any kind of pizzazz or smarts take off and go somewhere else. Leave. And so it's low tide in the gene pool, as we say, in the commercial fishing industry, and we don't have a lot to work with. So we have to rebuild it, remold it, and the first thing we have to do is eliminate commercial fishing.

BGB: Licenses?

WP: Stop it.

BGB: Okay.

WP: Rebuild it. From scratch.

BGB: 'Cause earlier, you were saying let's just revoke all the licenses. Then, what criteria would you establish?

WP: That would take a lot of discussion, and it would--.

BGB: But what are you getting at, is what I'm saying.

WP: What I'm getting at is that the individuals that we need back in the industry have to

be positive and they have to contribute and they have to, I'm talking about to the society at large, not just their own little community. And they have to be businesspeople, first and foremost, and they have to be able to survive in a changing capitalist economy, and recognize the fact that it's not going to be like it was in the [19]50s or the '40s or the '30s, and that it's a new time and you have to be flexible, and you have to be willing to do what it takes to make it work. But first and foremost, you've got to be quick, agile, and smart. And businesspeople.

BGB: But how do you get—I mean, you can't create that in people.

WP: No. We're not trying to create it in people. We're putting out a call for people. We're going, we're calling for the best and brightest that want a future. We're not looking for people that can't do anything else to fall into commercial fishing, which is what we have now.

BGB: So when you say 'tear it down so it can be built back up'--?

WP: Burn it down!

BGB: Burn it down so it can be built back up. Do you not think there's any value in the generational connections, in the knowledge that's been passed down?

WP: No. I don't. I think the whole generational and traditional thing is way overworked. It's like a fella told me one time, he was talking about how valuable this was to have this industry that's got such a wonderful tapestry of history and this generational bonding and everything, he said, 'Don't look too close, mate.' He said, 'Underneath that's alcoholism, wife abuse, and all the rest of that crap.' He said, 'No different than any other people!' And I said, 'Well, that's true, no different than any other, but they lived during this time, in this place.' And he said, 'Footnote in history!'

BGB: Wow.

WP: And it really has its place, you know. There is a place for that, there is the history in

that, but we don't have time for that. Just because you're born into a family with the last name of Tillett or Etheridge or Daniels or Smith, that doesn't mean squat. It's time to come up with people that are gonna work for a living, don't work off daddy's money or daddy's legacy or, just because Willy Etheridge IV, or whatever, I'm entitled to be able to go out there and get tuna so I can exploit the image for commercial value. No! This is, we're trying to build an industry here, and all of that is baggage.

BGB: How important is the commercial fishing industry, Willy?

WP: To who?

BGB: To society.

WP: I think it's very important if it's the right commercial industry. We don't need the food. We're getting 90% of it from overseas; that'll only continue. It's—they're at the other value that they bring to the table.

BGB: Such as?

WP: The potential that they bring to the table, as being the stewards of the public trust resource, of being people that are out there on a daily basis, able to record and pass on to the other people within the state that depend on their seafood, the conditions of the waters they're in. There's a huge, huge population in-state that has no idea what's happening out here when it comes to our waters and whatnot; they just flush the toilet and it goes into the Roanoke River in Roanoke, Virginia, and winds its way through some 200-and-some other sewage treatment systems before it gets down here, it gets dumped down into the sound, and they think, 'Hey, great! It's not around my house, I can't see it from here!' But if they understand how important it is for the overall vitality of our Earth, our ecosystem, our Gaia, for some it makes a difference, for a lot, it doesn't. Still, they don't care, but we need to close-loop all those systems and take

that gray water and run it through the house again, drink your bottled water, well water if you're fortunate enough to have some that's not contaminated with coal ash or whatever, and use the water as the water protectors did at Standing Rock [Indian Reservation]: the same thing, that's what it's all about. Water. [Philosopher] Ivan Illich said the same thing: it's all water, it's us, ninety-some percent, it's us. Same stuff, and we should be deifying it instead of destroying it, degrading it. And the commercial fishermen have an intrinsic role in that—can have—by both supplying the resource for food consumption and the mental resource to know that you're doing the right thing for nature and the ocean, which sustains everybody, one way or another. So, to me, commercial fishing is not about how many tons of product, protein can you dump on the dock. It's about a balance you can achieve.

