

Names of narrators: Michael and Renee

Interviewers: Julia Thomas and Victoria Barrett recorded this interview with the permission of Michael and Renee for the research project "Georgia's Fishing Traditions & Fishing Futures."

Primary Investigator: Dr. Jennifer Sweeney Tookes, Georgia Southern University.

Date of Interview: March 24, 2018

Place: Michael and Renee's boat in Darien, Georgia.

Duration of the interview: 01:21:44

Context for the interview: The interviewers met Michael and Renee at the dock that day and interviewed them as part of Tookes' research project. The couple was interviewed together.

General Description of Contents: Michael and Renee discuss their experiences in the fishing industry in coastal Georgia, how they first got into it, how it impacts their lives together, what they love about it, changes they have observed, and what they hope to see in the future.

[introduction and informed consent obtained]

JT: Can you tell me where you grew up?

M: I was born in Jacksonville, Florida and moved to Georgia, I could not tell you when that was, but I was about 15 and I've been here ever since. I've shrimp fished since I was 13 years old and I'll be 48 end of this month and I'm not gonna quit.

R: I moved here - I came here during the summers to visit family. He actually, when I met him, I was 9 years old and he ran a boat for my father. And I moved back down here 5 years ago and we ran back into each other and we've been together ever since and I've been on a crab boat with him and a shrimp boat with him. I'm from Franklin, North Carolina though. I'm not from here.

JT: Was shrimping or crabbing a thing in either of your families when you were growing up?

M: Nobody in my family. My old man, he still fishes over in Brunswick, he took me underneath his wing when I was young, and I just kept doing it. I never quit. He told me there wasn't no money in it but I made a good livin' at it and it just keeps falling' downhill every year but I'm not gonna quit it though.

R: My father had shrimp boats when I was a child so even though he's from NC, he moved down here over 30 years ago and when he moved down here he started buying' shrimp boats and he was running one of 'em. So I kinda grew up with 'em during the summers but I had never worked on one or ever even really wanted to work on one [laughs] to be honest, but ever since we've been together we've just always worked on a boat together.

JT: Can you tell me more about getting into it after you guys met again?

R: When I met him 5 years ago he was already on a boat, and it was just one of them things, he asked me if I would like to go with him, not actually start working on the boat and being a part of the crew, just to go and get that experience, and then when I went out with him and he started teaching me everything and I started seeing all these new things I knew right then that I loved it. I love every bit about it. Except for the rough rough weather [laughs] I don't much care for that but I don't get sea sick, but that's probably the only downfall I could actually say about it, would be the rough weather. And we crab together, we shrimp together, we just love it together. You see something different every day that you go out, whether it be on a crab boat or a shrimp boat every trip is different. You never know. You can go out there and get nothing or you can go out there and get more than what you ever thought that you would get and what you would see and I've seen more since I've been on the boat with him than I've ever seen in my life. Just awesome, different species of fish, and even the way the crabs are. I never knew that's how a soft shell crab come about so I've learned a lot with him and I love it, I enjoy it.

JT [to Michael]: So could you tell us how you got into it?

R: Skippin' school. [laughter]

M: Well, that's true. I don't know I just went out with this old man and I picked it up and just thought that's what I wanna do. I just kept going' on and on and got better and better at it. My daddy asked me one day, he said "Son why you keep working for somebody?" And I say "Cause I'm scared to take the wheel" and he said "If you don't take it now you won't never take it," so I just kept moving from stages to stages and being a deckhand, moving up to a captain and I don't know why I ever took it upon doing it I just love it to tell you the truth.

R: He does.

M: My momma worked at all the stores and different people. My daddy was a meat cutter. Nobody in my family was a fisherman. I don't know how to answer that I just picked it up and just kept doing it.

R: I always say it's his gift. I feel like that everybody has a gift and something that they're really just special and great at at something in their life and I tell him all the time "It was just your gift. It was what you were meant to do, and meant to be." He'll never leave it.

M: I've tried other jobs. That ain't worked out. My gills dry out. [laughter] I got to be on the water, I got to be on the water.

R: And when he's out there you always think "Oh I'll be glad to get home," but once we're home we're ready to come right back out, we really are.

M: Can't wait.

R: We can't wait. We only stay home maybe a couple of days and that's it but we're right back out there. This is basically our house, this is our second home, we live here [laughs].

JT: How long do you typically stay out for?

M: I stay out on this boat here anywhere from 4 to 6 days, but the boat I just got off of over in Key West we stayed out 30.

R: I didn't go on that one [laughs].

M: But pretty well 4 to 6 days unless we killing.

R: Yeah if we catching them good we gonna stay out as long as we can.

JT: Do you remember what it was like the first time you went out on a boat?

R: [to Michael] How old were you? You were like 13 years old?

M: 13, that was fun. I thought to myself "Ima become a fisherman" and it started out on a bait boat. We caught bait shrimp for these marinas all over the place for people to go fishing. And then I went out with a man over in Brunswick on a lil' boat about 50 foot and we made a beach opening. I said, "What kinda work is this right here? This is a lot I don't think I wanna do this," and then I went back and got back on another boat and that was totally different. That was bigger and I got to liking the way things worked out on there. I just kept moving to bigger and bigger and this is where I'm at now, but I can't really answer that question. I don't even know why I become a fisherman. I didn't have no thought at the time. This man gave me a chance to go work with him and he paid me with 50 \$1 bills a day and fed me 3 times a day and it just kept moving on and on and on. I said "It's got to get better than this right here." And it did. I went to work with some people that I was wondering, "Boy, this is all you can catch?" I've seen better times than this right here I've heard of it. And I quit school 3 times just to go back on one of these boats. Every time I thought I needed to get an education, somebody would do better and they'd offer me a job so I'd quit school. I did, 3 times in the 9th grade I can't tell you another story about that one, then I never did go back.

JT: [to Renee] So what was your life like growing up with your dad in the community?

R: I only got to spend summers with my dad, but when I did get to come down and see him during the summers and he had shrimp boats I was just all over them. I thought it was just the coolest thing and the best thing cause I come from the mountains, so we don't have no waters like this [laughs] or seafood or nothing like that. I just loved it, and then when we got together and I had the opportunity to go out with him I just loved it even more, and I love going out with him. Like I said it's something different every day, you learn something new every day. My family's out of it now, they've been out of it for quite a few years but it's just always kind of been a part of my childhood. It's something unique. Not everybody can say that their office is looking out at the water. He makes fun of me all the time cause I take so many pictures, but it's just something different every day from the sun coming up to the going down and it's an experience of a lifetime, it really is. If nobody's ever experienced it I would say experience it at least one time in your life. Just go try it and see what you see cause it's amazing. I'm amazed every time, every time.

JT: Would you mind telling me why your family's not involved in it anymore?

R: I honestly don't know. He could probably tell you that better than I could, I don't know.

M: Well your dad was a fisherman.

