

*Interviewer:* What is your name?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Bobby Aylesworth.

*Interviewer:* Do you fish for sport or for an occupation?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I am on both sides of the fence. I am a commercial and recreational fisherman.

*Interviewer:* What do you like better? Do you like to fish more for profit or for sport?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Well, I really can't divide the two, because one is a living and the other one is for fun. I suppose, on the fun side, I like doing offshore fishing a lot more than I do inshore fishing.

*Interviewer:* Did you want to be a fisherman when you were a child or did you have other ideas?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Well, being born into this business, and I'm second-generation, I'm not sure I had a lot of choices. It was my father's business, and I just grew up in it, and I learned to love it as I came along.

*Interviewer:* Were you born and raised in Tampa?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I was born and raised in St. Petersburg.

*Interviewer:* Did you enjoy fishing when you were younger or were you kind of eased into it slowly?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I have always enjoyed fishing, but I worked a lot when I was young, and I didn't get a whole lot of chances, until I got up into my teens, to get a chance to fish much. The older I got, the more I got to fish, and the more I got to like it.

*Interviewer:* When did you start fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I would say probably about seven.

*Interviewer:* Was it easy for you to go fishing or was it a kind of vacation thing to do?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* It was easy. It just came naturally.

*Interviewer:* Did your family also fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Oh, yes.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any sisters or brothers who fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I have two sisters, Carol and Toni.

*Interviewer:* Do they fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* No, they don't fish, and I am the only one that seems to be involved with the business as well.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any children?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Yes, I do. I have a son who is thirty, and he just served ten years in the military. I have a daughter, and she's twenty-eight, and she works and lives in Washington, D.C.

*Interviewer:* Do they like to fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* They love to fish, especially my daughter.

*Interviewer:* Do they like to fish in Tampa or St. Pete?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* They will go fishing anywhere they possibly can. She lives up in Virginia, Washington, D.C., right now and they go fishing. She and her boyfriend go fishing a lot up there, freshwater fishing, like in lakes and the Potomac River and what have you, but when she comes down here, she goes fishing offshore with us.

*Interviewer:* What are the pros and cons of fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Well, let's see. What would be the cons? We have a lot of regulations that we have to live with today, and a lot of them are good regulations and some of them that we may not agree with. We have fish that come in and out of season, and so we have to stop and think about what we can fish for and what we can't. That was probably some of the hardest parts of going fishing. Pros, there's all kinds of them, the relaxation and getting away from it all.

*Interviewer:* What are the best conditions to fish in?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Fair winds and easy seas.

*Interviewer:* You said you like to fish for profit, what is the most profitable fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Actually, I don't actually fish for profit. I am in the business of commercial fishing, and so I buy and sell fish. My actual fishing experience is purely recreational.

*Interviewer:* What is the hardest fish to catch?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* The hardest fish to catch can be a lot of different fish, but I would say, around here, the tarpon would probably be one of the most difficult to catch. They are very sensitive. I would say that would be followed by the redfish and the snook.

*Interviewer:* So what's your technique for trying to catch the tarpon?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I always like to talk about my Uncle Sonny. He was a tarpon fisherman of legend around here, and we would go out with him fishing, usually about once a week. My wife and I would take turns.

There is really two ways around here that's used for styles of fishing. One is for bottom fishing. You anchor your boat in certain areas here in the inlets and up in the bay. You anchor up and put a bait on the bottom and you just wait for one to pick it up if you believe that there is tarpon in that area.

The other one is when they start migrating and going up and down the beach and you chase them. You chase the pods going up and down the beach and try and get out ahead of them and present your bait before they get there.

*Interviewer:* What is your greatest accomplishment in fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I would say being able to fish as a family. I wouldn't say necessarily the prizes or the trophies or some of the things that come about with being in the winner's circle, if you will. The best part was being able to fish with my family, my wife and my two children, and fishing with friends.

*Interviewer:* Where is your favorite spot to fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Offshore, about sixty miles out. The further out, the better.

*Interviewer:* What are some of the changes that you've seen in Tampa Bay over the years?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* A lot of changes, good and bad. I have watched this area change with the amount of development and the quality of the water. It got worse, and then I've seen it improve. It has gone back to an improving stage, as far as Tampa Bay is concerned. The scallops are starting to move back in, which is kind of like the canary in the cave. You can tell wherever they live that the water must be good.

I would like to see Boca Ciega Bay do a lot better, but, yes, I've seen an awful lot of changes. You sure see a lot more houses and a lot more boats and a lot more people that you used to, and there's been other environmental changes as well that has affected the bay.

