

Name of person interviewed: Karen Willis Amspacher [KWA]

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

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Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber [MHA]

Abstract

Karen Willis Amspacher talks about the working waterfront community of Harker's Island (the Outer Banks for North Carolina) where she founded the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center. She discusses the boat building and decoy carving traditions of the area as well, the challenges of gentrification and regulations, and her work to develop new markets for local seafood.

Demographic information

Sex: Female

Age:

Ethnicity: White

Occupation: Museum Director

Born: Harker's Island, NC

Homeport: Harker's Island, NC

Key words

Role

Museum director

Fisheries Advocate

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Social networks (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers)

Social and Cultural Characteristics of Fishing

Regulations

Loss of infrastructure

Developing new markets

Gear and Fishing Technology

Boat building

Decoy carving

MHA OK. Well welcome and thank you for agreeing to do the interview and could you introduce yourself with the mic.

KWA I'm Karen Willis Amspacher.

MHA Ok and when and where were you born?

KWA I was born on Harker's Island, North Carolina which is at the southern hook of the Outer Banks. And that's where I grew up, on Harker's Island. On that time a community of about a thousand people.

MHA And, where you involved with fishing at all?

KWA My crowd was mostly boat builders and my daddy fished of course like every other person on the island fished, but he, after he got back from the army in the early 50s he went to work at Cherry Point which is a naval air re-work facility that was built there after World War II and he went to work in civil service. He still fished for awhile. But I had, my uncles were all, and my cousins now, are still involved in the boat building tradition. Harker's Island is actually known more for its boat building than its fishing.

MHA And but are they, what kind of boats are they building?

KWA Well now they're having to build what the market bears which is mostly recreational boats, but in the 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, it was primarily wooden work boats. There's a style of boat that's called a "core sounder" that's the body of work that we have. Core Sound C-O-R-E sound. And that's a round stern work boat usually 35 to 45 foot long with a cabin and a dog house on there primarily gill net and sink net workin' boats. And there's right many of those left. They've become quite a statement of the area, kind of our, part of our brand I guess you would say. And a lot of people are buildin' 'em now just because they're such beautiful craft. We have one at the museum where I work called the Jean Dale and we have her restored she's and exhibition, but they're beautiful vessels. And so and other kinds of work boats there's you know different styles that adapted. There was a channel netter which is the kind of shrimpin' that we do or long haul boat or whatever. I mean we, the boats adapted to the fishery.

MHA Right. And the, I imagine the bottom...

KWA Oh yeah. See it's real shallow water where we are and Harker's Island is famous for its flare bow, like F-L-A-R-E bow, B-O-W which is almost a piece of art the way the boats are designed and built, but it was all about causin' the spray in the rough water to spray out, not spray in the boat. So shallow, it's shallow water and, on the inside, and always blows. Our prevailing wind is southwest so there's always chop, and always wind to deal with and so these flare bowed boats were an adaptation to deal with that shallow water.

MHA I know that in some areas there's a lot of shoaling so that you have to go over sand banks and things like this

KWA You have, the beaches are movin'. You know it's very, in today's world it's very political how all that's happenin' and you know sea level rise is some part of a negative term at the political level in North Carolina. So we have our challenges there

MHA [laughs]

KWA But the Outer Banks are definitely moving right now there's a big struggle with Oregon Inlet that's shoaled in and that's affecting the, our largest commercial fishing fleet which is in Wanchese. And now they're havin' to dock up in Suffolk. So that has all kinds of ramifications because, for example, the flounder allotment is now bein' docked in Northern Virginia so North Carolina's got a threatened allotment in that whole allocation. So the, the inlets, the shoallin' that is a major issue, a major issue.

MHA So I understand, I guess I wanted to ask you, how did you decide what you were gonna do as you grew up, if you came from a boat building family. Did you wanna get into boat building?