R: Yeah, my dad was a shark fisherman. He actually caught one of the biggest sharks off the coast of Georgia and he's in the history books, but he went from fishing all those years, like shark fishing and things like that,

M: Tile fishing,

R: Tile fishing and stuff,

M: Great grouper,

R: And he moved here and it being such a big shrimp industry around here, that's what kinda got him into it. I just think maybe after age and years and stuff he just kinda got out of it. Wasn't nothing in particular really that got him out of it.

M: No cause he'd go back to it right now.

R: Yes he still talks about it he loves to ask us questions about it, even though he has a tree business, but that's really is his passion, I think it is.

JT: Has he ever come out with you guys?

R: No.

M: I work for him. He's the one who taught me how to shark fish and then I got off the boat with him and taught another man how to do it, the man that I worked for for 9 ½ years. [asks interviewers if they'd been to a dock nearby to which they respond no] Well we got into that shark fishing I went with him for a long time. I wasn't even able to drive a vehicle when I started with him.

R: But everybody's like a family though, all the shrimp boats and the captains and everybody on them. Everybody's just like a big family and he's grown up with all of them and like we said, even with Tom and Miss Kathy we call them mom and dad [laughs] and we've been with them for so long.

M: I've been with them since 2003. I crabbed for them and shrimped for them.

JT: Can you tell me more about the community aspect of it? How you've been with these people for so long and how it feels like a family?

R: It seems like everyone kinda has each other's back. Even though it's an industry where you are trying to basically outdo the other boats and there is a lot of competition in it, but people have each other's back and even when we're out there on the water we have each other's back, we really do.

M: Yeah, we not gonna leave nobody.

R: No, no.

M: And there's a few that we work with. And there's a few that we don't. I pretty well fish by myself.

R: There's always a little bit of this and that with it but everybody kinda sticks together and everybody supports each other and everybody's there for each other's families if it needed be. There's a man standing out in the parking lot right now that when his boat was sinking that he [Michael] saved his life. He pulled his boat, and every day that we see him he says, "I thank you, I thank God for this. You saved my life and you're a good man." You help people out. Everybody kinda sticks together.

JT: [to Michael] What was that experience like?

M: Well, we was running off leaving. I was working with another fella and everybody in Brunswick was sticking together and we wasn't from Brunswick we was from here. And it's pretty well when you fish off each part of this coast, everybody's got their own backyard that they fish on, and some people help each other and some don't. I don't know why they don't because we all there together to start with and we're not gonna catch no more than what the good Lord's gonna let us have to start with. He's the one who gives us the blessing. But he called a hang and tide was going out and he was right over the top of it and he must be close to about 70 now,

R: Yeah, he is,

M: And the boy that was on the boat with him was probably in his 60's and they was old and they done done everything they can do and there wasn't but one thing left and that was to leave them there and pick them up. We pulled up there to them and grabbed a hold of them and told them cut the rig loose and we drug them in there cause they had one net and they couldn't move and we just drug them into St. Simmon's Sound and dropped them off. He told us, "This far enough." We can't leave them. I don't care how much greed there is out there and who you don't like, you ain't gonna leave another fisherman behind,

R: No, never,

M: There's too many of us that's already drowned out there and lost a life to Mother Nature, but it worked out for the best and he's still got his boat and his life and he appreciates it. That's all I can say about that. I don't know nothing else, all I can say is I hope he comes back and gets me if I need help. [laughter]

JT: Can you talk more about what you were saying earlier, about seeing all the different things?

R: Every time that you go out you never know what you're gonna face when you go out. Whether the weather's gonna be good, if something happens with your boat, or if you're just not catching nothing, and sometimes we can go out and the sharks eat our nets up. There's times you can go, like when we pick up our bags and we empty our bags, when we pull all the shrimp outta those, we have all the trash and everything to the side, when you push it in I've never in my life seen so many sharks. I never would have imagined that. They're so thick that you could actually walk on them, and they wait. They'll swim right beside the boat the whole time waiting. I've never in my life seen anything like that and every time I see it it's just more and more amazing to me. I've seen species of fish and things I've never, never ever, and I come up with my own names for them but I will ask him what they are and he'll tell me and I never even knew or had heard of anything like this. But you see all kinds. It's something different every time.

M: I think her best part of the whole day is when the dolphins come up beside the boat and she gets to feed them.

R: I love that.

M: I'll stop and she hand feeds them out her hands. I know that ain't supposed to be going on,

R: But it's just amazing,

M: Because you're not supposed to feed the wildlife, but how can you not?

R: They're just beautiful,

M: When they're riding along and stop and they stick their head out the water,

R: And look at you,

M: Get right beside the boat and you hold a fish out and he comes up and takes it out your hand,

R: They're just as gentle as can be. They'll follow you through and I'm always like "Oh my little friends are out today," I always say that,

M: Eagles,

R: The eagles, yeah,

M: We feed eagles too over there,

R: We can throw a fish up in the air and the eagle will swoop down and get it, and actually the other morning we were out crabbing and this eagle comes by and he's talking about, "There's something in its claws," and we look and he,

M: He had a live possum,

R: I was like, "Aw poor possum," but that's life.

M: He done caught a possum,

R: But it just is, you never know what you're gonna see out there or what you're gonna experience. You don't, but every time it's something beautiful. Whether it's rough weather or, it's just an experience, it's something most people could never say they've seen in their life and I probably would've never seen this much if I hadn't been on the boat with him, but I thank God for it every time we go out.

JT: You mentioned sharks eating the nets, so what do you do when that happens? Do you sew your own nets?

M: I patch my nets, lace them up and put them back but net man gotta have a job too.

R: Yeah, we'll just fix them enough out there to where they're not so tore open that we're losing our shrimp, but we have a man that'll normally come fix them, but there's a new kind of netting that everybody's putting on them like a,

M: Shark chaffer,

R: Shark chaffer, and it does help, but it also helps too just we try not to chum them up and feed them,

M: We hold our fish on the boat,

R: Yeah, because if we were to scrape everything off all the time we would constantly have them sharks there eating up our nets and stuff so we just kinda hold it,

M: They'll follow you,

R: They'll follow you all day. They will circle your boat, even on anchor you will see them circling your boat. It's kinda creepy sometimes [laughs]

JT: How often do you need to get the nets repaired, not just patched?