*Interviewer:* Overall, you see a change for the better?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* It's changing for the better. I am going to leave that as a work in progress.

*Interviewer:* What are some changes in fishing technique over the past few years?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Kingfish would be a good example. In the last twenty years, we have had kingfish events and tournaments that have been added on. In the early days, we used to fish with just a cork sitting still and waiting for them to come off the beach, just like the tarpon would.

What you will see now, more than anything, is a lot more trolling for them and using different techniques, such as using real thin wire and things like that and using live bait more.

*Interviewer:* How much has the population of fish changed over the years? Has it decreased or has it increased?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* It has increased. I have watched it to where fishing, back in the 1970s, was very, very good. Then it got to where, in the 1970s and 1980s and early 1990s, it was not quite so good, and I see it rebounding considerably, especially in certain species of fish. Some fish we're seeing a lot more

of than we used to.

*Interviewer:* Where have you fished other than Tampa Bay?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I have fished in the northern Gulf, I've fished in the Keys, and I've fished out in the Gulf an awful lot. I have fished on the east coast of Florida, and I have fished some freshwater around the country, out west.

*Interviewer:* What is your favorite fish to catch?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Actually, what I really enjoy is some of the easiest fish to catch. Maybe it's because I'm getting older, and I don't know, but I like to catch grouper and snapper species, because I can do something with them. I can bring them home and have a good meal.

*Interviewer:* Have you gotten other people into fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Yes, I sure have. One of things we enjoy doing is take somebody who has never had a chance to go fishing offshore, and so I've done that quite a few times and gotten them into it, starting with my children.

*Interviewer:* If you could fish one thing, what would it be?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Probably grouper or scamp, something in the grouper species.

*Interviewer:* Why?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Because I can take it home and have a good meal.

*Interviewer:* What is your favorite kind of boat to fish with?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* A go-fast boat, one that I can get out there real fast and get back real fast, so that I don't have to take all day to go out to the fishing grounds.

*Interviewer:* What is the largest fish you have caught in Tampa Bay?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I would say that would be probably a thirty-six-pound kingfish, but my wife likes to brag that her fish are always bigger.

*Interviewer:* What is the longest fishing trip you have been on and

where did you go?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* The longest fishing trip probably was about a week. It wasn't a single trip. It was going out fishing every day, but it would be off of Jacksonville. There's a major kingfish tournament there. It lasts for about a week, and that would be my longest trip. As far as fishing continuously, a weekend, fishing like what's known as the LOOP Tournament fishing here in the Tampa Bay area, right here out of St. Petersburg. Each leg of that tournament lasts about a weekend, usually Friday to Sunday.

*Interviewer:* What is your favorite type of bait to use to fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* It depends on the fish.

*Interviewer:* For example, the kingfish.

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Blue runners are always a real popular one. There's probably about a dozen that I could add to it, and they're all very good. It depends on the conditions and sometimes what it is you can actually catch. Sometimes not everything is always available, but blue runners would probably be my favorite.

*Interviewer:* What is your inspiration for fishing? Like who inspired you?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Around here, it just comes naturally. We're very fortunate that we live in a place like this. It's just something that you do. I really feel sorry that there's people in this area that hardly know that we even have water around here, but, growing up in this area, that's just something that you did. If you weren't working or going to school, you went fishing. It's just natural.

*Interviewer:* You said you were in the fishing business. Would you say it's hard to sell fish?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* It's probably like any business. There's good parts and there is bad parts, but we were, for many, many years, in the seafood business, but now I'm strictly in the bait business, fishing bait. We sell frozen fishing bait to both commercial and recreational people.

*Interviewer:* Let's say you weren't in the fishing business. What kind of

job would you like to have?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I would like to be an airline pilot. You know how everybody always has that thing they think about, like, gee, what could I have done? That's one of my fantasies. That's kind of way off, isn't it?

*Interviewer:* If you could go anywhere in the world to go fishing, where would it be and why?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I would say probably in the northern Gulf, because fishing there is just really easy. There is just such an untapped resource up there in that area. All those oil well rigs out there hold a lot of fish. That's probably one of the best fishing spots that there are, at least here in the Gulf.

*Interviewer:* What is your best memory of fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* My best memory would have to have something to do with fishing with my family, just being out there and going fishing. You don't always have to catch something. Sometimes it's just being there and being with the people that you enjoy being with.