KWA No. I graduated and left the first time in 1973, went to college, got married, put him through, he left and then I got on with my life and went to school to be a social studies teacher, social studies, language arts middle school, went to school up at Appalachian State in the mountains of North Carolina and my work study job there was transcribin' oral histories and that was, that was what moved me to say, "Why isn't somebody there talkin' to my crowd?" You know? I had an uncle who was a whaler and boat builders and you know at that point in the early 80s, late 70s, early 80s, there wadn't a lot bein' done down our way. We hadn't been quote unquote discovered. So it was just a real passion that, hey my crowd, you know we, somebody needs to be doin' this. This is important. And I taught school in the mountains for awhile and then ended up marrying back home. I really didn't want to go back home because I loved the mountains, loved the, I found the mountain people to be much more like my people than any other people I had ever gotten tangled up with. Just because of the isolation I think and they talked like us and they kind of thought like us and...but I moved back home in '81 and was teaching school there and had gotten married back home and the church at Harker's Island wanted to do a project. We first did a bazaar and that was wonderful. And then they decided they wanted to do a cookbook. And so I, in the meantime I had been getting really into this oral history thing and I had seen some cookbooks where they had meshed oral history with the recipes 'cause we are all about what we eat, you know. And what we cook, and the food is a major force in our culture. And so that became my opportunity. And I was out havin' babies and led the church and the community in the process into doin' the Harker's Island cookbook which was published in '87, no '86. And since then it's still in print and my guess is, close to a hundred thousand copies.

MHA Phew!

KWA And it's not about the recipes, it's about the stories 'cause you know we went, I, we got little cassette records and we sent the women out to talk to there crowd and some of it got transcribed, some of it didn't. Some of it was scratched on the back of napkins. But it all got put together. And it's just a powerful statement of what our island was. And so that kind of got me on this trail. And then in the meantime the decoy carvers had start, you know there was a whole re, resurgence of decoy carving, waterfowling, that's big down our way too. And they had a festival and they wanted me to help get the crowd there. So between the cookbook and the decoy festival and this whole, this whole, I mean there was a real movement, 'cause we could see this whole island changin'. The landscape was beginin' to be dotted with big houses owned by people from off, "dingbatters" we called 'em.

MHA [laughs]

KWA And just the whole threat of what was happenin' to our community. And so it's been a twenty five year process, lots of pieces and parts, but it all gets back to the people. So that's my story.

MHA Well you are, you mentioned that you were involved with an organization, an institution, like a museum

KWA Well a lot of things. I'm the Director at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center. But it started out primarily a place to interpret waterfowling, decoys. We added heritage center to that name in two thousand and five because what we found was that the sum total was greater than the parts and to talk about waterfowling we had to talk about boats and if we talked about boats we had to talk about commercial fishin' and in that there was this wonderful sacred music tradition so it became a whole, the whole culture. And you can't talk about the culture unless you talk about the resource. So you know it was the whole environmental education piece of it and the arts, you know the boat building and the carv...so it for us, everybody keeps tryin' to put us in a box. Are you a history museum or are your a science museum? And we say we're neither. We don't even like museums. We're a place where things happen, where this community lives. And economically commercial fishing has been the mainstay of our communities, they built the fish houses, they built the businesses, they built the churches, the fishermen were the leaders in the community. The bankers, the whole fish house culture, and so I've got more and more as that need has come to the surface to connect commercial fishermen to the consumer. I've gotten more and more involved. And the museum is built, it's not paid for, but it's built and so I'm, so I tell people that my job now is as the evangelist. It's not so much bein' there to make sure things run like it does, but to focus on the mission and the living traditions. Because when we get to the point that the only decoy carver or the only boat builder or the only commercial fisherman we see is in a museum under glass, then we've lost the battle. That's not what we're about. We're out there tryin' to keep these occupations viable, usually in a modified form, in an adapted way, but I am especially interested in this local foods movement. And where will seafood fit, and we're helping make that happen, kind of along with all this, regionally, statewide, there has been what we call the "catch groups" which are local branding programs inspired by Port Clyde,

Maine. Yeah we're learning more about Maine and about the northeast, what people are doing here. And so Cartwright County where I live was the first to establish Cartwright Catch, and then there was Brunswick Catch and Ocracoke Fresh and Outer Banks Catch. And then two years ago we pulled 'em altogether with a grant that the museum got as part of our outreach, we call it Saltwater Connections. It's kind of our institutional development there and we've now formed an umbrella of these catch groups who work on the, at the ground, it's kind of like Baptist Churches, every community's got one, but there's this convention every now and then. So I'm on the board of the NC Catch and yeah we're findin' our way more and more to Raleigh. We fought the game fish bill. CCA's very active in North Carolina and they don't love us, but we're fightin' our battles. We had another shrimp ban petition on inside waters and we fought that off. But it's a constant battle. My whole way up here I was textin' to somebody who was in a turtle meetin'. So the battle is just different chapters of the same book. And the whole regulatory process. But the museum is kind of like the gathering place for this stuff to happen and our network of people, so it all fits together. If people are interested in one, they're interested in the other. That's kind of how it all shook out. In fact part of my crew is in Raleigh today. Our resident anthropologist Barbara Garrity Blake who I'm sure you've heard of, she's receiving the Brown-Hudson Award today in Raleigh which is the North Carolina Folklore Society Lifetime Achievement Award and they're up there and there's a documentary that NC State has done called Core Sounders that's being presented there. And part of my group, one of my fishermen and Pam, they're there. They're in a panel discussion and it's all about the culture of the communities and their reliance on the water, so it's good stuff. I'm lovin' New Bedford, first time I've ever been here. We got scallop boats here, I've gotta find 'em so...