M: About every other day. And I've seen one drag [inaudible],

R: They ate the brand new nets,

M: They even slapped off the doors and they ain't getting no better. [inaudible] They used to keep the population thinned down a bit, but now, and then June and July pretty well when they start having their babies and all, they really go in a feeding frenzy and when they do there ain't no kinda webbing, nothing you can do to stop them from eating on your nets. And they really

don't like to bit you when you ain't catching nothing, they wanna get you when you're really in something and they wait,

R: Just Mother Nature's part of it,

M: A lot of times they just eat on your webbing when you're dragging, but when you're bringing your bags to the boat is when they bite the bag and wait until it starts coming up out the water and starts dropping everything out of it, and they ain't eating it, they just striking it and cutting holes in it. Anything shiny that's in the main part of the net, they gonna bite that spot and there ain't nothing you can do about it. They done stopped all the net boats, all the long-liners pretty well. You used to be able to catch 4,000 lbs clean, and then it went to 4,000 lbs not clean, down to 38 sharks, and then there's certain ones that you can keep in but you ain't gonna stop it the population's just overruling now and they ain't going nowhere. They own them waters out there we don't [laughs]

JT: So then on days you do go out what is your process for the trips, like prepping for them to when you get back?

R: Well to prep for it we basically just check all of our nets, ice our boat down,

M: Fuel, water

R: Putting fuel on it, putting our groceries on it. There's no stores out there, that's what we always say, there's no stores out there so we're gonna make sure when we go out that we have everything that we need, all the way down to the needles that we need to patch up the holes. I mean you just really do have to be prepared cause there is no stores out there so if you don't have what you need you gotta stop your trip and come back in, and then once you come back in, we pull right up to this spot where we're sitting right now and it's about getting,

M: Getting the catch off and regrouping,

R: Which takes us a couple of days,

M: Same thing over and over every time,

R: It's the same thing. It's not different. Every trip that you go out it's the same, every trip that you go out to get prepared for it and when you come in it's the same thing and we come in, we start unloading, we start putting water and fuel back on the boat, we start restocking on groceries or whatever we need like that and we normally get maybe one day of not being on the boat and then the next day we're gone again, so it's basically the same process each time. But normally

when we come in they unload us pretty much that day and from the time they unload us we start getting ready right then. We actually normally will be putting fuel back on the boat while they're unloading us,

M: And water, and ice, everything, same day,

R: So that's how quick of a turn-around it is. When your season comes in it's one of those things, you gotta get out and get them while you can,

M: They don't last about 9 months and it's slowly trickling down where it ain't 9 months.

R: That's why we always call this our second home. You know this is our second home because,

M: We had to grind, it's a grind,

R: It's just nonstop, it really is,

M: If that's what you choose to do, it ain't like a hill job. Weather's the most thing, and the shrimp, you ain't guaranteed nothing, but they ain't gone climb up no anchor rope or come to no dock to see you neither, you've got to go to them.

JT: When you get back who do you sell to?

M: We sell to the dock right here to Tom and them who owns this boat, and I run it for them, Miss Kathy and D.W. Pierson's.

R: But we're able to pull right in here and unload our shrimp here to them and they have a market for them, which works good cause we do all the other stuff so we don't have to look for a market for them, they've already got that market.

M: They're pretty well gone.

R: They're established. Normally we're still out there catching shrimp and they're calling us wanting to know what we got, how much longer we're gonna stay, cause basically what we've already got on the boat they've got sold already cause there's such a demand for them. We have people travel from everywhere to pick these shrimp up, everywhere. We have people from what, New York come and get our soft shell crabs, so people travel to get this fresh seafood, and we make sure it is the freshest, like we said we take it right off our boat, it's not frozen on our boat. It comes off this boat and right then we have a market for it to get rid of it.

JT: So you also crab as well?

M: Yeah, I crab.

R: Yeah, we crab as well, we do the crabbing for them too.

M: Yeah I catch some blues up there on the table, my boat's right down on the dock right there.

R: That's what I was saying earlier, we normally crab in the morning.

JT: Can you talk a little more about that?

M: Same thing goes, I started out with that same old man over there in Brunswick and didn't even have a starter on the motor, we had to hand pull the motor off, and I couldn't even drive, they'd carry me to the river in the morning times and I paddled a piece of styrofoam out to the house boat that we had on the South Brunswick River, and get in the boat and hand pull it off. I didn't even have a truck to drive to the crab plant down there by Georgia Bulldog, the university down there where Lewis crab factory is. I drove a crab boat down there and I learned to crab straight out the boat at the dock and would drive back and sit there at the boat landing, and the days that it was sunny and pretty we swam back and forth from the boat landing to the houseboat, and somebody would rob our boat out from underneath the dag on bridge right there. And we never left no boat down there cause the houseboat just sat there and we tied the boats up to it. He told me, he said, "There ain't no money in crabbing." I made more money in commercial crabbing than I ever made shrimping, working on halves,

R: But it's the same thing as shrimping, it's a war,

M: It's a war, crabbing is a war, people think they own the waters out there. You don't just go out there and throw a crab trap out there and think you coming back to it cause somebody thinks they own that. I buy a license to fish in the state of Georgia, I oughta be able to fish where I wanna fish. I oughta give you enough courtesy to give you enough rights to not be on top of you. You're not gonna catch everything in that water, ain't nobody gonna catch everything that's out there. Mother Nature is what it's gonna be. She's only gonna produce so much and the good Lord's only gonna give you so much, so it's either get along or go out trying, but crabbing's fun. Everyday is different on that there because certain time of the month, when them lil virgin females that they got up there on the table, they decide they wanna go on their molting deal and become a mature female, that male crab ain't gon' trap, and the male crab's worth the most money. He's not going in that trap, not when she's out there wanting to go through her procedure and he's gonna hold her instead and whenever she decides she gonna shell out he'll quit with her and he decides he's going in there to eat and we'll trap him up, but every month they gon' go

through that same thing. You gon' have a dry spell in any of it, but crabbing, it's totally different. You crab with your head not your behind. [laughter]

M: Anybody can go throw a crab trap in the water, but to follow their routine, they got a route that they take. When the water gets so salty and they hunt in freshwater they can go up in that marsh grass. They gon' try to climb out on the hill. You'd think I was a idiot, sometimes crabbing because all my traps will be out of the water, completely out the water. How is something gonna climb in there with it being out the water? Well, when that tide comes in he's going up there to climb to try and get out of that salty water to find some freshwater and I'm gon' catch him. There's food there and just like in the winter time, you gotta get in deep water to catch them. They're not gonna stay up there in that shallow water and freeze to death, they're gonna go get in deeper water and bury up. They got a routine that they pull and males and females don't mix. Only in the winter time do they mix. A male crab'll go up the creek in the summer, females stay right down below him, and then when the rain comes it'll start backing them out. They'll start mixing up a little bit but it's very seldom that you catch male and female crabs together unless it's winter time cause then they all trying to find somewhere to get warm.

JT: Is that unusual to have the traps outside the water?

M: Well, it depends. You can put it in the water and it'll be just as empty as it would out the water. And I don't know where the crabs go, I cannot answer that. I can't answer none of the questions really, but I know they're smart just like a shrimp. Shrimp disappear every year but they come back to the same spots every year. How they know to do that I could not tell you. If we could figure out both of them, everyone would be doing it. You pay attention to the winds, the weather, it's like a west wind here, it draws everything inside and you ain't gon' catch nothing. Northeastern, pulls everything off out there to us. It's just the winds and the weather what draws them really, water temperature and all. Ain't nobody can answer that, nobody.

