

Name of person interviewed: Kevin Curole [KC]

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September 28, 2013

Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber [MHA]

Abstract

Kevin Curole talks about his 37 year career as a shrimper, the impact of imports on the domestic shrimp industry, and his work with his wife Margaret to advocate for the domestic fishery. He also talks about his current work driving a support boat for the off-shore oil industry Louisiana.

Demographic information

Sex: Male

Age:

Ethnicity: White, Cajun

Occupation: fisherman

Born: New Orleans, LA

Homeport: Grand Isle, LA

Key words

Role

Fisherman, boat owner, support boat driver

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

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

Social and Cultural Characteristics of Fishing

Gulf Coast Shrimp fishery

Gulf Coast Oil Industry

Imports

Gear and Fishing Technology

Other gear and technology

Boats

KC My name's Kevin Curole

MHA Ok. And where were you born?

KC In New Orleans, Louisiana

MHA And is that where you grew up?

KC No. I grew up on Baie L'Fuje (sp?) in Guiana

MHA And is your family from Louisiana originally? Was the...

KC Yes.

MHA And what do you consider your ethnic background?

KC Cajun

MHA And is the rest of your family involved in the fishing industry?

KC Yeah. My Dad used to shrimp as a second job, he worked in the oil field. And my grandfather, both of 'em was shrimp fishermen.

MHA Wow. I read in your bio that your nickname is "Godzilla".

KC Yeah.

MHA I'm dying to know how that came about.

KC When I started gettin' paid to shrimp since I was three years old.

MHA Three!

KC I lived on a 22 foot shrimp boat with my grandparents and they'd go out for like two, three, four day trips and we lived out in the marsh in this boat And my grandma would pay me fifty cents for every little gallon bucket I'd fill up with jumbo shrimp. She'd actually put me in the middle of the pile of shrimp in a shrimp basket so that the crabs couldn't get to me and I was standin' in there and pickin' all around the basket, pullin' out the jumbo shrimps and she'd put a mark on a paper every time I filled a bucket. Well by the time I graduated from high school, my mom never let me spend none of that money, and I had the money to pay for my first boat, got it custom built at a ship yard out of aluminum. It was twenty foot and it was all aluminum, I called it the quicksilver. Well, we lived at my grandparents hunting camp out in the marsh, me my wife and my daughter. And we would untie the boat from the dock, put the nets in the water and start shrimping, right there. Well the boats that would come to fish with us at night were like big boats and they looked like monsters and after about seven years of gettin' intimidated

by all these big monster boats, I sold the QUICK SILVER, built my first bigger boat which was thirty foot and to me, that was my monster and I named it GODZILLA.

MHA [laughs] that's a great story. Wow, so you started rather early and how did you know what to do, even as a three year old? Your grandma must have shown you.

KC Just going with their guidance.

MHA Yeah, yeah. And what happened to the crabs? Were they also, were they blue crabs?

KC Yeah.

MHA So were they sold at that time?

KC Uh, they were, we never really had a market available to sell them if you was shrimping, you know. It's kind of a specific industry that if you crab and then you end up selling your crabs everyday, goin' to haul them in a truck to a place that buys them and we just concentrated on catchin' shrimp, didn't really catch enough to make it feasible to go out of your way. We mostly just ate 'em or gave 'em away or threw 'em back.

MHA Now what years did, how long did you continue fishing?