MHA That's fascinating. So what do you see happening. What are the, how are the challenges, what are some of the challenges that you are facing? You said things have changed and you are working very hard to keep all these different pieces together, so

KWA So many challenges. I think our greatest challenge is encouraging the local people, the native people, the indigenous species to keep them encouraged and mobilized and engaged because I firmly believe that there is a place for them in the new economy in the new world. We've got a lot of people movin' in our place. Property values are, you know local people can't live there. Our school, there's all kinds of social, cultural issues about that. The, it, nobody can tell our story for us. That's just really important. That our people not only tell it, but that they believe and understand how important it is so they can be proud to be fishermen. People have not always been proud to be fishermen. And that's my job. I'm the cheerleader, is not necessarily to keep the crowd thrilled but to keep that team on task. And that's why events like this are so important. And you know, I'm taking notes. Because we have some festivals, we have a seafood festival, it's a farce. It's the numbers, and the activities and the rides and all that have just taken over and our people have got to be bolstered. We've got to give young people encouragement to get in this industry. Parents have gotta quit tellin' 'em not to. But they're gonna have to be creative. We've got two CSF's, the only two CSF's in the state are located in Cartwright County and they're doin' very well. They're workin' their butts off. They're venturing into new territory. So we're doin' everything we can to keep them encouraged and marketed and pushin'. So it's

an evolving time. The fish houses are old. They're not real sure where they fit in the bit picture anymore. So we're just hopin' to keep everybody talkin' and we'll figure it out. Fishermen have always adapted. And people forget that. It's not always been like this. We change as the landscape changed as the economy changed. So we're just tryin' to keep changin' and work with it not against it.

MHA Well that was one of my questions is how are you going to keep the youth engaged? Do you have any special programs for youth?

KWA We're looking at, in Cartwright County where I live, we are especially blessed I think that we have a really strong university presence. UNC Chapel Hill, NC State, Duke University, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries, National Weather Service. They are all, the National Park Service. They are all located within twenty miles of each other and in fact we are, there's a movement among those institutions which are all siloed at this point about outreach to k-12 education. And so we're trying, we're gonna pull them together and say ok, we're the community. We welcome the opportunity for you to learn more about us and we'll learn more about you because the challenge now is here your kid gets a college education there's nothing around for them to do. So how can we encourage young people to get involved in these resources management careers. They, you know I've got a friend at Ocracoke, Marty Gaskell, he's a sophomore at NC State. He's been a commercial fisherman since he was twelve. He's going into marine biology. We need people like that in the management systems. We're also doin' what we can to encourage these young business people that are direct seafood marketing they have skills they have wives and children who do the internet, really, I remember our meeting in Washington DC, Kim Chevanne who does the Direct Seafood, I keep sendin' that information out to our guys and they're lookin' at these options. How can we sell shrimp on line at eight, nine, ten dollars a pound rather than sell it on the side of the road for two-fifty a pound. So just building that direct, you know those niche markets. There's a tremendous movement in the chefs world, the high end restaurants. Asheville is a big food hub, Chapel Hill/Raleigh, so if I were doin' an inventory right now of the people runnin' seafood east and west, 'cause for us traditionally it's always run north and south, everything got on a truck, came to Fultons from Baltimore or Washington. So which is volume. We're not dealin' in volume anymore. So where are the east west truck routes at? So that when Winston Salem's high end restaurants call, is there a truck all ready to run it? We're just tryin' to connect the dots and the industry in North Carolina has been somewhat asleep the past eighteen years, but if there's a good thing in the game fish bill and the recent political uprisings, it's that people have realized just how important that consumer is and that the conversation's really about seafood, not fishin'. Everybody wants seafood, not everybody knows enough to want fishermen. But that's the educational process. Yeah this fish, you gotta have nets if your gonna have fish! And you've gotta have fishermen and you've got to have working waterfronts. And they may not be grassed over with landscapes and beautiful architecture. To me this is the most beautiful waterfront I've seen in a long time. But anyway it's like changing the perspectives.