JT: Are there any other similarities or differences between crabbing and shrimping?

M: They're both a job [laughter] a way of life. A way of life. It's a living. Other than that I'd say they all live together. Crabs eat the shrimp, sharks eat them, everybody else eats them too, but I don't see no difference in it. It's just a way of living. I won't be able to do it all and I'm gonna be a legend doing it [laughter] I'm going to.

VB: So you were talking about how every day is different, what is the strangest thing that's happened to you during a trip?

R: It's strange some of the stuff that you pull up, you just couldn't even imagine. Just different things that when you empty those nets, just the different stuff that you pull up,

M: She don't like fishing jelly,

R: I don't,

M: That fish that don't know how to die, he wants to lay down and flop,

R: He wants to flop the whole time, and then you've got all this jelly that you've got and it's flopping the fish and the jelly's hitting you and you're burning up cause all this jelly's hitting your skin and honestly I wish when we emptied our bags that the fish would just lay there and not move because there's times I'll get so frustrated I'll walk off the back deck cause I'll be burning from all the jelly cause it's splashing on me and stuff like that. Even just what you see out there as far as weather it could be one minute just slick, calm, and then the next it's so quick. Things change so quick out there. I don't know how to explain it but it really is, it's different every time and every day it's different. You really don't know what to expect. It's just expecting the unexpected.

M: You see things other people don't see, and if you tell them to look it's too late.

VB: Like what?

M: Turtles,

R: I've seen a turtle the size of

M and R: A Volkswagen,

M: Right underneath the [inaudible]

R: Right there beside us and when I first spotted it I was like "Oh my gosh what is this?" and he was like, "It's a turtle," but I could have never imagined in my life seeing a turtle that big.

M: I've seen diamondback rattlesnakes swimming. I've seen manta rays jump out the water as wide as the back deck back there. You just be riding along there and just look and they just shoot right out the water and you tell somebody to look and it's too late, they gone back down in the water.

R: I like when we see the birds when we're pulling our nets and you'll see the birds swoop down in the back and when they fly up past the wood house they have a big shrimp in their hands and he always says, "Oh, we're getting them, oh we're getting them," cause I always just look for that bird to have that shrimp cause he's always told me from the beginning "we're gonna get

them if you see that bird.”

M: If you got birds and they see them shrimp, it don't take but one shrimp to jump on top of the water and a whole flock comes. There won't even be a bird around you,

R: And all of a sudden,

M: And then when they're jumping they're getting theirs, and they catching theirs. I couldn't tell you no,

R: It's just beautiful, I mean it really is something that you would hope that people would get to see and experience at least one time in their life cause every day that you wake up it's just different.

M: Pictures mean the most, taking pictures is a thing, you can prove a picture. A picture means more than word of mouth or anything like that.

R: If you can get that picture [laughs] cause sometimes it's hard but it's beautiful, it really is, and there's not a lot of people that can say everyday that when they wake up it's nothing but water around you and it's a great place to work. It's not easy, believe me it's not easy. I quit all the time, and I quit for 10-15 minutes at a time and then I go back to it, cause it's not easy but it's beautiful, it really is. It makes you be very thankful for what's around you and getting to experience something like that

JT: Is there a standout memory or something that happened that you usually tell people about?

M: I've seen, well last year on a beach over in Carolina for about an hour and a half that was so rough that the swells was coming over the baugh of this boat and we couldn't get in because we didn't know how to get in this inlet and there was two other boats sitting there with us. My crew sat on the back deck back there with the wind howling. I had lightning strike, dragging away from it and I ducked down and looked back and lightning cut the antennas off the top of the mast pole, the mast in the middle of the boat, cut it off, hit the deck, hit aluminum boat, and shatter off of it, went down in the engine room, went through the generator, blew the whole generator part out and made the big engine drop a baugh. And I asked my crew, I said, “Y'all ever been struck by lightning?” they gone on about no I said, “Well we just all but have been.” And I've seen that twice. I've had lightning strike the antenna and I reached up there and undone it and it run down this arm, down this leg, and grounded me out to a chair. So when lightning storms come, I do not care if electronics blow up, kill them, I'm not never touching no other cold wax cable to a VHF radio ever or nothing, cause that electricity don't play. Lightning don't play. I've seen weather just like in Key West if I had my phone right now I'd show you a weather that we went through

in the month of January. One night we quit and 1 o'clock in the morning. I was on 100 foot steel hull, way bigger than this boat right here, and the swells was breaking on top of the wheel house. And we finally just quit at 9 o'clock the next morning I got up and took a video of it, dipping the doors in the water. Rough. We just dropped our anchor. Out there working in the Gulf Stream on red shrimp, it's crazy the way it just comes up to 10 or 12 or 14 foot seas.

R: It can be so calm, just slick, clam, sunny, beautiful, and then all the sudden it just. I'm okay with it, I don't like it when we're out there and we get caught in a storm but when he gets nervous and I see that he's getting nervous about it and I see how serious he is, that's when I know,

M: She knows to get scared then,

R: Yeah, when I see he's getting scared, that's when I do get scared cause I know that he's been through so many more storms and so many more years on a boat than me but when I see him like, "Oh you know things have got serious," that's when I'm like, "Okay things are serious."

M: When I stand up at the wheel instead of driving with my feet [laughter] when I stand up,

R: It's serious [laughs]

M: It's getting real.

R: You like run, the boat'll be going and it's the best workout for your legs, ever. It is cause you have to keep yourself standing but to walk you're just running, going back and forth back and forth just trying to stand in one place.

M: You see that TV screwed down?

R: Yeah, everything, all of our TV's,

M: It gets rough [laughs] it's not gon' sit there.

R: Nothing does,

M: This boat's got such tall rigging on it too and it's so wide and shallow. It get the butter from the duck early in the morning, sometimes it's sickening,

R: We're roolly,

M: It's roly. One of the rolliest boats I ever been on, but it's cause the rigging's so tall and long on it. Wide, I think it's like 76 foot long, 26 foot wide but you got rigging up yonder 50 foot and the higher that rigging gets the top heavier it gets it's gonna roll.

R: And when it's rolling, it's make you sometimes,

M: It's them high riggers,

R: I'm not gonna lie when I say it does get scary every now and then but normally I keep my calm until I see him get scared then I'm like "Oh yeah okay," [laughs].

JT: Earlier you mentioned crew. How do you normally find crew, how many people do you bring out?

M: Beat the streets,

R: It's hard. It really is hard to find somebody.

M: Crew's always hard to find now.

R: He's the captain, I'm a crew member and we have one other person with us. We do our crew right and they'll tell you that, all of them will, but people just,

M: Nobody wants to work,

R: They don't want to work and when we do go out that many days it is working around the clock and it's not easy work but we don't have many stick out with us a whole long time to be honest, and no boat does it's not just us. It really is every boat, and to be honest with you the crew people that we normally get are older.

