

Interviewer: Alexis McGhee (AM)

Interviewee: Robert Everson (RE)

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Project: Fishing Traditions and Fishing Futures

\_\_\_\_\_ = Questionable statements

From First Recording

[00:01:03 – 00:03:03]

**RE** I grew up in Meridian Georgia, born and raised in Meridian and I grew up there until I graduated from High school. I think that's when I started at shrimping.

**AM** What kind of pushed you into the fishing or the shrimping industry?

**RE** My father was a shrimper and, uh, he shrimped mostly in the gulf. He started in McIntosh and he eventually went to the gulf, Fort Meyers, and then into [inaudible] Mexico and Texas and [inaudible]. He's fished the area from Texas back to Carolina. And, uh, it was a pretty good life, shrimping was a pretty good life in those days when they did it. Shrimp was an abundance and you could make a decent living shrimping and, you know, the equipment wasn't as expensive as it is now a days and you could bring home mo' money. And I started operating a boat from my brotha. That's when I started and he bought another boat and I started with that boat and eventually [inaudible] I conceived the idea that I wanted my own boat and then I went and I bought me a boat and it was an old boat, it needed a lot of repairs. I made the repairs and I had to fish on calm days. I wasn't in a boat that was too sea worthy [laughs]. You had to keep your eye on the bills and make sure, in other words, the boat was in the water and the water wasn't in the boat.

[00:06:15 – 00:08:30]

**RE** My father was a good fisherman. He started off, he did a lot of fishing here and he was considered a good captain, you know what I mean? And men in those days who had boats wanted good captains. When he left Georgia and went to Florida and started to work in Florida, I think he started off with Saint George, I think Saint George fishing company or whatever, packing company or whatever and then eventually went to another company, Durant Herring shrimp company. And that's when he, he stayed there until they got ready to get rid of some of the boats Bapoven boats, they gave mt dad the option to buy one. They told em he could get a brand new boat or he could get any one of them boats he wanted or he could get one of the older ones which would be easier to pay for and naturally, he took the older boat. And, uh, he brought it up and stayed up here until he retired. He was very good in setting doors, I don't know if

you're familiar with doors, and rigs. He spliced cables and he pretty well did most of what needed to be done as far as setting rigs. He taught my brother and I how to do that, and I'm still doing it up until this day. I'm still splicing cables, which he didn't teach me to splice cables. I learned how to splice cables from the University of Georgia over in Brunswick. One of my friends was a [inaudible] layer. Name was Tom Shirley, I don't know if you ever heard of the name, he worked over at the University of Georgia, we called em Frito. Frito taught me how to splice cables and I've been doing it ever since.

[00:09:40 – 00:10:57]

**RE** But the shrimping is like I said right is, and I really don't understand how men could still buy boats, I really don't [chuckles]. You know, seeing the cost. Where then you could buy nets for \$500 dollars, now, oh my god. I don't know what they cost now. I would say 15 or 1000, or 15 or more, I don't even know what they cost now. And, uh, everything is, all the prices is up, with everything. Simple things like shackles and things that you need on boats. The chain and everything, is unbelievable right now and that's enough to force a person out. I wouldn't, you couldn't give me a boat. And I said if someone is to give me a boat and its full of fuel, I would take it and fish it til I burn all the fuel and I'd give it to someone else [laughs]. That's just how I feel about that right now. It's just [inaudible]. But like I said, when I did it, you could bring home some money. You could make a decent living them, I worked hard.

[00:13:30 – 00:15:17]

**RE** It was the same thing every day, not the same thing everyday cause you run into some things that, some days that you its hard to even explain the things that can go wrong on a shrimp boat and when you think nothing else can happen, something else can always happen. I remember one day I was having a bad day and everything was going wrong. I said to em I said well, everything is already happening ain't no way nothing else could happen. And dog on if something else didn't happen. I shouldn't of neva said nothing to begin with [laughs]. I mean it was just from one thing to another and then you have those kind of days and they beat you down so much til you come in and ain't no way you wanna go back the next day. But, you bite the bullet and go back the next day and get some mo trouble [laughs]. Someone described a boat as a hole that you pour money into, a hole in the water that you pour money into, you probably heard that expressions. Like I said, it's a was a good job, it was a good and decent living, when you could go out and shrimping, the price of shrimp was up. I think, the biggest blow we had to the shrimping industry was the pond raised shrimp. When they start getting those cheap shrimp and the price of shrimp. Naturally if you can buy shrimp for, I'm just saying two dollars a pound, you won't pay three fifty and people don't know the difference. Most people can't tell the difference.

[00:36:41 – 00:39:12]

**RE** Well, the prices at one time the price of shrimp, we were getting like seven dollars a pound for shrimp, and seven dollar [inaudible] I can't remember now. That's a positive. It stayed up in the fives and the six, stuff like that's positive. Negative, is when those pond raised shrimp. [laughs]. That was a major negative with that and then the cost of equipment. [inaudible] over head, there, lets put it like that. We call it over head. In the over head, changed so much. So those are negatives in the shrimping industry.

**AM** So what would you say would be the most rewarding part of your career in the shrimping industry?

**RE** The year of 79, my brother and I , we talked about it. I think [inaudible], it was a good year in the shrimping industry. There were other good years and they've had good years since then. But, 79 was a good year for me [laughs] and for some reason and another, I don't know why I got rid of most of my, envelopes, you know, you put it in an envelope and put everything, your cost your expenses. I don't know, some how or another, I found 79, I don't know why of all the others I had, 79 I found, and I kept it. And I was looking over it and my brother evidently he had his too, I don't know why, but he says 79 was one of his best years and I said it was one of mine too. And I still have it, I kept those. You know, bring home money, I mean you'd be sur-, we did real good. Lets put it like that it was one of them years that you wish every year was the same, but there had been some years that it was really poor. Like some of those cold winters. They said the cold killed the shrimp or whatever.

From Second Recording..

[00:07:11 – 00:08:38]

**RE** And I known some fishermen that were some good fishermen that fished up into their 70's and that did good, you know. Sometimes they would put it like this, its in ma blood. I don't know whether it was in my blood, [laughs] I didn't know whether it was in my blood, but I loved doing it while I was doing it. But when I got out of it, I didn't wanna get back into it. So I don't think it was all in me, in my blood, but like I said, my dad did it, he did a good job. He was well respected. Every port that my brother and I went into and they found out who my father was, you captain Bean/Bing's son, everything changed. You called my father a Bean/Bing and everything changed, every port that we went in it was a difference when you found out who my dad was, cause everybody knew him. He paved the way for us. It's good when your father or whoever you fall on after have paved the way for ya cause if he was one them fellas that nobody liked, you know he woulda caught the devil, you know what I mean [laughs].