MHA Yeah.

KWA So it's hard. We're not gonna win 'em all, but we love our little battles as we will.

MHA [laughs] This is great. So do you have children yourself?

KWA I do. I have two children. One is twenty nine and he lives in Brooklyn New York and lives and works in the City.

MHA I guess he's not fishing...

KWA No he's not fishing

MHA Or boat building

KWA Or boat building. He went to Columbia. I felt really proud about that and he had a girlfriend for awhile and she was from Chicago and her father was a stock broker for McDonald's Corporation so in case he told me that I said "In other words she doesn't build boats in her back yard." He said "No mama"

MHA [laughs]

KWA But he's in the City and then my daughter lives in Eastern North Carolina. She's a graphic artist. And she is hard core Core Sound. She's my young 'un and she fights for the culture. She would love to be home, but the jobs are just not there. But she does a lot of pro-bono work for all that we do for the fishing fleet. But that's the dilemma. Where can they come home and have jobs where they can build their house and build their future. Property and taxes are very high and so we're, I think Harker's Island and the Down East Core Sound area, the Outer Banks in some degree, we're kind of at a crossroads. And I keep going back the the quote I read years ago by Ellen Goodman. Sometime I'm gonna meet her, I'm gonna tell her how important that article was. She was writin' about Chobeg Island when they ceded from the mainland and incorporated on their own. And she said that the difference between an island community and an island resort is its school. And that's paraphrasing it. That's what she meant. And I think that's our critical point. Are we an island resort? Or are we an island community? And it's that community I fight for every day. You've gotta have fishermen to have an island community. You've gotta have people comin' back and investin' in that community. That's to me the ingredient that is hardest to measure, quantify in dollars, but you can see it, you can feel it, and so that's what I hold on to. And I just believe that getting out to places like this and seein' what other communities are doin' is vital.

MHA So how, I assume you have grammar schools. Do you have a high school on the island?

KWA We have a k8 School, prek8. There are, right now we've got a kindergarten first and second combination which is scary. There are a hundred and twenty four kids in that school and less than half actually live on the island. We have a bridge so people like me, I live on the mainland. I can't afford land on Harker's Island. So I live seven miles away on

the mainland. And over half of the kids come across the bridge every mornin'. The county commissioners have allowed us to keep that up so that kids could go to schools out of their district. But there's always this undercurrent of how long will that last. There's some discussion about Harker's Island Elementary becomin' a magnet school for marine biology which is a very interesting concept. In fact we're talking to the Island Institute up in Maine about their island fellows program, there school's program. I've had some teachers up there to their conference. I just can't see Harker's Island School stayin' like it is. And the economics, no matter how much the commissioners want it to stay there, you can't run a k8 school with a hundred and twenty four young 'uns and the majority of 'em out of district. So we gotta be creative. I struggle with that whole thing. But these are issues that other people have figured out.

MHA Or are in the process

KWA Or like the rest of us! But you can't bury your head in the sand and say well the school's gonna close, the school's gonna close. Well if you don't do something now, to make sure it doesn't then, you know. So that's why I say it gets back to the people believin' that they have a voice in their future. Because Harker's Island and the other, there's thirteen communities in Down East Cartwright County which is the least populated. There's the largest land mass but the least population in that county and we've always been the hinterland. We have one commissioner out of seven. So we've not had a real strong voice politically, but we're workin' on that too. I had a meetin' whatever day it was, Thursday morning with the county manager about a project we want to do and he was receptive. Ten years ago they wouldn't have been. Yeah they'd have laughed in our face. So the real estate market fallin' apart was the best thing that ever happened to us, it put a hold on everything and people are lookin' at things a little bit differently now. I don't know if that answered the question or not.

MHA And how about the high school. Where...