KC I shrimped from like about 1968 to two thousand and probably five when I finally gave it up. I was working for the price of the shrimp and the import pressure on the cheap shrimp and the price of fuel and ice and groceries and break downs. When I made the opening in the August season, I think it was maybe two thousand and probably two, the opening of the August season, that week, you stand to make the most money in a week you're gonna make all year, 'cause it's fresh fishing grounds, you know? I made, seven days and nights, we never stopped, the boat was either shrimping or we ran to Grand Isle, unloaded and as soon as we was unloaded and had fuel and ice, we made that night again. So for seven days the boat never stopped. Me and the deck hand would take turns sleeping, maybe two or three hours a day, that's it. And after workin' that long, I had seven thousand dollars worth of shrimp, no five thousand dollars worth of shrimp in seven days. And my expense came out to seven thousand dollars. In one period I worked like all night, ran to Grand Isle, sold the shrimp, worked again that night and never even slept. I went forty-three hours without a nap, and it cost me two-thousand dollars to work that hard. So that's when I called one of my former employers and says, I'm gonna be wantin' a job, you know. 'Cause a relative of mine, he's got a boat company, works for the oil field and I just have to call him up and tell him, I'm lookin' for a job and in his words, is like, "If I've got to fire the most slacker dude on the crew of one of my boats, you can have a job within a week". And me and Margaret [his wife] was leavin' to go to Portugal to speak at a convention about seafood for the fishermen in our community and I told him, I said, "I'll be back in a week." He says, "Don't worry" he says, "You'll have a job". And that's when I quit shrimping full time. And we'd just shrimp on my days off from my

regular job and after doin' that for like a year or so, I'd go shrimpin on my days off, I'm like "Wow, did I used to enjoy workin' this hard?"

MHA [laughs]

KC I gained like thirty pounds in three months when I quit shrimpin' for a livin'.

MHA Wow

KC 'Cause it's hard work

MHA Yeah. So do you miss it?

KC I miss the freedom of being able to go and come whenever you want, like if my daughter had some event with school, I could just take off no matter what and go. But when I realized how hard I was workin' to make money for other people, then it wasn't a pleasant thing no more.

MHA Right, yeah. So is there still a pretty strong fishing community in the area?

KC No. I'd say probably 90% of the fishermen that used to fish when I did is doin' somethin' else.

MHA And it's for the same reasons, 'cause of the imports and costs?

KC Yeah, and the oil spill we had in the Gulf destroyed a lot of the stocks and they still never came back right, you know?

MHA And how about the hurricanes. Did they affect you?

KC Hurricanes...that isn't nothing, we live with that.

MHA You're used to it.

KC The worst thing about the hurricanes is the couple days you miss seekin' shelter and then all the debris you gotta drag through for the next week or month where you usually fish was good clean ground and now there's frickin' trees and remnants of houses and mattresses and box springs and nightmares, you know

MHA Yeah.

KC The first week the guys that go out man they have it rough. You lose some gear.

MHA So what were the fishing grounds like normally. Are they kind of sandy, muddy bottom?

KC No it's strictly mud.

MHA Mmmm.

KC Inland. If you're offshore on the beach, we got a few sandy beaches, but not much. We just mostly have mud.

MHA And is it, like in the inlets, is that where you do the shrimping?

KC Yeah. We got a lot of like small twenty, thirty, forty foot inland boats. I mean you start off with what you could afford, you know? And some people either, me I just enjoyed workin' there home inland. Some people just upgrade and get a big offshore boat, but it's pretty much mostly what you've grown up into. If your family had small inland boats and that's what you learned then to move offshore that's a whole different set of wrecks and hangs and obstructions and to move off to a big offshore boat, you kind of almost gotta grow up into that nature and get passed a boat from your elders or get helped into it, you know?

MHA Yeah.

KC I ended up in a fifty foot steel hull which was a offshore beach inland combination boat, but I ended up de-riggin' it for offshore and just, it was like my personal yacht inland boat. We had five bedrooms in there, shower, galley, two sofas. It was nice. We had Wildlife and Fisheries board my boat once it was some humbug and they wrote on the ticket I had a burnt runnin' light so they boarded me for a burnt runnin' light and wanted to give me a five thousand dollar fine over a burnt running light. And they wrote up on the ticket, my boat was classed as a shrimping houseboat. It was nice.

MHA [laughs]

KC You had a full ton air condition, it was nice.

MHA So were you able to get out of that ticket?

KC Yeah. The week after 9/11 happened.

MHA Oh.