M: You gotta go to the senior citizen home to pick them up.

R: Yeah, they're older people.

M: Younger crew don't want to work it no more. No crew like it was when I was growing up, you don't see them no more. And that's what's gonna be the death of us. There ain't no new crew, there ain't no new captains, cause you got to start out as a crew member before you're a captain, you just ain't. You got to crawl before you can walk. But, you beat the streets,

R: That is, that really is

M: [inaudible] trip, they don't work.

R: We have people come up to us, give us their number, we keep their number and when we do need help we'll pull out a number or run into somebody and we try to give them a chance and hopefully it does work out

M: I don't like to fire nobody. I'd rather you fire yourself. I'd rather you quit going home then we don't have no hard feelings, you did it to yourself,

R: And that's what normally happens, it really does, it's just gets to be too much for them and we're gone too long or whatever circumstances. It is what it is.

JT: Since you've been involved with it, even in the past 5 years, have you seen any changes in the industry?

M: Yeah we don't work as long. There ain't no cold water shrimp no more. Seasons, our seasons are short, just like now they got us cut back right now they got us shut down to where we can't even go outside 25 miles right now unless we go to Florida.

R: And we'd kinda rather stay in our own waters but we have no choice. We can't stay tied up that long,

M: No cause when we leave here we're going straight to Florida,

R: Florida, until we find out when they're gonna open us up that's our only option is to go to Florida but we buy our license for every other state, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida or whatever but that's why he went for January and February to Florida because there just wasn't nothing for us to do here.

JT: So do you go to Florida or other states relatively often?

R: Seems like more now than we used to, huh?

M: Yeah,

R: Because of the way they are shutting our seasons down like normally when they open it up we'd be right here. We'd be right here off of our own coast, right here in Georgia but like I said we keep hearing from so many different people that they're not sure when they're gonna open us up but we have to go,

M: They need to let the shrimp make the choice. We're not gonna drag if there ain't nothing down there. We can't afford it, can't afford the fuel and all, and let us be the one that makes that suggestion, going or staying,

R: Yeah cause if we get out here and we're dragging and we have nothing we're not gonna stay there. We can't afford to stay there, we're gonna go find them somewhere else but like I said right now our only option is to go to Florida until we find out what they're gonna do here and when they'll open us up here and of course when they open us up here we'll be right back here.

M: Last couple years we've had good years, red shrimping and all, brownies, can't sell them hardly, brownies, cause they so little people don't want them. That's our main thing, being able to get rid of the product. There's a market out there. People eat shrimp every day. I've seen where I've sold 80-90's with the head on and that man in Darien at Skipper's Seafood, cat's gotta eat too. Get a dollar a pound for them, they don't even wanna give you a dollar a pound for 26 30's or 21's with the head on, they don't even want a head on shrimp.

R: It's hard, each year it gets a little bit harder,

M: It's getting worse and worse,

R: Each year it gets worse and worse,

M: It's getting worse,

R: But like I said we can't stay tied up. We have to go.

M: I think it's imports, I think it's imports we just gon' run somewhere where the shrimp's better, where we know we can get rid of them. I had a market of my own. I had a little stern rig boat. I sold my shrimp at home, my momma sold them for me, I caught them and people come every day, glad to get them, right now they'd beat my doors down at my house, wanting shrimp, crabs, conks, anything,

R: Every day we have people come to our house begging for shrimp and crabs and anything,

M: Anything, but the economy gone up so high boat motors are price inflation, gas inflation, net price,

R: Our business license to do it ourselves,

M: Yes everything goes up. I just had to get back out of it. I got my own crab license and don't even use them, and I've been paying for them for 25 years, in my pocket right now but I crab for Tom and Miss Kathy. I buy my shrimp license every year just in case they try to stop it where you can't get one like a crab license, you can't even go buy a crab license right now. If you ain't followed in, you're not buying one. Somebody's got to sell you their license for you to become a crabber. There's no license on the market.

R: They'll never sell them again. He has people beg him all the time to buy his crab license, but it's just something he's held onto this many years,

M: I can't do that,

R: We're not gonna do that,

M: I know what kinda living I can make with them, and you ain't wanting to pay me that.

R: If they'd pay us what we'd make in year of crabbing, sure.

M: I told them I'd lease them. I'd lease them for a certain amount a month but if you get in trouble with the DNR well it's gone come back on me for it, so I just keep them in my pocket. One day I might go back and use them, but I want to buy my own boat's what I really want to do. I want to stop working for everybody else. Ima buy me one too before I get too much older, I hope it ain't too much later. [laughter]

JT: Why aren't there any more crab licenses for sale?

M: I can't answer that you'd have to ask DNR that,

R: Yeah, we don't know we really don't, but it's just the people that've had them have seemed to held onto them their whole entire lives.

M: That's a question I can't answer.

R: Wish we did know the answer to that.

M: Tom probably can cause he's on the crab committee, Tom and Miss Kathy is. They on that shrimp and crab committee up at DNR but that's a question somebody else would have to answer for you but I ain't gonna let mine go, not if I can help it. I feel like I'd log every month to keep them. No activity. I still pay them a 100 and what, 5 dollars but the price went up,

R: It went up, yeah,

M: Per trap this year,

R: It goes up every year.

M: You didn't have to buy a trap license, you could just pay for the license. I been buying a trap license every year for them, but it's a bunch of paperwork, money, money is what they want, but they wouldn't have nobody working for them cause they wouldn't be able to pay them. It's a money racket now I believe on them license. I went and bought all our licenses the other day,

R: Last week,

M: Fishing, crabbing, striker license. I remember buying a striker license you could do everything that's on there for \$12, \$14. Now, each thing that's on the paper is \$5, and them \$5 for them to turn around and process the license for you. I don't understand it. It went from 2 sheets of paper to 10 sheets of paper. I don't needed to pay all that [laughs] processing no license it's on computer. It prints it right out to you. I don't know.

JT: How long have people not been able to buy crab licenses?

M: It's probably been 20 years or so now. It's like that cast net license that they got out there. They used to put your name in a lottery. They sold everybody a license that had a license that was gonna renew the license and then it went that they put your name in a lottery and if your name was drawn they'd let you buy a license if you could afford to get it I guess but I don't buy no cast net license. I ain't never had no limit anyhow. I catch all I can get by with.

JT: So have you seen any positive changes over the years or things that have improved?

R: I really wish we could. I mean just in the little bit of time that I've been with him,

M: It is what it is,

R: It's just we just do what we gotta do to keep going out there and crabbing and shrimping. We just do what they ask us to do and,

M: We take the good with the bad and the bad with the good,

R: We do,

M: I ain't never planned nothing, I just get up and hope for the best.