BGB: So, you were saying earlier that the last couple years have been bad for the blue crab in this area.

WP: Terrible.

BGB: Do you think that's a water quality issue?

WP: Partially it is. I think everything, ultimately, is related to the fecundity of the waters, you know. It's not very difficult to trace the decline, I think, overall, and the species, now that we've eliminated the commercial effort from the equation, as being a primary factor for all the stress it's accruing across the whole building block system.

BGB: How about climate change? Do you think that's feeding into what's going on with the resources?

WP: I think climate change has always been with us; it may be exacerbated more by man, but the fish adapt. We're stuck, we're hung up on this idea of how much should be produced from a man's perspective, and that's not what nature does. It wildly oscillates. You look at the

herring runs in Europe over the last 2,000 years, you know, and you'll have seventy years with no herring and all the sudden they come on like gangbusters when the conditions are perfectly right for them, at that time. You know, herring are tremendously appropriate as a tell-tale species, as to the conditions. All of, I think, the major problems we have with our commercial fishing industry right now up this way is that everybody's lumped into crabbing, and the amount of effort that's gone into crabbing has tripled since we started with the moratorium effort and the crab license and license-by-share ideas that were come up with before the Fisheries Reform Act.

BGB: Is there less opportunity to switch from one fishery to another?

WP: Oh yeah, there is no switching. You don't go anywhere; pretty much, when I started out trotlining back in the [19]70s, it was, you know, it took a spool, a line, and a homemade boat and an air cool motor and a dip net to crab. Crab pots cost $7.50 apiece, now they're $40 rigged out. Somebody wants to get into crabbing, they better be able to spend $80,000.

BGB: Wow.

WP: Because it's got timelines and it has Belhaven meeting and all that other stuff that I saved. I can make copies of it or whatever, but it gives you some idea of what we're talking about originally, to do something towards self-determination. But crabbing now is huge. You know, I've paid guys $200,000 a year in crabs, for seven months.

BGB: Wow.

WP: Yeah, in a good year. We haven't had that recently, and all these guys are hung out to dry with lots of equipment, and then the effort just keeps on because we have new people coming in all the time from Maryland and whatnot, usually in the Vietnamese community, and they're buying out these other guys and believing those guys didn't make it 'cause they didn't have enough pots. So they build pots all winter long and set 'em out there, and it's just, it's a

clusterfuck. There's so many pots out there, it's just mind-boggling.

BGB: Is it mainly Vietnamese folks now?

WP: Hmm, over half.

BGB: Wow, yeah. I mean, I knew the Vietnamese community was big in crabbing, but I didn't know it was, they were coming in from--.

WP: Yeah, I'd say, this was a big point of contention that we had with Melvin Shepard, who served for a while as our spokesperson for C.L.A.W. and, of course, has gone on to be Coastal Federation's spokesperson and now is in Snead's Ferry, but he believed it was a racist thing, that we were forming this organization to try and shut out people from coming in from other places, especially Vietnamese. So we started saying 'the Norwegians' so it wouldn't be confused, but the fact that it did matter whether they were coming from Florida as crabbers or Silver Springs, Maryland, or Philadelphia, which is where most of the Vietnamese live, and just come down here and crab and then go back up there. But the same problem was occurring, and that was that we're just putting too much effort into the industry. Back when I was in my prime, I was able to fish 300 pots, I took Orbach on the trip with Scott Taylor, I think, one day, and I fished 300 pots and I'd be back to the dock at 12:30, crate the crabs up, and be back home and spend the rest of the day getting ready for the next day or working on equipment or whatever. I was able to work eight months out of the year and have the rest of the year to build a boat or do whatever over the wintertime, and make a decent living. Whereas now, if you don't have 700 pots in the water and multiple stands, generally, you can't compete.

