

*Interviewer:* What is your name?

*James Britt:* My name is Jim Britt, and I was born in Virginia, but we moved to Tampa in 1954, and I moved to heaven, because I could fish every day. I love to fish.

*Interviewer:* What are some types of fishing techniques you dislike, whether it could be way too aggressive for the animal or is in really big amounts, and how would you stop that?

*James Britt:* How would I stop that? Well, I know that they have eliminated, in the bay, many of the big, long gillnets, and that's good, because they pretty well eliminated the mullet population. When I was a kid, mullet would cover this whole end of the bay, and now you barely -- I see a school of mullet once in a while, and there's a small school in your canal here, but not many, and so eliminating the large gillnets is a good thing. Cast nets, they're good, because you can limit where that goes.

Mostly, I've done fishing in the bay, and so I don't know about big fish traps or anything like that. I do know that they have also eliminated trawls. They have eliminated trawls in the bay, and I used to have a shrimp trawl, and I can't use that any more in the bay, which is a good thing.

The best thing they ever did for the bay was they quit dumping raw sewage into the bay. When I was your age, the bay waters, grass areas, were just about destroyed by raw sewage, and they finally got that stopped, and so the bay has come back a lot, as far as the grass flats and all, and so that's a good thing.

*Interviewer:* Do you prefer to fish in fresh water or salt water?

*James Britt:* I prefer salt water, and I have a friend that is a bass fisherman, and he and I would go bass fishing, and we would sit at opposite ends of the boat fishing, and he would pull in one after another, and I couldn't even get a bite, because I used the technique that I use for trout fishing, and it doesn't work on bass, and so I really haven't done much freshwater fishing. I mostly do saltwater fishing.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and so that's exactly why you like to do that?

*James Britt:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* I wanted to know how you got into fishing.

*James Britt:* When I was about -- I don't know, but I was living in Virginia, and my cousin and I -- My cousin lived on a farm, and I would go spend weeks with them on the farm, and, one day, she and I went fishing in an uncle's pond, and we caught lots and lots and lots of brim, and that got me started fishing. I must have been six or seven years old, and I have loved to fish ever since.

*Interviewer:* What's your favorite fishing memory?

*James Britt:* There are so many, but I guess my favorite one is I was fishing down near Fort Desoto, down near the Skyway Bridge, and I was trying to catch bait, because I didn't want to buy shrimp, and so I had a little tiny piece of cut bait, and I got a little tiny piece of cutup fish and a little tiny hook, and I was trying to catch pinfish, and I hooked a fish that jumped.

This fish was as long as my leg, and I said, oh no, I've caught a snook, and I can't keep it, because snook was out of season, and it was bigger than the snook you can keep anyway. It was over thirty-six inches long.

Well, I fought that thing for the longest time and got it beside the boat, and my wife could not get it into the landing net, because it was bigger than the net. We finally got it tired out enough to where I could stick the head and the tail out of the net and pull it into the boat, and it was a trout, a spotted seatrout, the biggest spotted seatrout I have ever seen in my life, and that thing was huge, and that's my favorite fishing story.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever traveled the world to discover different fish, and, if you did, what were some of the different fish that you did catch?

*James Britt:* One thing that my wife and I have done a lot is snorkeling, and we have been many places in the Caribbean snorkeling, and fishes we've seen -- We have seen moray eels, and I have fed nurse sharks, and that was interesting, and we fed stingrays. I always thought of stingrays as being something very scary, because -- Well, Steve Irwin was killed by a stingray.

When we were in Grand Cayman, we fed stingrays. These stingrays would climb up on your back, and they were not startled. When the stingray is startled, they flip their tail and stick up their stinger. Well, these stingrays weren't startled, because they were getting fed, and they were just all over the place, and that was exciting. That was fun.

Something that I really remember is one time, and that was also in Grand Cayman, we were snorkeling, and I saw a school of squid, little squid, and they were about four inches long, and they were all purple, and you could almost see through them, and this whole school of squid just swam right by me, and that was really cool, really cool, but snorkeling is the greatest thing in the world. People like to dive, and Ava, the lady that set this up, our niece, is a diver, but we don't dive. She does, but I love to snorkel.

*Interviewer:* Do you prefer to island fish or deep-sea fish and why?

*James Britt:* I prefer to fish in the bay, because I like using light tackle. If you're deep-sea fishing, you cannot use light tackle, because you have to use heavy weights to get to the bottom. Also, when I have been deep-sea fishing, we used a rod that I call a telephone pole, which is a big, heavy rod, and just caught small fish, and so deep-sea fishing -- I like to go once in a while with a group, and it's more of a party than it is actually fishing, but I prefer to fish where I can cast and use light tackle and just have a good time.

*Interviewer:* What is the most difficult part about being a fisherman?

*James Britt:* A difficult part about being a fisherman? Wow. To me, there's not a bad day fishing, unless a storm comes up. The most difficult part in fishing in this area is the storms, because being on the water is a bad place to be in a storm. Lightning hits the highest point, and you're usually the highest point on the water, but, other than that -- You know, if you're not getting any bites, that's not a problem with me. Just being out on the water fishing is what I love.

*Interviewer:* What is the most dangerous experience you have had while fishing?