KWA The high school they go to a consolidated high school in the mainland. It's twenty some miles away for us. It's forty miles for Cedar Island the northeastern most community. But they get on the bus at ten past six every mornin'. So acrost all kinds of causeways and bridges and all that. And some days they can't get to school 'cause the tide's across the road. So very isolated, very small communities. We have communities of less than two hundred people. Two hundred, three hundred, five hundred. Harker's Island has the largest, we peaked at seventeen hundred back in the nineties, but now our population on the census record is droppin'. But the indigenous portion of that is dropping at a higher rate. Our large, right now I would guess that we're about half and half, people from off and local people. But the local people who are left are people like my mama who's eighty-five and you know I'm holdin' on to our piece of land come hell or high water. I mean that's just, I'm not givin' it up. But I'm in a lucky position where mama doesn't need to sell it to pay the taxes and the insurance. Many are. And there's just my brother and I and we're gonna work it out. But unfortunate. Unfortunate. Most families have to sell and are forced to sell 'cause there's a family ruckus, two want to sell, one doesn't. That's what happened to my grandmother's land. I had an aunt and uncle that

wanted to sell. Daddy didn't but daddy wouldn't go borrow the money to buy them out so we lost that chunk of land. So it's complicated and the economics of it dictate a lot of hard decisions.

MHA Well I assume that it's the development that's causing the taxes to rise?

KWA That's right I mean we've got, we've got, right now there's about three hundred residential lots on the planning board for Harker's Island. We've got one high end residential property that's pretty much full. That's what, the year that the, next reval after that subdivision was put in, my mother's taxes went up four times, four times. There's another sub division they built the gate, but they haven't built any houses in there. There just waitin' for the economy to come back. I think it's quite tellin' that they built the gate first. But anyway, yeah. It used to be just water, waterfront. Mama's land is waterfront. And then it was waterview. Now it's, anything on Harker's Island is valuable.

MHA And where is the center?

KWA The museum's on Harker's Island. We're on the east end, we're on Park Service property. We are the gateway to Cape Lookout National Seashore. And that was another impossibility that people said would never happen, twenty three years ago, twenty two years ago when we started, said we were gonna build a museum, we said well Park Service has got ninety-one acres and everyone said well no you won't get it. Well we found a museum right up the beach that had that kind of an agreement and our congressional delegation went to work and we got it! And it's a great partnership. It, I, the Park Service history on Harker's Island is very ugly as it is in most cases. It was very ugly. And I hated the Park Service as bad as anybody, that's a long story, but I am to the point and it's not necessarily because of the museum. The museum's just a bonus on that, but I am to the point as a native, a Willis of Harker's Island that I am glad the Park Service is there because I shudder to think what that end of the island would look like if they hadn't been. Is everything copasetic with the Park Service? No. We have lots of challenges, but we have a very good relationship and they'll listen to us. And it's a federal agency, so there's not a lot of decisions that are made locally. But we find our way to Atlanta at times and Washington at times. And we have a strong congressional delegation. was very involved in the Park. So that's where the museum is. We have sixty acres on a long-term lease. And we've built the museum, twenty-two thousand square feet. And it is a museum, a library, an on-line archive, and a community center. In fact we've got a weddin' there today and a baby shower there tomorrow. And we also have a hiking trail that connects in with the Park Service, their Visitor Center is right next door. Ducks Unlimited Wildlife Resources, US Fish and Wildlife, very involved. We have four acre fresh water pond for the waterfowl and hiking trails and we do a lot with environmental education, water quality, we have an educator and they partner with the Park Service's interpretive staff so...we do good stuff and we have about thirty thousand people a year that come through there. And we're on the way to nowhere. We are literally at the end of the road so. But you know we have lots of events and it's a lot of work, but we're doing, we've not done everything right, but we've done a lot of stuff right. And again our message is to the local people is that ok, you've got your space here, we

have community exhibits and they're all community driven, if you don't come tell it, somebody's gonna take it.

MHA So people come.

KWA So people come. They, you know it's not a hun, we're not battin' a thousand, but we've found out who the leaders are and it's been a struggle every step of the way, it's be an a struggle, but I've said this before, I'll say it again. When it comes to the museum we've got four and a half million dollars on the ground, sixty percent of it's been private dollars. We've got HUD money, USDA, that kind of stuff, but sixty percent of that four and a half million dollars has been community driven. Some of that's been in-kind, like the sidin' and the windows and the brick. You know we bartered. And now, looking back if somebody would write me a check for four and half million dollars and tell me to build it or go through what we've gone through, I'd go through what we've gone through because people feel a part of it, they own it. They're all over it. Their blood, sweat and tears. And they're very attached. And so it's been a success. We've still got a three thousand dollar flight bill and a lot of insurance, but we're working through that too.