R: That's all we do. It really is.

JT: What about any new technology or equipment?

M: What to help you catch them? No, no. It's a brain game.

JT: So then despite it being hard and getting harder, what have been some of your favorite or the most rewarding parts of your career?

M: Get by. Get by is all I can tell you.

R: Even as hard as it is, it's just a passion, we love it.

M: I get up early every morning to make sure Ima get up to do what I got to do. I get about 3 or 4 hours sleep a night and I'm ready to go. Rain, sleet, snow, or shine, I'll beat you down that river if I can.

R: He's on a boat. He'd much rather be on a boat than land. I can't fight that with him so I just go with him [laughs] So we get to work together, and be together, and we love it. It works for us. I'm not saying that it would for everybody, but this far it's worked.

JT: What should younger people or people not as familiar with the coast know about the history of it here in Georgia?

M: It's work. They need to learn how to put a sign up on the outside door if you ain't ready to work don't fill out the applications. It's work. Other than that, you can't tell them nothing. They got to learn it on their own.

R: It really is something that you should experience, you really do,

M: It would be fun,

R: You have to experience it, to just know.

M: It is fun at times, and sometimes it's a nightmare. Things just go wrong all the time. There's a monkey on the boat and he wants to tear up all kinda stuff on the boat and send you right back to the dock.

R: We've had this boat catch on fire 3 times in one day [laughs] honestly.

M: I walked from the back deck,

R: Just this part I don't know,

M: Into the wheel house, and I smelled some hot wood all day, but I never could find it. I called my crewman up there [inaudible] I said, "Man you smell some hot wood?" "Nah, cap, I don't smell nothing." Well, let's make one more try, even though I wanna take up. I left the back deck, come through that door and up there, went around, sat down, and I got up I said, "Ima take up," I walk right back out that door, her and him was sitting right here at the table, I walked out the door and the flames was already up high as the back of the wheel house back there. I said, "Aye, y'all need to come and get a fire extinguisher."

R: We grabbed them from which we have them in every room.

M: There's one right here,

R: We grabbed them, we thought it was out, still paid attention to it cause it was hot.

M: [inaudible] put back out.

R: Yeah, put back out. The other crew men and I went out there on the back deck was sitting there going through our shrimp, I look back and it was on fire again.

M: Deck hose, had to use the deck hose and everything else to put it out.

R: It's just so unexpected. Everything about it is unexpected, it really is.

M: And most of the fire's gonna start back there [inaudible]

VB: What was on fire?

M: The dog house, the woodwork, all dried out and just the heat build up in there and it just,

R: It just caught,

M: It just caught. After a while it just sat there and smoldered and smoldered and you know how you can build a fire and it never catch like a piece of charcoal? That's way that whole fuzzy wood did back there. That's one of the things about a wood boat, when you take the water away

from it back there the glass and that like they have on this boat, the wood starts drying out and then you can go down in there and suck the ribs and everything out this boat with a shop vac.

R: It dries out that much.

M: It's like a crab. You see how that crab's hard up there on that table, and then she sheds into a soft shell? That's what this boat turn into. Once you take that water away from wood, it's gon' dry out it's not like a steel hull or a fiberglass boat. You close it in with fiberglass it's gonna dry the wood up and what's left to do? It's gonna rot like a tree. It's gonna rot. That's what a boat's built out of, wood rots. And that's what happened there in that dog house, and the heat just build up in there until finally the wind was blowing just right and the heat was just right and it set it. It ain't like somebody went back there and laid a match down or nothing.

JT: You also mentioned a monkey?

R: That's a fisherman's tale. We actually will buy, when we go shopping, for the boat we'll buy bananas,

M: And lay them on top of that pile,

R: And leave them to keep the monkey off the boat.

M: And let him jump off the boat.

R: It's like a fisherman's tale.

M: get him a banana, we'll leave him.

R: instead of getting on our boat, cause the monkey is the problem on the boat, so we leave the bananas on the dock. Old fisherman's thing but we still do it, we do follow it.

VB: We were told a little bit about that, that we weren't allowed to eat bananas before we went out shrimping because it would draw

R: Bring the monkey on the boat, yeah [laughter]

JT: So that's why?

R: That's why, yeah. So we always leave the bananas on the dock for the monkey to stay on the dock and not get on our boat

M: And leave some hooks in him, [laughter] [inaudible]

R: Fishermen totally believe in their wives tales, which one of them is they don't like women on a boat, but he doesn't believe in that.

M: I don't believe in that.

R: He doesn't think that way but a lot of captains and fishermen do. A woman shouldn't be on a boat.

M: I seen some woman strikers better than a man, I have. I've seen some women, I've sat down on the back deck, and one of my best friends, he passed away now, but his wife and her cousin worked on the back deck and I went back there and sat down with them and they was way faster than I was so I got up and left. And I've been doing it for a long time, they was good. I walked back in there and told him I said, "You need some help babysitting?" [laughs] They don't need no help back there they got this.

JT: Are there any other fisherman's tales like that that you can tell us about?

M: They don't like you turning the hatch lid upside down, they don't like you to whistle,

R: And not go out on what day?

M: Don't kill no birds. I wouldn't kill them anyhow they ain't plans.

R: I think everybody kinda has their own that's been passed through their family.

M: Don't walk under a ladder, don't bring no suitcase on,

R: Yeah, you're not supposed to bring a suitcase. Like a duffel bag or a garbage bag is what most people do, just bring a garbage bag full of clothes, but I think everyone kinda has their own that's been passed through their family to them and it's just funny to hear them sometimes. Everybody kinda has their own superstitions on their own boat. I don't think we really do, we got our monkey thing but

M: It is what it is.

R: We just ask the good Lord to bless us and we go out and do our best and that's all we can really ask for and that's all we can do, and just hope for the best.

M: I don't have no problems. I just ain't gonna let you kill no birds on my boat.

R: And we try to save everything that we can save. Anything, even if we get a shark caught in our net, we try to always get them back out in the water and just save what we can.

M: I throw everything overboard that I ain't want. Especially I dump bags most of the time back there. I see some kinda little fish like a [inaudible] or a flounder or something cause I like catching them. I might never see that fish again but Ima grab him and throw him overboard.

JT: Do you know where or why these wives tales came about?

R: I don't know, I always think of it that, maybe like where I come from, like the mountains and things that it's just something started and it just has went on through the years and I'm not sure where it started from but I think in any profession in life or anything you do in life I think everybody's got some sort of little, "Oh, I don't wanna do it this way," or "I don't wanna do that."

M: I think it's foolishness.

R: [laughs] He does, he does. I just find it funny.

M: Cause I've done it all. I've done it all and I ain't seen nothing bad happen different. It's just foolishness.

R: But it's kinda cool though, listening to it and listening to what other people's superstitions are and what their father told them and what his father told him. It's just kind of a neat little stories and things to listen to, but we don't necessarily believe in it. Probably our biggest one is the monkey [laughs] We really do, we'll put a banana on the dock and try to head out.