KC And they sent me a letter in the mail saying that it was gonna be considered a warning because they were so overwhelmed with the pressures from 9/11 that they wasn't worrying about pursuing a running light violation.

MHA Well good, somebody had some sense then. [laughs] Good. So, when you, what was the most unusual aspect of, I mean, about fishing, all those years that you were fishing? Would you have any surprising encounters?

KC Uh, just I guess the odd catches where you'd be shrimpin' normal and next thing you know you run across a school of like jellyfish and you blow up your nets cause it's full to the gill with jellies and the next thing you know the nets get ripped off the frames or sting rays, devil fish, sting rays, you know like, these things follow each other in a line, kind of like the lobsters do.

MHA Uh huh.

KC So if one of 'em goes in your net, you're gonna end up with everyone that's in the line til next thing you know the same thing happens. The boat stops moving'. You go out side to see what's wrong and the nets are floatin' with jellyfish or stingrays or

MHA Wow.

KC And you try to pick up and the net either breaks or you gotta cut it open to get them a way to get out. I've caught logs the size of pool tables before.

MHA [laughs]

KC Stuff like that you know. One time, this was crazy, we had a pokey boats workin' off our shores while we was in Grand Isle Pass and it was really kind of poachin' in the territory it was at, but there was so much fish they did it anyway and the net blew up on them, they caught so much fish at one haul that when you go to pen up all them fish together, it chokes 'em and kills 'em.

MHA Right.

KC So they lost all that fish that died and ended up washing on the beaches. So we fightin' through this for like a week of rottenness and

MHA Ug

KC We just quit. It wasn't worth the horror,

MHA Yeah.

KC Shrimpin' through that so we packed up the boat, washing it up and went and spent a week in Florida, you know. Well when we came back, the mess had cleared up, well we're skimmin' on the bottom for shrimp, and we're catching tumbleweeds of fish bones the size of tennis balls and softballs. There was so much dead fish bones from the current rolling 'em around, they were piled up like tumbleweeds.

MHA Wow that's fascinating.

KC [laughs]

MHA It's amazing what happened out there

KC Yeah.

MHA Huh.

KC And then once we was fishin' and that grass and seaweed that comes from Africa and all, the way the wind blows, it piles it up in the passes and one night I went out, I was by myself, no helper, and I put in, ten minutes later, right at dark, I notice, I'm goin' backwards. And my nets was choked full of the weed to the point where one of the nets blew out and the boat turned all of a sudden I end up with the other net in the wheel, in the pass, barely nobody there because of all the weeds. So all I could do was throw my anchor overboard in the current, raging current in the Grand Isle Pass, by myself, go dive, cut the net out of the wheel, cut the other net off the frame to get the weed out of it. It was one o'clock in the mornin' off of a ten minute push before I untangled myself that was another week we went to Florida to get away from the weed. We get to Florida, the beaches in Florida's covered with the weed. So we spent the week in the swimmin' pool. Not even wantin' to go see the beach.

MHA Yeah. Huh.

KC Stuff like that you know.

MHA Yeah.

KC Now once, once in thirty something years of bein' a commercial fisherman, did I make a set like that with shrimp.

MHA There was so much.

KC Yeah and it was so odd. We had made some friends in New Orleans and brought 'em home to come shrimpin' with us and it was late in the evening by the time we got home and the young lady's like "We goin' shrimpin' tonight?" I'm like, "Uh, it's really too late, we missed the peak of the night right at dark" "Oh no" she says, "Let's go. I wanna see some shrimp." "Alright we'll go." So we get there and we're like three hours late and the boats piled up along the demarcation line 'cause whoever's in the front of the line got the best chance of catchin' the most shrimp. And I just so happened, and there was like one little gap left. And I fit up in there and I had a friend of mine on one side of me, friend of mine on the other side of me and I called 'em up on the radio like "What's happenin'?" "Nothin', we're fixin' to go home. You didn't miss nothin'" So I see 'em pick up and he's got a bag about the size of a basketball, maybe half of that's shrimp, you know. So maybe a half an hour we was there, you know. And you've got lines of current comin' off of this bank and that bank and this channel and that bay and it's a Russian roulette as to where the shrimp's gonna pass, you know. So I'm like "Oh well, we just a soon pick up and go home." Man the winch is in a bind tryin' to pick up, you know. And man when it

finally starts comin' up, I see this big bulge in the net. I'm like, "what the heck?" It was all, it was all shrimp!