*Interviewer:* What is your favorite fishing technique?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I like bottom fishing. You just anchor up and you find your fish and you just take it easy. You drop your bait, and it's nice and easy. Back in my younger days, I would fish a lot harder and change baits more often and troll more. Now that I'm older, I like to -- I call it Huck Finn fishing. We just take it easy, but offshore though. That's where I like to go.

*Interviewer:* Have you done any other type of fishing, like spearfishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Yes, I have. I have gone spearfishing and I've gone freshwater fishing. Probably the only thing I can think of that I haven't done would be fly fishing. I have never tried that. I would like to try it sometime.

*Interviewer:* You said you buy and sell fish, but what type of fish do you buy and sell?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* We have quite a few. Probably our most popular would be Spanish sardines and squid. Those would be our most

popular. One of our most unusual types of bait would be pig feet. We also sell to commercial fishermen, and that's what the stone crabbers like to use. We sell quite a bit of that as well.

*Interviewer:* When did you decide that you wanted to fish for a living?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Again, I don't fish for a living, but being in the business, I guess it just kind of came about naturally. I worked in my father and uncle's fish house ever since I was a little kid. The next thing I know, I was working for them in my twenties. The next thing that happened, I ended up owning it. It just sort of happened.

*Interviewer:* What was the strangest fish you have ever caught?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* There's probably been one or two that I have had trouble identifying. If my uncle was still alive, I know I could have taken them to him and be able to find out just what they were. I can't even tell you how to describe the fish, but it was nothing that was a normal, usual fish for our area. It wasn't a big fish, probably about three or four pounds, but there's been a couple here and there through the years that I don't know what they are. I should know, shouldn't I?

*Interviewer:* What is the longest catch you've ever had? Let's say you're reeling one in and it's so hard to bring in that it takes a long time. What would your longest one be?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* You know I would like to give that credit to my wife. It was watching her take about an hour-and-a-half to catch a fish, and I actually didn't even get to watch it. I wasn't there. She was fishing on a professional fishing team. It was a kingfish out here in Tampa Bay, right there in the ship channel, and that's how long it took for her to get it in. It went under ships as it came in, and it wrapped around crab traps and headed for other boats parked around, and she had quite a time bringing that fish up. I guess what comes to mind is thinking about her and her experience.

*Interviewer:* Did you get your wife into fishing or was she a fisherwoman before you met her?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I think I got her into it. She married me, and that's what I did, and she just tried it. She loves it, and she swears she's a better fisherman than I am.



*Interviewer:* Have you had any health-related issues to fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* No, other than having my occasional sunburn when I was young or putting my back out catching a big amberjack or something like that. There are people out there that have an allergy to iodine and just being around fish. People who eat certain types of seafood can get ill from it, but I have actually seen somebody who actually just being around it got an allergy to it.

*Interviewer:* How do you protect yourself from getting cancer from the sun?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Lots of sunscreen, good sunscreen. I was raised at a time when my mother would always put baby-oil and iodine on you, thinking that was supposed to be something good. Of course, in a way, that's kind of like adding oil to the frying pan, but I've been very fortunate that I haven't had any skin cancer. I have had pre-cancer, and I go every year for a checkup because of that, but I'm just one of the fortunate ones. A lot of people aren't. Fair-skinned people have to be much more careful, but now I put SPF 30 all over myself. I lather myself down real good, especially my ears. I've seen a lot of old-time fishermen who had to have their ears removed.

*Interviewer:* What is your most frightening moment while fishing?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* That would be being offshore during storms. I fished a tournament when Hurricane Ivan came up through the Gulf and went over and crossed Georgia and went out the Atlantic and turned around and came back across Florida into the Gulf while we were fishing a tournament up in Orange Beach, Alabama. It was like fourteen-foot seas, and we were out there supposedly having fun. There was also one right here a couple of years ago, in September, that was a pretty bad storm. That's the most frightening times.

*Interviewer:* How did you stay safe during those storms?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Don't panic. Absolutely no panic. It's something like you feel like you want to do when you're in that situation, but you can't, especially if you're the captain and you have all those other people onboard that you're responsible for. You have to keep yourself together, because it would be

very easy for a boat to roll with high seas, and so you've got to keep yourself pretty steady.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever seen or experienced any rogue waves?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* Yes, I have. Probably not like one you would see in some movies, certainly nothing like that, but they actually happen from time to time. They are not so rare. A rogue wave basically is one that comes from an unforeseen direction, and, if it's a big one, it catches you off guard. It's going to make you rock pretty good.

*Interviewer:* Have you gone fishing in any other countries?

*Bobby Aylesworth:* I have gone looking for fishing in other countries in business. I've been in Venezuela and down in South America, but, no.

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