M: Because when we first got this boat it was a nightmare. This boat was ready for the landfill and we brought it back. There wasn't no ceiling in here, there wasn't no counter, no stove, no refrigerator,

R: Nothing.

M: Nothing but a alleyway to walk through there and up there. All this here was full of trash. It was just junk.

R: The day I took him to get it I was like, "Really?" [laughs] "Really, this is the boat we're getting?"

M: And I got off a cadillac to get on this boat. [inaudible] daddy's girl for Teddy Smithwick over there.

R: But Tom and Miss Kathy make sure that we have everything that we need, cause it is our second home and so anything that we ask for that this boat needs they get it right then. It don't matter if it's a new mattress for our bed, they get it. They take really good care of us but we do any and everything that they want us to do and we appreciate everything.

JT: So before this we'd also heard about certain words you can't say, do you know about any of those?

VB: So we heard you couldn't say porpoise, alligator.

R: See that's another part of the superstitions,

M: No, no, I say all that.

R: We've heard it but like I said it's just family things.

M: I don't go by that.

R: No, we don't.

M: I say it all the time. [laughter] Like, "Look at that porpoise" [inaudible]

R: But every boat and every captain on that boat is different, it really is, everybody's different on every boat.

JT: So does what you mentioned about some captains not wanting women on their boats still happen?

R: I think with some, yes.

M: I ain't know nothing about it until she told me about it, about one certain fella in this parking lot out here put that in something the other day.

R: And I'm assuming that may be something that he believes in, but I don't think me ever being on the boat has ever brought our luck or anything, if anything I feel like I've brought you more luck [laughter] just gonna put that out there [laughs] but I think it's just what people believe and what they've heard and grew up with. Ourselves, we're not really like that.

M: I'm not into that.

VB: So you said you've tested some of these superstitions, did you do it on purpose or just didn't know about them until after you did it?

M: I just say it. I don't know if things happen or not, things just happen. You've seen things happen. I don't believe in none of it to tell you the truth, I don't believe in none of it.

R: I don't either, I just get a kick out of it.

M: But I don't own no suitcase so I'm not gonna bring mine clothes in no suitcase. I'll bring them in a trash bag.

R: [laughs] See that's what most people do.

M: Freshly unfolded. Throw them in there, drag them out as I need them.

R: I think it's just to each his own, just certain people have grown up with their fathers and captains before them telling them things.

M: I never really had nobody to sat down and never tell me things.

R: And we do the monkey thing, I think as more of a kick, a joke with us. Cause we'll leave and there'll be rotten bananas on the dock and sometimes people will eat them [laughter] We've put bananas out for the monkey and we've had some people that work at the dock. It's just a kick, just something that gets our trip started out with a good, funny note. When you're headed out there and it's like alright, our monkeys are on the dock,

M: some kind of practical joke or something, like they've had bad luck for some reason. The boat just tear up and tear up, so they leave some bananas and you start tearing up and first thing you say, "Man what'd you do? Throw your monkey off and onto my boat?" [laughter]

R: It's just a joke

M: There's fire drills, nothing stays the same everyday. Everything could be fine, I could drop my anchor and get up the next morning and engine'll be logged up.

R: You just never know.

M: Or the wench don't wanna work, crew quit.

R: You just have to be open-minded, because you never know every day what you're gonna get. Yeah, we've had crew out there in the middle of a trip quit on us and you just really don't know. Expect the unexpected,

M: They just quit.

R: That's what I always say, expect the unexpected and just kinda roll with it. You have no choice but to roll with it. You're out in the water, you don't have land around you, there's no stores out there, there ain't no buses gonna come pick somebody up. Just expect the unexpected, really. And just go with it from there and do the best that you can. That's all you can do in this line of work.

JT: So with crew quitting in the middle of a trip when you're out at sea, how does that work?

M: When they've done counted their money,

R: Yeah, they've made the money they wanted to, or we're catching so much they're tired and don't want to do no more, their hands hurt, just different things like that.

M: Sorriness.

R: It's hard to find people that wanna work anymore, but they start counting it up and they're like "Okay I've made me a check, I'm done." and there really isn't a whole lot that you can do about it but either try to finish your trip out with the crew that you've got and just make it work, or just quit and bring them in.

M: Get somebody else.

R: And head right back out.

M: It ain't no big deal, they come and go every day.

R: It's just something you have to deal with, it really is.

M: It's something you deal with. I worked for a man for 9 ½ years as a deckhand, I was obligated in my job. I thought, "This man really depending on me" and right now I'd get on over on his boat and go fishing now, it don't make a nothing of who's on there, he'd carry me fishing with him.

R: It's just unexpected everything.

M: Like I said, the crew ain't like there used to be. They want the money but they don't want to work.

R: And it's work, it is work. It can drain you physically and emotionally.

M: It sucks. It sucks sometimes. Sometimes it's like you ain't can't catch nothing, and then you can go somewhere else and can't get out of them. Sometimes you might go out there and just sit overboard in them.

R: You just never know.

M: I ain't never got rich at it, and I ain't planning on getting rich, but if I can make me a living we gon' do it. That's all I look at, making a living.

R: That's all we ask for.

JT: So have you ever had to stop a trip and bring crew back to shore?

M and R: Oh yes, yeah.

R: Yes, and that's all you can do is just stop your trip no matter how good your trip's going that's really all you can do because once they quit and they're done they want off the boat.

M: They ain't gonna do nothing.

R: They want off that boat.

M: They start showing an attitude, wanting to fight with you, fuss and everything.

R: For our safety and our other crew members' safety we just bring them in, even if we have to leave shrimp and leave a check, for our safety and things we're gonna stop and take them in. Plain and simple. We're gonna regroup, find another crew member, and go back out.

M: I ain't gon' never do nobody that way. I'll quit whenever we get to the dock. I'll deal with it. Trip ain't gonna be that much longer.

R: And we've tried it, we've tried to talk to them like "Hey c'mon just finish out the trip, we only go this amount of time, and you gonna have a check and this and that, when we hit the dock we understand you go your way we'll go ours," but it don't work out like that. But it's just one of the things you have to deal with, one of the unexpected things you have to deal with.

M: Yeah, you never know when it's gonna happen. Everything could be going fine and you might go to bed and wake up the next morning,

R: And they're done and they want off the boat.

M: I'm quick like let's shake the nets out, load the rigs, yank the rope, let's go.

R: We take them in.

M: I don't show no pity. I get rid of you. It's sad that it's like that but ain't no sense in arguing with them, ain't gonna do nothing but make things worse. You can't beg a man to stay and they gon' got their minds set to go, I'm gonna replace you. I can keep going.

R: It's all you can do.

M: Just cause a mule fell down don't mean the wagon can stop, that's my living.

R: This is our living though.