MHA That's great. So what, how, what happened with the Park Service to change your view of them. Did they change or did the, what changed?

KWA I think both. I think the community began to get sold off and what was coming wasn't looking like Harker's Island at all. So there was that on the one hand. And then the Park Service, we had a Superintendent eight nine years ago who was terrific who helped turn the tide and he got sent there at a very critical moment in the Park's history where some of the leasings to private individuals were runnin' out. And he was just amazing. And he continues to be an advocate for us. He's in, his name is Bob Bogul, I'll go on record with it. He is now Superintendent down the National Mall. And he continues to be our ally. But he took the time to listen. And he began to realize the value of our culture and got to know people and helped us bridge some gaps. And it was timin'. That wouldn't have happened twenty years ago.

MHA Right.

KWA But that was a piece of it. And then I think the museum has been a piece, you know. We know how valuable that piece of property is for us. We would have never been able to build a museum of that size if we'd had to pay for the land. So we're in bed with the Park Service. And we get to be a filter sometimes. We've had a recent drama with the ferry consolidations. But we're helpin' them through it. We see the community's side. We see the Park's side. And we're doin' everything we can to be good partners. And when they mess up we tell 'em. In a heartbeat we'll say, "Look you can't do this! This is not gonna work. You're not gonna win this battle." So you gotta pick, sometimes you've just got to pick your battles and they've had to. And our congressional delegation in particular, Kay Haven, our Senator has been real important to our relationship. So it's all about relationships. That's what it is.

MHA That's very interesting. Let's see what I wanted to ask you. Oh I know. In Maine they have some programs that help waterfront owners deal with taxes.

KWA Present use that. Present use value and Dr. Barbara Garrity Blake as I mentioned before, one of my comrades, lives in the next community, she I guess now its probably been eight years ago she helped engineer, actually she basically did it, others followed her, for a working waterfront initiative in North Carolina and at that time Senator Bassknight from Manio which is up on the northern coast, he was the President pro tem of the Senate and a very powerful individual. And with his help and her leadership, they had legislation that was twenty million dollars allocated for, this was like in the heat of the real estate rush, twenty million dollars for working waterfronts. And it's been real disappointing how that money ended up gettin' spent 'cause the recreational fishing industry got real involved with it. Wildlife Resources was in it. So out of, I think it was eleven or twelve projects there's only like two of 'em that really had a positive impact on commercial fishermen. But one of the pieces of that legislation was "present use value" for working waterfronts. And that did get, that did pass. And that site there, what she's learnin' and she and Sea Grant have recently done a fish house inventory update in the past twelve months and so she went, she retraced her steps 'cause they did an inventory five years ago which was a part of this working waterfront initiative. And she's finding that out that there's not been really good communication with those property owners from the county level. So that's another educational component that we're helping to fill out. Say "Look do you really, do you realize that this means?" So as taxes have gone up, that's become more and more of a factor. But it was modeled after the Maine. In fact in one of her big meetings they had people here from Maine, from the Coastal Enterprises I think. They were here and they helped inspire and inform that process. So yes we're trying to make more and more use of the tools that we have. So yes, it's all politics.

MHA Yeah.

KWA It's all politics and money. Like I say again, the real estate collapse in North Carolina has been a friend to the commercial fishing industry because there are a lot of fish house deals that the money fell apart and so now they're back to fishin'. And so one of the goals of NC Catch is to create such a strong market that these fish houses can survive with a combination of ways, whether it's a truck running east and west and when the spots hit in the fall they'll ship 'em north, but some new model of movin' seafood. 'Cause it's all about the consumer.

MHA Mmhmm. And how are the community supported fisheries doing?

