

Fishtales, Sunday September 29, 2013
Working Waterfront Festival

Interviewer – Markham Starr
Interviewee – Thomas Quintin Jr.

TQ Yeah I was born in New Bedford. Now I live in New Bedford.

MS And you're a commercial fisherman?

TQ Yeah I'm the captain of the Patience.

MS Scalloper?

TQ Yeah. Yeah. I've been captain there since '92.

MS Oh great. And you had a couple stories I know you wanted to share.

TQ Yeah. Well, I saw the one about the pranks and I just told this story the other day. I don't mind, we have like a little box on the boat you know where you keep cigarettes, I don't smoke, but cigarettes, candy, you know snacks, things like that. And you put your stuff in there. So, years ago I was on the deck and there was piles of candy and I leave it on deck and we had this particular crew member who every damn March, I don't know if I can say damn, he'd eat all my candy. And I said "Hey guy, you know it's alright if you have some, but leave some. Don't be such a glutton. I'm gettin' sick comin' up here and have to fill it back up again." So, he didn't listen. So I said, alright, I'll fix his fanny. So the next trip, when I got in, I went to the drug store and I got, bought chicklets, and I bought Ex-Lax, the Ex-Lax gum. And I went home and I opened the box and put the Ex-Lax in the Chicklet box and sealed it all up and brought it out fishing. I couldn't, it didn't take too long for me to do it. 'Cause I was chompin' at the bit to do it. So, we went out fishin'. After a few watches, I broke out the ammunition and I put it in the thing, and I said "Hey, look, I don't have much this trip, so I'm tellin' you, DO NOT TOUCH MY GUM, you got that? Don't touch my gum." And he, "Yeah, yeah yeah, yeah." I knew damn well he was gonna. So I come up the next watch [laughing]. I said "Hey, where's Johnny?" "Oh, he's in the freakin' toliet" [laughing]. I still laugh when I talk about it. So, when he came out I said, "What's the matter?" "I can't stop" you know what. I said "Hey that's because you just ate a box load of laxatives." "Oh you xxxx!" "I told you not to eat them things. Shoulda listened!" I get that from my father. He was quite a rascal. But danger, I don't know.

MS How about biggest storm?

TQ Yeah, the biggest storm, they actually talk about in, in Perfect Storm, and there's another book too by Michael Tougias on the whole storm called Fatal Forecast. I was on deck on the Victor and they gave twenty to thirty knots so we were on George's Bank and it blew a hundred. And I'm not one to exaggerate so I always told people that the seas

were probably about fifty feet. But then when I read one of those particular books, there was a buoy out there that was measurin' the waves and right where I was, southeast parts and they measured 'em at seventy feet.

And something that's very interesting that few people ever see, even most fishermen, when winds get to hurricane force, something weird happens to the ocean. You no longer see the deep blue, or any blue. It becomes just this huge white mountainous, like foam. It's just froth. And it's crazy. But like I say you don't even get breakers. They don't break. There just these like mountainous things. And we were right on the bank where it goes from two miles to forty fathom. 'Course I was 21, I didn't know I was, my life was in danger. You're indestructible at that age, but that particular storm, a couple boats sank and one of 'em pitch poled. I mean it came up on the wave, just like the Perfect Storm movie, came up on the wave, goes up, flips over, lands on the wheelhouse. And there was one survivor. When he popped free, the life raft inflated right in front of him. He spent two days bouncing around on the ocean. That's the biggest storm I was ever in.

MS Probably big enough!

TQ You got time for one more?

MS Yeah!

TQ This one is hairy. I'm a, my father was a fisherman, both my grandfathers were fishermen and I'm a fisherman. And both my grandfathers were lost at sea. One in 1952 and one in 1975. But it's a, in this community, so often you follow in your dad's footsteps. I mean my father walked on water in my eyes growin' up. I wanted to be just like dad.

But in 2005 on Memorial Day, my cook Bob Chase, he wanted to bring his son and so we took him shackin' and it was the worst May I had ever seen. It was storm warnings. Not sixty knots of wind, gale warnings, storm warnings, gale warnings. I called her off for about three weeks 'till we finally went out. And when we finally went out we had a beautiful stretch of weather and it was Memorial Day morning. It was flat calm, beautiful. We were catchin' scallops. I was runnin' the winch on the starboard side and there was another guy runnin' on the port side. And my cook Bob Chase was hookin' up and his son was on the other side. And the winchman on the other side, Bob saw something wrong with the gear and he told the winchman to stop and hold it up 'cause he had to fix it. So he went to go get the equipment to fix the thing and when he went to go get the equipment, the drags started to creep, creep down. And I teach the guys, when that happens, to get your fanny out of there, don't look. But he had like a chip on his shoulder because he was like a proud peacock with his son, so he turned around to scream at the winchman and as soon as I saw his face, I knew what was comin' 'cause he just went white. There was nobody behind the winch. The guy had not put the safety flap on, the drag came down, it picked up speed, when it hit the rail, there's a safety flap on the hooks that's there to keep the hook from comin' out. But because there was the momentum when it hit the rail, it broke the flap and the hook came out and that two and a half tons of steel

came down WHAM! Like a mousetrap, a human mousetrap on him and his head bounced off the deck, blood was everywhere. His kid sees the whole thing. Four days fishin'. So now his kid runs over there and he's screamin' "Dad, Dad!" And he's trying to pick up the drag. The winchman freezes, 'cause he don't know what to do. You know, I had to run out there, put the hook in, get the hook up, tie it back and get a hold of the Coast Guard before he died right before our eyes. I couldn't raise the Coast Guard on the radio. So what I did was, I ran to the back and I activated an EPIRB, an emergency position indicator radio beacon because I knew if I put that on, they'd get a copter in the air right away. And he still credits me with savin' his life.

MS Wow

TQ I think that may be a little bit, he might be givin' me a little bit too much credit. I think prayer probably played a bigger part than anything. But you either, when that happens, you either die or you're paralyzed. 'Cause it's happened before through the years. But neither happened to him. He walks today.

MS Wow

TQ Can't fish, but, even talking about it now, I get a knot in my stomach. I, he's a very good friend too.

MS Wow

TQ That's enough?

MS That's great. Thank you.

TQ Look I did all that in ten minutes. And I can still not get my wife yellin' at me.