MHA Wow

KC Both sides of it, one foot from my gear to there gear and we just landed in the shrimp by some miracle of God. She convinced us to go out that night and we ended up and we used salt boxes We got like hundred fifty, two hundred gallon tubs, we add fifty pounds of salt to and what it is, the fish float before the shrimp. So when you add salinity to the water, the fish will float more and you gotta set that balance just right that you don't make the shrimp wanna float.

MHA Mmm Hmm

KC And I put the first bag in the salt box, and all the water came out. It was just so much shrimp.

MHA [laughs]

KC All over and the shrimp's falling on the deck. I'm like, "Wow." So we got a side band ready for the next bag and just picked it up and dumped the whole bag straight in the ice hole. Once in thirty somethin' years did I see that, you know? That was nice.

MHA Yeah. That's amazing. Um, so there was something that, something that Laura wanted me to ask you. And I totally forgot what it is. Have you been involved, you went straight from shrimping into the oil industry.

KC I started in the oil industry. My Dad got me a job before I even graduated.

MHA Oh.

KC And at the same time as when I commissioned to build my boat. And at the time when I started I worked full time for the oil industry and shrimped on my days off. Did that for a couple years and then I really made more money shrimpin' then I did on my job and the pressure of dealing with working with other people. It's better to be your own boss. So I ended up givin' up the oil field to work full time shrimpin' and in the oil field when the shrimpin' was, in the winters for the little boats, three, four months out of the year we'd go get a, if I didn't make enough money shrimpin' and I didn't get to stay home for the winter, I'd go work in the oil field.

MHA I see. So how do you feel about the oil fields after the oil spill? Do you still think it's the right thing?

KC They've come up with some regulations and safety standards to improve on the problem that happened, you know. There's no getting away from it. You wouldn't have

got here if it wouldn't be for it. You wouldn't be, you would be walkin' home or taking your horse when you leave here. You know. We flew here.

MHA Yeah.

KC The whole world has to reconfigure their train of thought before this is not gonna be a necessity no more. You know. But we at home, like for the storms and all, we'll lose power for a week or two, or sometimes three weeks and most people have generators so they don't have to be without air condition or their freezer defrosts. My wife, when we lived in the marsh, with my daughter, we didn't have no generator, no. We had a solar panel that ran, charged a 12 volt battery, ran a 12 volt light bulb, a DELCO stereo system out of an old pick up truck, and a Ru bilge pump that made us a shower. That was our modern conveniences. Then we upgraded to the shower. And from that one day we was debatin' about getting a generator and my wife says, if I can have a fan, and not have to deal with the mad people or the gas stations and paying five dollars a gallon, getting ripped off for gas, and waitin' in line three hours for that and listening to the noise and trying to start the darn thing after it's been laid up for a year, you know. So we bought like four solar panels and hooked 'em up to batteries and a few converters and we can charge our phones and the computer and listen to the radio and I can charge my cordless tools and do maintenance in the yard and we got solar powered fans. We built a little screen porch on the back of our house that we could go sit out in the breeze and we went that route, you know. I mean if more people would think of that, instead of goin' and spendin' two grand on a generator, that's what we spent to build a screen porch and the batteries and the solar panels and when the hurricane hit, we were sittin' back there cookin' the food at it defrosted out of our freezer, and the neighbors are comin' try to borrow gas from us and extension cords and we're sittin' back there enjoyin' ourself with our solar fans and eatin' lobsters and Dungeness crabs as they defrosted out of our freezer. We weren't sufferin at all. We spent like three or four days, cleanin' up the broken branches out of the yard and finally got so fed up on listening to them complaining about how miserable they was with their generator, we just got in the car and left and went on a vacation. Came back when the electricity was there so we didn't have to listen to them complaining.