BGB: M hm.

WP: So the same amount of crabs are being caught, it's just twice or three times the amount of pot are being used to catch 'em.

BGB: So, if you could wave the proverbial magic wand to fix the crab fishery, what would you do? Would you limit pots per person?

WP: Per operation, probably, yeah. Per license.

BGB: How many?

WP: Well, what we came up with before was good, and that's as many as you can fish in a day. And if you got two people on the boat, it's 600 pots, and that's enough. That's all you need.

BGB: So when you had the unique position of not only helping get the ball rolling, which led to the Fisheries Reform Act, then you served on the Marine Fisheries Commission, and you got to vote on one of the first plans, which was the crab plan!

WP: Yep, I got stuffed! Partially, that was—what happened, in my opinion, was—and this is sort of getting into the weeds, as you say, but the Division [of Marine Fisheries] was not in favor of the crab plan, and didn't want the controversy associated with it. They wanted—it was mandated in the Fisheries Reform Act that the crab plan would be the first one, because we'd been the ones to initiate the whole effort. So, it being the first plan, they wanted to get it up, running, done, and gone; they didn't want a big bunch of controversy. It was a huge amount of controversy. I was on the advisory plan, had me taken before the Ethics Commission because they believed that I was ethically in violation by trying to serve my own interest by advancing the crab plan. Which was a huge insult to me, personally, because my reputation is one of the thing is take very seriously, and it takes a lifetime to build and fifteen seconds to lose. I was exonerated by Molly Donovan, whatever her name was, and I was allowed to continue but it was one of those thumps that they give you to let you know that you can only go so far before we're gonna start going dirty.

BGB: But you were a proponent of limiting pots, which is limiting yourself. So how is that a conflict of interest?

WP: I didn't really get in trying to defend myself on it; it was determined that as long as I was into a plan, that affected the entire industry equally, as well as myself, it was no issue. Whereas, if I was benefiting directly from it, that would've been—and others were—that would've been something different. But that being said, it got pretty ugly and then, sort of, the coalition that we had built up until that point started coming apart. We had Vietnamese that were on these committees that we were forming to try and come up with these different plans, a lot of people were sort of hostile over that inclusion. Then we had people that were terrified of any sort of mandate that came out of the state, and ultimately believed that they'd rather take their chances on their own in a Wild West scenario than have the state have the ability to ratchet down the amount of gear that they were involved with and, ultimately, possibly, put them out of business, as they had already done with the other fisheries.

BGB: So people got scared?

WP: People became nervous and unwilling to trust the state, and so ultimately, my final comment was 'let the big dogs stand.' And that's what it was; it became a rush as to who could put the most money into the fishery in order to be successful. And the ones that are in there now that are successful have put the most money in.

BGB: 'Cause I remember you were on the Commission and it was the vote, and you stood up and—didn't stand up, but you spoke against a pot limit after all the work you had done.

WP: Because I was representing the industry.

BGB: Wow.

WP: I couldn't represent myself, my own personal views. You know, as much as I felt we

needed one, I had to represent the broader coalition of people that were out there, the crabbers and whatnot, and that was what they came up with.

BGB: So you got so close to realizing this, and then--.

WP: So close. And maybe it was for the best, I don't know. We don't know how it would've turned out; the state could've used it to ratchet down the amount of gear 'til it was back to the 250 pots! And their fears would've been justified. I don't know. But I was willing to take a chance on self-determination, and having us be partners at the table rather than being dictated to.

BGB: And so, to vote against that was helping the self-determination because your coalition wanted something else?

WP: No, I just felt, as a representative, I needed to be true to their desires.

BGB: Okay. Wow.

WP: And it's over my own personal interests or belief.

BGB: So what advice would you give a young person in the industry, as far as how they relate to the management system?

WP: Uh, the present management system, my position for the last ten years is to resign from every advisory board.

BGB: Resign?

WP: Resign, and every commission seat, and to go to the meetings and turn you back on the commission.

BGB: Would you tell young people to not participate?