KWA They're doin' excellent. They're doin' very well. Walkin Fish was the first. They are grounded at Duke University. And they have actually formed a co-op in Cartwright County and co-op, you couldn't say that word out loud a few year ago. But they formed it and they have some grant money. They're lookin' at a working waterfront development project. They're lookin' for property now, just lookin' at the feasibility of it right now. But that's kind of in the works. The other CSF is a privately owned, one family. But he's got a crew of fishermen that he buys from. He's kind of the broker there. And his fishermen are

gettin' more money. His fishermen are participating in the delivery. He runs into Raleigh, Carboro. He's got, he's picked up some high-end restaurants so he's deliverin' to them. They have a CSF that's runnin' to a farmers market in Boone which is six hours west. There's discussion with a group in Charlotte so and now they're workin' out the logistics of transportation and he needs a refrigerated truck. And they were recently awarded a small cost-share grant through the Department of Ag, NC State for a shrimp deveiner, peeler and deveiner. That's one of the big challenges is shrimp. That's the big cash crop. And we have no processing infrastructure. So shrimp get on a truck go to Louisiana get shred, you know, get headed and deveined and then they come back to us. We're just losin' that. So that's a big piece. There's, the CSF's are, they're creative people. And they're pavin' new roads.

MHA Yeah.

KWA And a lot of the other counties are interested in that. It takes, one of the key elements is the land, who's on the other end, the receiving end, and what's your market there, and do you have that network of people who are willin' to pay premium price for a premium product. We've got pockets of that in North Carolina. We're, Department of Ag knows we're out there. The Department of Agriculture in North Carolina had the staffing infrastructure there has been reduced to one third of one person which is a crime. But we're on the project. We're on the project. We've had some research, short-term research through the North Carolina Rural Center, Economic Development Group and we've got meetings set up, we've got Farm Bureau involved with what we're tryin' to do. So we feel like we're gonna have a stronger relationship with Ag. Fishermen don't want to deal with this stuff. They want to fish. And the Department, the Division of Marine Fisheries, they regulate. Fishermen want to fish. Division of Marine Fisheries wants to regulate. Nobody's out there hustlin'. So that's what the Catch groups are tryin' to do. And we're excited. In fact we've found, one of our catch members found the Rhode Island manag--, I haven't, I've skimmed it, but there was a whole report comin' out of Rhode Island about how they're dealing with sustainability, with traceability, with the marketing piece. So we're real interested to see how other states make it work.

MHA Yeah, yeah.

KWA We've got a lot of catchin' up to do in North Carolina. And a really tough political situation right now. But hopefully, hopefully the current administration has ticked off enough people they'll be gone in three years. That's what we're countin' on.

[inaudible]

MHA Oh geeze. Well it's really, I'm really glad to have a chance to catch up a little bit and hear the kind of follow on to what I heard in Washington a year ago.

KWA Well we're still shoving, we're still shovin'. It's slow work, but it's, there's momentum building.

MHA So you think that the Direct Marketing thing and the CSF's are a good model for pushing this?

KWA They are a good model for small scale, for small operations. 'Cause like I say, the key to it is that other end, having somebody who's willing to pay premium price and it's like I tell Eddie Willis who owns Core Sound Seafood, the most important thing you're sellin' them is you. 'Cause they're attached to Eddie and Alison and their little girl Maggie. But that's what farmers have done. You're not buyin' pumpkins, you're buyin' somebody's pumpkin that planted that seed and harvested that crop. I think they're a big part of the PR effort. It's a piece of the solution. I think that's the difference. Used to [be] fishin' was large volume, a hundred boxes at the dock it was on a truck in two hours headed north. But it doesn't work anymore. There still needs to be some trucks goin' north when the volume is there, but how do you keep that infrastructure in place and create new infrastructure. And that's gonna take some help from the state and private resources. But if somebody in Gallsboro or Winston-Salem or Ashville wants fresh, local, North Carolina seafood, then it's gonna take us all, includin' the state government and hopefully that's what our next frontier is. We are doin' the State Fair this year, the first time North Carolina Seafood has been at the fair in twelve years.

MHA Wow. That's fantastic

KWA I'll be cooking scallop fritters that are comin' off of the boats in Providence, our boats in Providence and then we'll ship 'em home, so...we're all connected. We're all so connected.

MHA Well this was very good. I hate to cut this short, or to end it, but we promised to let you go at one

KWA That's ok. Well thank you. I'm sorry I was late,

MHA That's ok.

KWA But that's so in character with me 'cause I'm trying to squeeze in somethin' so we ran to Cape Cod this mornin'.

MHA So what, are you participating in anything?

KWA I'm on a panel. I've not gotten my schedule yet.

MHA Oh I think you're on, you might be on the panel tomorrow?

KWA I think it's tomorrow.

MHA You can cut it, yeah.