MHA Now how did you and Margaret end up going to Europe to speak for, with the fishing industry, you mentioned that earlier.

KC Yeah well the price of our shrimp went down to they wanted to pay us less than sixty cents a pound for our biggest shrimp, that's stupid

MHA Yeah

KC You know.

MHA Yeah.

KC So we got really pissed and I was kind of one of the lead protesters and took my nets off my frames, tied up at the factory dock where we would sell our shrimp, and took some bed sheets and spray painted on 'em and hung 'em where the nets went, "This boat will not work for less than sixty-five cents a pound" And the people buyin' the shrimp from us, retailin' our shrimp for like two, three dollars a pound and the retail people who was buyin' it from was asking 'em, "Hey, what's up with that boat with the sign in his masts about the sixty-five cents a pound and we're paying two, three dollars over here for shrimp" And we arranged a meeting in one of the local communities. We had over eight hundred people showed up, fishermen, that's phenomenal.

MHA Wow.

KC From the little boats to the medium boats to the big boats, we had everybody show up. That's phenomenal you know? You might get a group of the same class of boats show up, a hundred people, you know, the whole industry showed up. Even the processors 'cause they wanted to see what was happenin' and the buyers and the fuel docks, some of the mayors, we had a lot of people show up. And from that gathering, we formed the Louisiana Shrimp Association. One of the fishermen was the, he's a lawyer whose father sent him to school to be a lawyer, but they were fishermen and he ended up going back to fishin' and he arranged for us to get together form and organization, non-profit organization and we had meetings and somebody says, "We need to attend the Gulf Coast Council meetings who make the laws for our fishermen." "Good idea" My wife came up with the idea. "Who are we gonna send? How are we gonna afford," We had dues and we had a little money and like we can afford to send two or three people. Nobody volunteered and they all pointed to her. "It was your idea, you're going." "Ok, fine." She said. So she went. Well a couple meetings down the way was the WTO meeting in Cancun coming up and one of our fishermen were invited to go attend that. But he was not going. Pointed to Margaret again, "You like to travel, you go." So we ended up going and she attended the meeting and there was people there, it was the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers, forty-two countries at the time, of [?] fishing villages around the world. Margaret spoke which she's so good at doing and they were so impressed with what she had to say their, they have a man and a woman representative from every area of their organization and at the time the woman representative for North America, America and Mexico was not involved in their processes, they gave her the job to take over that woman's place. From that meeting, before we got home, she got invited to go to Portugal and tell her story about our fishermen to the Portuguese fishermen at one of their big functions. From that meeting, before we got home she got invited to go to Italy. From that meeting and it never ended for about five years, that before we left a function she had already been invited to go talk somewhere else. We went to Iceland, she's been to like thirty something countries. She spent three weeks out of every month travelling for the fishermen for five, ten years before it slowed down.

MHA And what I'm guessing from that is that she, people could see the parallels.

KC Yeah, oh yeah.

MHA In their own situations. Yeah. So have you had the opportunity to travel even in the United States along all the coasts?

KC Yeah I've been, I get to make about half of the ventures she goes on with my work schedule.

MHA Good. And do you talk to the fishermen, other fishermen and so on?

KC Oh yeah. She's actually from a meeting we ended up in Rhode Island with the help of Jerry Fraser from Commercial Fishery Magazine [National Fisherman]. They came with, let's form the Commercial Fishermen of America.

MHA Right.

KC Ok. And that represents the crab fishermen in Alaska, Sig Hansen joined the group and squid fishermen in the Carolinas and you name it, lobster fishermen. So we formed a common group of one force to have a common complaint. We can all get together as what they're doing to step the fishermen out of the industry, you know.

MHA And have you come up with some ideas about how to proceed, how to stop that?