WP: I would tell young people to get ready to fight like hell, and the only way to do it is to call the vote. And that vote is, are we going to have a commercial industry or not? And if we are, tell us what it's gonna look like, let us work on developing it, and give us a future. Because

right now, we have none, and we're not likely to get one.

BGB: Yeah, 'cause you hear a lot of fishermen talk about death by a thousand cuts.

WP: That's what's happening.

BGB: Little bit here, little bit there, little bit there. So you're saying, call the question, yes or no.

WP: Call the question. Yeah. Right. And what's it gonna look like? I mean, bring it on. Don't let's keep pushing it down the road for somebody else to deal with, you know. If there's gonna be a future, let's do it. If there's not gonna be, these guys are bleeding dollars here trying to hang on, thinking that things are gonna change somehow and the way we're going, it's not. It won't happen. You know, the political forces at will are not interested in a commercial industry without a commercial industry being involved in the process. And the only way to be involved in the process is to have some hope that you have some influence, and to do it. Presently, there's just no hope for that, no way to influence, no way behind the scenes, manipulate politics—that's how you get things done now. It's not through public hearings or going to the commission or any of these other supposed steps to enacting change; those are all ways to wear you out. The only way to really do something is to confront it head on, and if it's not, these guys can move on and do something else, you know? Whether you buy the gear out or not, to get rid of 'em, but they at least have the dignity to be able to walk away from it. Now, they're just being starved, starved out, just like the Native Americans, just keep shrinking. The ability for them to survive by shrinking their lands or the tools that they can use or whatever and introduce all the factors of society now, drugs and alcohol and all the rest of the crap that drives 'em to despair, and eventually before you know it, it's a whimper and it's gone.

BGB: I've noticed that you have, you take interest in young people and sort of serve as a

mentor. So you have some hope in those people?

WP: I do.

BGB: You do.

WP: I take great pride in trying to work with kids on my docks and I don't want to beat my own drum, but we do have a reputation in the community, all the parents want to send their boys out here to learn work ethic, and we try and impart honesty and hard work and we counsel on credit and things like that to try and help them achieve some chance of success when they leave this community and go into a bigger community to school or whatever. And we've had two Moreheads [scholar recipients] and two—no, one Park [scholar recipient], that've come out of here so far, and that's been great. And we have kids that've gone on in fishing, but they're coming to me now and saying, 'What am I gonna do? Where am I gonna go? I'm offshore fishing and we're ruined if we're not the first boat in. The croaker market's gone, twenty cents is all we can get for them.' Or they have to work for shares for somebody else 'cause they can't afford the equipment to get in and they can't make any money that way. The kids that really have the passion for it, they can only hang on so long.

BGB: I'm trying to get a little hope out of you here, Willy! [Laughs]

WP: My hope is that, you know, stand up and fight! My hope is call the question, give 'em some hope! There is no hope in the industry right now, I mean, there's just no prospects for anything turning around. I mean, I'd love to say different, I'm sitting here holding millions of dollars' worth of facilities specifically for commercial fishing but the reality is it's going away unless something happens fast.

BGB: M hm. Alright.

WP: And there are people that are working on it! I mean, they're not necessarily looking

out for the commercial industry by doing it, but they are definitely calling the question, and our present leadership has been oblivious for the past thirty years as to the need for us to change our image and change how we interact with the public.

BGB: M hm. Okay. So, would you like to say anything to wrap this up?

WP: I don't know. What do you want me to say?

BGB: Well, it's not that. This has been a very interesting interview and you've got valuable experience and insight.

WP: Well, I would say that whatever's used for what's happening beyond this point, off that tape, to eliminate any portions of it that are negative to anyone specifically, so that there's no name-calling or any of that other stuff, negativity, in that aspect. And I would hope that instead of it being viewed as no hope, that it's viewed as a dose of reality and awareness and a realization of the position to where there is hope, rather than the continuous deadening of our senses that's occurring, proclamation by proclamation.

BGB: Yeah, alright. Well, thank you, Willy. I appreciate your time.

WP: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]