*James Britt:* The most dangerous? A dangerous experience fishing. Well, I mentioned storms, and I did go out one day with a

man, and my father used to own a twenty-five-foot cabin cruiser, and, on weekends, we would go down to Ruskin and stay on the cabin cruiser, and there was a man down there that had a twenty-foot boat, open boat, and he and I went fishing out in the Gulf.

While we were there, a storm came up, and a waterspout came up about a hundred yards away. Well, it came down out of the sky about a hundred yards away, and I guess that was the most dangerous thing.

*Interviewer:* What is the process that you go through after catching a fish?

*James Britt:* The process I go through after catching. Well, first, you have to measure the fish, to make sure it's of the limit. There are some fish that you can only keep certain sizes. If it's too small or too big, you have to throw it back, and so you have to make sure you're legal.

Then I like to take an ice chest and put a block of ice in the ice chest to keep my fish, because I like to keep them cold, and then, at our house, we have a fish-cleaning table, because we live on the water, and so, as soon as we get home, I clean the fish and throw the remains over in the canal for the crabs and all, and we've got to where we pretty well like to grill the fish more, and we're trying to stay away from fried foods now, because of fat problems and all that, and so that's pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Do you think of fishing as a job or as a hobby?

*James Britt:* A hobby. It is fun, and I have known people who were commercial fishermen, but I don't think they thought of it as a real job either, but, to me, it's not a job, and it's just fun. The minute I get on the water, and I don't have to be fishing, but just pushing the throttle of the boat -- It's just as if, all the cares and problems I've had, we're just leaving them in the wake, and it's really great.

*Interviewer:* If you could do it all over again, would you be a fisherman?

*James Britt:* A fishermen for a living?

*Interviewer:* Yes.

*James Britt:* No, I couldn't. The reason is because I was called to be a Baptist pastor, and that was my life, and so fishing has been great, but I tried doing other things, but I was called to be a preacher, and so there wasn't any choice, in that respect.

*Interviewer:* Well, God bless you.

*Jim Britt:* Thank you. God bless you, brother.

*Interviewer:* What is your biggest accomplishment while you were fishing?

*James Britt:* Biggest accomplishment while I was fishing? I mentioned that I'm a pastor, and, a number of years ago, over twenty years ago, I went to a church in Tampa that liked to do fish fries, and I had only been there a couple of months, and they said that we want to have a fish fry, and I said, that's great, and let's go catch the fish.

They said, we can't catch enough fish to feed the whole church, and we'll have to buy them. I said, well, let's go see how many we can catch, and so we had three boats, and we went out in the bay fishing, and, out of those three boats, we caught and cleaned 278 fish, and that was enough fish to feed our church.

They were silver trout and whiting and black sea bass and Spanish mackerel, and we had just a nice -- Maybe a shark or so, a small shark, but we had plenty of fish to feed everybody, and that was the greatest accomplishment.

*Interviewer:* What steps do you take to ensure your safety while fishing?

*James Britt:* There are certain safety requirements on a boat, and you have to have -- Well, you have to have a boat hook, and you have to have life jackets for everybody, and you have to have a flare kit, and you have to have a fire extinguisher.

I like to check the motor, to make sure it's running okay, before we go out, and I let somebody know where I'm going, because there are people that get stuck out overnight, and I have had to use my flares to get pulled back in before, because my motor conked out while I have been out on the water, and I like to watch the weather. If there is a storm coming, I don't go. In Tampa, in the summer, there is a storm almost every day, and so I like to

make sure that I watch out for that before I go.

*Interviewer:* What kind of boat do you own, and is it your dream boat, or do you hope to own another one in the future?

*James Britt:* My wife would laugh. The last four boats I've had, I said, honey, this is the last boat that I'm going to buy. Right now, I own a seventeen-foot Scout. If you turn around and look at the Boston whaler behind you, it looks very similar to that, except mine has a windshield across the front, and it's a great bay boat. I used to have a Boston whaler, but it was a center console, and I did not like the center console. I like a windshield. The center console gets in the way of fishing, to me.

I have owned many different types of boats, and, when I bought the scout, I was looking for a Boston whaler, and I could not find one with a windshield that was for sale. I have seen one or two since I bought the Scout, but I'm not going to sell the Scout now. It's a good boat. It's got a ninety-horsepower motor in it, and it will go forty or forty-five miles an hour, and so it will get me where I need to go.

*Interviewer:* I was wondering if you knew what was the most common fish caught in Florida?

*James Britt:* The most common fish caught in Florida? Well, I can tell you the most fish that I have caught was speckled trout, because I do bay fishing.

*Interviewer:* Do they taste good?

*James Britt:* They are wonderful. The thing about trout is they don't grill very well, because the meat is so tender, and it's hard to grill it without it falling apart on the grill, and it's best fried, but we try to avoid that.

The shirt I'm wearing is redfish, and they are wonderful to grill, because the meat is firmer, and they're a very sweet, white meat, but shark is wonderful to grill. Blacktip shark and bonnethead sharks are both very good to eat to grill.

*Interviewer:* Does Tampa have a lot of invasive species?

*James Britt:* I don't know about many invasive species. I know, when we were in the Keys last month, they were talking about the

problem with lionfish, and they have a bounty for people that catch lionfish and prove that they have caught them and killed them, and so that's the only invasive species that I'm aware of right now.

*Interviewer:*

Sir, thank you very much. Thank you for sharing everything with us.

*Jim Britt:*

Thank you. I hope that you enjoy fishing, and it is a great, great, great, great way to spend the day.

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