KC What they're workin' on right now is to try to put fishermen in the same category as farmers where we can maybe get some kind of health coverage and general benefits like that. Not really complaining about specific gripes with individual industries, just trying to get a common benefit for the fishermen as feeders of the nation, much like the farmers.

MHA Right.

MHA Would you ever want to go back to fishing?

KC Uh, I would love to, but I've learned too much to know that there's no future. The powers, we'll say, that allows foreign product to come into this country make too much money to stop investing ten cents on the dollar to turn a profit off of lettin' foreign products come into this country. They're not concerned about helpin' the local fishermen at all.

MH That's uh, that's sad.

KC Yeah, 'cause I mean I honed a skill which, you know any fishing industry is a skill. You either learn it or you get put out of business. Actually when I quit, Margaret convinced me that I had an alternative career in captaining oil field boats that most of the fishermen didn't have that option. And I should give up my share of shrimp to the fishermen who wasn't capable of that alternate income, you know.

MH Hmm. And why, how did, why would, how were your skills different from some of the other fishermen that she was talking about? I mean I would assume that any fishing boat captain would have the same kinds of skills to go out to the oil rigs

KC Well I was fortunate as when I first became old enough to work, my Daddy got me a job in the industry and, I'm forty seven years old and I still got school every year. I gotta go to, to keep up with this industry. And for somebody who hasn't come up in the industry, right now to make their way up to captains position, it's gonna take you about five years and twenty thousand dollars to get there. Plus you gotta be still healthy enough to make your way up to the bridge, work your way through the deck in the blazing heat on the back deck of a frikkin' iron oven, you know. You're on back deck of a steel hull in the sun in August in Louisiana. Our temperature gauge that sits in the shade marks a hundred twenty degrees sometimes from the radiating heat coming off of the steel hull.

MHA So what does your job entail and are you carting equipment and people?

KC Yeah we, no we haul supplies for drilling rigs, drill pipe, fuel, water, cement, cargo, tools, drilling tools, stuff like that. Not personnel. There's other boats that haul personnel. I don't work with those boats.

MHA I assume those are, they're not as hot, [laughs]

KC Uh, I wouldn't say that. They're fast boats. They're lightweight aluminum boats made to just make quick runs, pick up people, bring 'em in. And the boat I work on, it's designed as a mule, slow and steady.

MHA Strong.

KC Two hundred forty foot, and it's a baby.

MHA Wow.

KC The new vessels supplying the industry's needs are three hundred twenty footers nowadays. My little two hundred forty footer is like becoming obsolete and they're talking about stretching it an extra fifty foot.

MHA What about the draft, is it deep enough?

KC Draft? We draft between twelve and seventeen feet. We load product to the rig in fifteen foot seas sometimes.

MHA Wow.

KC The [?] would be coming out the water. On DP, using Dynamic Positioning with satellites and no lines, them rigs are not moored to the bottom, they're floating in five, six, seven thousand feet of water, using satellite positioning and once we get within about

thirty meters of 'em we lock onto 'em at a computer that range and bearing to the computer guided navigation we use and we just kind of dance in harmony with the rig as it moves twenty thirty meters one way or the other. Unbelievable.

MHA I wonder what would happen if the satellites, the GPS flickered off at some point?

KC There's various systems. There's, we work with like usually a minimum of like seven satellites and there's different, you got satellite and then the information goes to a land-based signal calibration system which brings the accuracy to like a couple of feet. And you got some that are like say, you paid for this service, and some of them are government operated services. So there's various references. There's, it's a voting off of what's like, if you're gonna have three satellites that are similar and four of 'em that's oddball, they can vote out the four oddball signals and pick on the three that match. Then we have various other, like the system that catches the range and bearing off the rig, we get to punch that in as our primary guidance for position, so even if that rig loses it's satellite capabilities, if he moves, we're movin' with him. It's a lot of redundancy, back up, bunch of computer evaluated references to the boat swaying. It's two different vertical reference systems and everything is at least two redundancies if one goes out, you got a spare and there's an alarm that's gonna go off before it affects you.