M: Like I said earlier, I'll let you fire yourself. I'll let you fire yourself I'll work until then, I can deal with anything, I deal with a bunch, but you ain't gonna ride my boat.

JT: So what was it like being a deckhand for 9 ½ years compared to now?

M: Now I get to make the rules [laughs]

R: Now I'm the deckhand [laughter] and I listen to what he says.

M: Now we go by what I say. We going in when I get ready to go and we coming in, when I get ready to come in.

R: But he still does help.

M: It ain't no different, it's a lot more stress cause you trying to make somebody else's check. It just swaps up, this man here was trying to make me a check to keep me with him, but it's a lot more. It's a lot of boat to take care of and

R: Having other people's lives in your hands

M: Paying attention to everything and working on it all the time, it's like you never get a life sometimes, but you really do on the off times,

R: Which is very rare

M: Yeah, cause I don't like quit. Right now I should be just now in March coming back from Florida and tying up for the winter, do a repair on the boat to get ready for April. Instead we've been tied up since before Christmas. That's why I went to Key West, I just can't quit, and this boat wasn't going to Key West so I'll tell you that, there ain't no ice boats over there there ain't no more freezer boats over there. It just changes, a lot more headache cause you got to find a crew that's willing to work with you. It's a lot more responsibility, going from a deckhand you think you ain't got nothing to do but go back and clean the drag out, shake the net out, get your check and go home. On here it's totally different you gonna do everything, get fuel, get ice,

R: I like being the deckhand [laughter] I don't have all that stress and pressure on me. I let him worry about that and I just do it

M: And I'll keep doing it. I'll do easy job. I'll drive or I'll work the deck it don't matter. It's what I'm gonna do.

R: Just to keep our boat going, whatever needs to be done everybody pitches in.

M: I work deck on here, along with her and other crewman, and drive. I run back and forth to that wench to that wheel, up and down I hope I don't have to slow down too much but it's coming. Time, it'll get you sooner or later. That's a lot of boat to run back and forth that's why I wanna get something smaller and my own. And then Ima let her stay home and sell our product, Ima find me one good man and then me and him going to work everyday.

R: That's fine with me.

M: I'll bring them back, she gon' sell them for me. I got a plan, it just ain't worked out that way yet.

R: Yet.

M: Dreams do come true.

JT: So then what are your thoughts on the future of the community and the industry?

M: The strong gon' live and the weak gon' die.

R: He's always gonna say that to you. It's just, it almost seems like it's a dying industry, it's dying, it really is.

M: There ain't no new boats coming.

R: No, so what's here is what's gonna keep going.

M: You ought not to even be able to hardly turn a boat around in this creek right here.

R: There'd be so many boats and it just isn't like that. This whole dock right now only has two boats that fish and we're one of them.

M: This one and the sun [inaudible]

R: The one next to us. That's it.

M: The rest of them in heaps. Can't find nobody to run them, can't find nobody to work them. Ain't got no money to put motors back in them.

R: Yeah, it's not cheap to be in this industry whatsoever, even crabbing. But it is, it's a dying industry. It's sad but it's just the way it is.

JT: So then is there anything you can think of that could maybe revitalize it or save it?

M: Get rid of imports.

R: Yeah, that really is our biggest problem.

M: Get rid of imports buy ours.

R: Buy fresh, buy local.

M: Yeah, it's pretty bad when you can buy a certain amount of shrimp and get a certain amount free. And they ain't got boats over there catching them, they raising them in a pond. They gon' drain the pond, go out there and dig them up. We always catching wild shrimp. Imports has got us. That's what really killed us is imports.

R: It really is. And that'll probably be the death of this industry, it really is imports.

M: And dang near every pound of shrimp that you walk in that grocery store and buy matches the price what they give us for going to catch them. And that's what death of it is. The money. Everything going up but our money for shrimp.

R: Everything but our check.

M: Everything going up but my check. And I'm the one spending all the time out there trying to catch them and coming here and get the least for them and turn around and go right back, can't wait to get there. How many am I gonna catch today? That's all I can say about that and imports. And I know the imports ain't been always around but when they started getting them imports our price fell down. There ain't no market on it, you can't even sell a head on a shrimp no more. We used to be able to catch anything you could catch, and now if you don't head it, and that's same with the crew, the crew ain't going out there to head the shrimp, no, we used to be able to pick them up and bring a boatload of them in here with the head on. There was somebody up there to head them shrimp, ain't nothing no more and I won't pay, not when you can get your certain amount buy one get one free. I don't even like to talk about that to tell you the truth but I'll turn the radio off when they all go to start that whining down there. Ima get what Ima get. We just have to catch more.

JT: So if people did start buying locally and the problem of imports could be resolved, what would you hope to see in the upcoming generations?

R: More boats, more people getting out there and just going back to what it used to be, keeping your family in it and teaching your children how to do it, and bringing the boats back. Like I said it's a family it's a whole type of different family, shrimpers and captains and stuff. You would just really hope that if that did happen that we could bring more boats back.

[shouts from other fishermen]

JT: Is there anything else you'd hope to see?

R: I would just really like to see it be the way it was.

M: Go back like it was.

R: Back in the day it was something to see, all the boats. He even tells me stories of when they'd be out there and it'd be the end of the day and there'd be 40-50 boats all together and everybody'd crawl on each others boat and eat dinner together, but it's not like that anymore.

M: [inaudible] drop his anchor and the rest pull up, single file line. Everybody'd get tired they'd untie and go.

JT: Can you tell us stories like that, like everyone coming in together and eating together?

R: It's a family out there, that's what it was.

M: Everybody works together out there pretty well and they all started falling down.

[fisherman comes in and asks about interview]

JT: Is there anything else that maybe we didn't ask or think of that you really want people to know about your experience? Any stories you want to tell?

M: Nah, I believe we've pretty well about covered it.

JT: If you could go back and choose a career over again, would you stick with this?

M: Oh yeah. Yeah.

R: I love it. I left my other career to do it.

M: I tell her, "You know when Ima quit? When they pile water on top of me" [laughter] I will be buried at sea.

R: Yes, he will be. And I'll be right there with him.

M: No, you're going back home. You know you ain't going out there I'm going to find me a mermaid [laughter] day trip I'm going to find me a mermaid, she said she wanted to go back home and that's where she's going. You know it, tell the truth.

R: Yeah, well, only because I don't come from here. I think about going back home to be with my family when that time comes. But you never know, things change. I couldn't imagine my life anywhere but right there with him on a boat, so things change.

M: Oh I wasn't saying nothing like that.

R: [laughs] I know.

M: I hope you plan on hanging around until I'm gone anyhow.

R: I will. And then I'll throw you out to sea and [inaudible]

M: I am 10 years older than you.

R: I know, I keep thinking about that too, you're gonna go before me. [laughter]

JT: That was great, thank you guys again.

R: Thank you.

M: You're welcome.