MHA So this must be a bit of a change from when you first started.

KC Oh yeah. It was all hands on the wheel, tyin' up, bein' made fast to the structure or just what we call "crew boatin'" floatin' out there usin' your propulsion, maneuvering with the rudders and some captains they was nicknamed like "Hook and Run" 'cause they didn't know how to hold a boat in place. They could back up under the crane and by the time they guy with shackle and slings, they was runnin' because they was twenty feet off and when that crane would pick it off the lift was flyin' you know, sideways. But the industry, I quit for like, like fifteen years. And when I came back I was amazed at the changes like I said when I did that in the old school, the rig would send you down a sling and you would hook that up to every individual lift with four shackles. Now every lift that gets put on the boat is pre-strung with a D-Rig and all you gotta do is connect the crane one hook, boom. And there's three men down there, two hands on and one guy with a radio talking to the crane. Back when I did it, early, it was one guy doin' all that by himself. So there's a lot of safety changes, improvements.

MHA Do they make you go through safety training?

KC Oh God yeah. Yeah, before a guy can walk on the deck, he's got a week of evaluation and training and at least minimum of a week, that's just the company's policy. And he should have at least SDCW before they even hire you which is at least another week of international training, surpasses American standards.

MHA Hmm. Interesting. So...

KC Then when you get hired on as a green hand, you get an orange hat for six months, and an orange hard hat so that everybody who sees you, the crane operators, they know, I better keep an eye on this guy, he's new. Then after six months you graduate to a white hat and he might feel a little more safe seein' a bunch of white hats down there.

MHA How about in Louisiana among the fishing industry, are people taking safety training at all?

KC No, no, no. It's, you learn from your mistakes and pay for 'em yourself.

MHA How about, do people use, have survival suits and things like that?

KC God no. We don't need that. It's very few weeks or months that the water in the Gulf actually gets cool enough to worry about that.

MHA Hmm. Ok. How about floatation devices?

KC Oh yeah. Yeah. If you go beyond a certain point before you get issued a license you gotta have, you know, some type of life rafts and EPIRBs and depending on where your gear permit limits are.

MHA So when you were actively fishing, you usually fished with one crew member?

KC Yup. I would, I had a steady helper and if anybody, a friend or whatever would wanna come add on to the crew for a trip just to pick 'em up some shrimp to bring home or somethin', it was always welcome. I'd pay 'em out of my pocket just for me not to have to go out there and help the deck hand and allow me to concentrate more on navigating the boat and keepin' us in the shrimp, watchin' the fish finders and stuff, you know. Keepin' me out of the sun. My grandma would call me sometimes late at night and say, "Beb, it's rainin' over there?" "Oh yeah." She'd say, "Oh, you getting wet?" "Me no gro? [speaking in Cajun] Me why not?" I say "the deckhand look wet outside, but it's not rainin' in the cabin". "Oh man that's good Beb". My grandma was psychic. She could predict if I was gonna catch shrimp or not. She could predict deaths in the family. Yeah, yeah. She did it every time we lost a family member, she knew a week before it happened. And I'd bring her shrimp like a couple times a week, you know. And she'd tell me, she say, "Beb it don't pay for you to go tonight, you're gonna just waste your diesel." I said, "Oh well gron, I gotta go try." And she was usually right. She'd say, "Yeah last night I went outside about midnight and the cows was layin' down under the trees and the wind was blowin' from the East and there was some clouds or whatever. You know the old people, they didn't have the weather channel. They depended on nature to help 'em out and they used it and nowadays we're so spoiled if we can't turn on the TV and figure out if it's rainin' outside right now, you know.

MHA Isn't that the truth!

KC Or even worse, check on your phone. Phones are like dope these days, you know. I remember when I first started workin' on boats, you would see a boat pushin' a barge and the guy would be sittin' on the front bed just to get away from the aggravation of whatever you know, smokin' him a cigarette. Today, that same guy's sittin' on the front bed playin' on his phone. You push a guy overboard as a joke, you gonna owe him a seven hundred dollar phone today, if it's not in a life box. [laughs]

MHA [laughs]

KC Yeah.

MHA Yeah. Things have changed. So do you see young people going into the industry at all?

KC No. Not, I don't know, just a couple of old stragglers left.

MHA And how about the waterfront, the working waterfront? Is it all changed over to supporting the oil industry or are there still facilities for the fishing?

KC Uh, where we live, the thriving used to be commercial fishing industry docks and stuff is gettin' pressured out of being able to afford the land taxes and what have you to where just the people with money's buying out the properties and building condominiums and nice resort summer homes and what have you. Oil field, they just pretty much had a stance on where they've been. Just Port Fusion is growing, it's always been a major oil field and it's before the expansion they're working on right now is finished, the plan's in effect for the next expansion project for the bigger boats and the bigger boats and it's phenomenal.

MHA Wow. Hmm. I'm not totally surprised, I heard about the boats that are expanding to go through the Panama Canal that are gonna be unbelievably large, Hammacks, I think they call it or something.

KC And have you heard they're supposed to build a railway across, it borders Panama, um, I forgot the name of the country. But anyway to compete with the shipping through the Panama Canal they're building a railway. It's the next country north of Panama. Anyway, that's in the works right now too.

MHA I hadn't heard

KC Instead of sending the ships across, they're gonna rail everything across and have ships waitin' to pick 'em up there.

MHA So the oil from, in Louisiana, is it going mostly by pipeline? Or ship?

KC Uh, mostly, yeah it's mostly moved by pipelines to the refineries and then from there it gets put in ships.

MHA Well this has been very, very interesting. I know that there are a million more stories that I could get from you, or I'd like to hear from you, but I, we have to close. Before we close though, what is the, your necklace? What's the...

KC The trip I mentioned that we went to Iceland, that's the runes from Iceland, it's one of the oldest functioning languages left on earth. And as I was there I bought a charm rune for a friend of mine and it stood for friendship and there was a little card in there that explained all the different runes and their meanings and I made this necklace out of bones. And the four I got stands for "travel," "strength," "health," and "pleasure". That's my motto. [laughs]

MHA Wonderful. And fleur de lis

KC And this is my little surf board.

MHA Yeah.

KC And the fleur de lis. I built these two fleur de lis in the necklace the morning the Saints won the Superbowl.

MHA Oh, ho.

KC So those are my lucky bones.

MHA Perfect. Well thank you so much Kevin. Really appreciate you spending the time. I hate to end it.

KC This is a shackle. It's a deer antler.

MHA Oh.

KC And a bone.

MHA Oh.

KC Threaded into a shackle.

MHA Very interesting, yeah. Hmm. So have you always carved?

KC No we ended up, one of the trips we went to ended up in Italy at Terra Madre and there was some African women there who worked in dairy farms like over like three quarter of the people there, there was five thousand people invited by the Italian government and I'd say over half was African communities. It had to be all organic food. And 'cause of our harvesting of wild shrimp, we got invited. And those African ladies, when the cows would die, they would save the bones and make jewelry like this and I

actually bought four little plain, they were plain, just like this though into a necklace, for like ten bucks, you know. And I wore that and had more compliments from that, than any piece of gold I ever wore. And the people who liked that to me were like cool people, you know.

MHA yeah, yeah.

KC And I found some antique scrimshaw I bought for Margaret. It was a charm of a mermaid playing a banjo. And I, with my leatherman pocket knife, made her a pair of reciprocating earrings that matched the charm and from there people was like, "That's cool. Make me one." And I have never quit makin' em.

MHA That's great. It's a whole other little sideline.

KC Natural, organic. If you're gonna rob me for this, you can have it. You know. Don't shoot me. Don't steel my gold 'cause I don't wear gold no more.

MHA Have you ever carved cypress knees?

KC No. I used to carve a little wood decoys and stuff, long time ago.

MHA Well that's great. Well thank you.

KC Yeah.