

Interviewer: Can you state your name, please?

Glen Brooks: Glen Brooks.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Glen Brooks: I was born in Columbus, Ohio.

Interviewer: What made you want to move down here?

Glen Brooks: Well, my parents moved me down here when I was very young, when I was probably about ten years old.

Interviewer: Who got you into fishing?

Glen Brooks: Well, I grew up in a commercial fishing village down there in Cortez, Florida. I grew up down there, and, just kind of growing up around it, I just kind of fell into it.

Interviewer: Do you prefer inland fishing or offshore fishing?

Glen Brooks: Offshore fishing.

Interviewer: What type fishing do you do?

Glen Brooks: Grouper and snapper.

Interviewer: Do you have like a story as to the biggest fish and the most challenging fish you caught?

Glen Brooks: The biggest load of fish that I ever got was probably about 8,000 pounds, which was a pretty big load, seeing as to where the fishery was at the time, and it was overcapitalized, and big trips just weren't that common.

Interviewer: Then what type of advice would you give someone who is getting into the fishing industry, or fishing in general?

Glen Brooks: Well, it's a young man's game, I think. Somebody later on in years, I wouldn't advise them to get into this industry right now, because it's a young man's game. It's a lot of work, and a big investment, but it's a worthwhile investment.

Interviewer: What do you think on the ban in net fishing?

Glen Brooks: Well, I wasn't into the net fishery myself, but I know a lot of people that were, and I think it was wrong that they banned the nets. It wasn't scientifically justified, and I think what they had to go to afterwards was harder on the fishery than the nets were. I think it was already a well-regulated fishery.

Interviewer: Have you seen pollution or anything affect your fishing?

Glen Brooks: Well, the red tide.

Interviewer: How do you make a profit fishing?

Glen Brooks: How do we make a profit? Well, everybody works on a percentage, and so, if you don't catch the fish and hit the markets right, you don't make a profit, and you can actually go backwards.

Interviewer: Do regulations affect your ability to make a profit?

Glen Brooks: Sometimes, yes. with size limits and restrictions and closed seasons and closed areas, and everything has an impact. We used to say that we would kill 10,000 pounds of fish to bring 6,000 pounds to the dock, and that was due to regulations.

Interviewer: What are the costs associated with fishing?

Glen Brooks: The costs associated with fishing? A lot more than what it was back in 1980. Back in 1980, basically all you needed to go fishing was a boat, and I don't think there was SPL licenses, which is our state license, and there was no reef fish permits, none of the regulatory regulations were in place, and there was no boundaries and no closed seasons. Basically, all you needed was a boat. All the safety regulations that have come into play over the years, with the EPIRBs and the life rafts and the VMS units, all of that is added onto the cost of going fishing nowadays.

Interviewer: On average, what would you say your total profit is per trip?

Glen Brooks: Total profit per trip, nowadays it's probably about \$5,000, and keep in mind that I'm not the captain of my boats anymore. I hire captains to run my boats, and so the captains get paid, and the crew gets paid, and, of course, all

the expenses get paid first, before anybody starts divvying up any money, but a good profit is usually around \$5,000.

Interviewer: Has the market or consumer base changed since you started?

Glen Brooks: Yes, it has. The demand has gone way up, and the price of our product has probably tripled over the past few years, and we used to think that \$2.00 a pound was a really good price, and our average price was probably \$1.50, and, if we got \$2.00, we thought that was just out of sight, and now we're up to I think \$4.25 right now, and that's based on red grouper. Other species pay different prices.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what would you say is the most enjoyable part about fishing, like the most rewarding? Would it be the pay, or just the fact that you like fishing overall?

Glen Brooks: Probably the tranquility of it, being offshore, and it's peaceful, at times, as long as you're not in a hurricane or a bad northwester, and it's can be pretty peaceful out there.

Interviewer: What would you say are the pros and cons of being in the fishing industry, as opposed to any other field of work?

Glen Brooks: Being independent. You know, you make your own schedule of when you work and how hard you work, and, of course, it's like any job where you own the business. The harder you work, the more money you're going to make, and there's a lot of people that don't really care about the money, and so they don't work real hard, but they enjoy it. They love it.

Interviewer: What time of day would you say is the best time to fish?

Glen Brooks: Well, the type of fishing we do, that I'm into, it's pretty much twenty-four hours, probably depending on the moon and the weather and the tides, but different times of the week or month is better than -- You could be fishing at two o'clock in the morning, and the fish will be biting real good, and sometimes it's early morning, and sometimes it's early evening, late evening, before sunset or after sunset, and so it changes.

Interviewer: What do you think has been the biggest changes in the fishing industry over the years?

Glen Brooks: The biggest changes? I would probably have to say the IFQ program, and I think that was a big game-changer.

Interviewer: How do you feel about these changes, especially in the area of environmental regulations versus protecting the fishing industry?

Glen Brooks: We try to promote science-based regulations and seasons and quotas, versus political.

Interviewer: Do you have any brothers or sisters, and are they in the fishing industry as well?

Glen Brooks: Actually, I am the only person in my family.

Interviewer: Did you ever suffer any injuries or health issues associated with fishing?

Glen Brooks: I got my hand caught between two boats once and crushed it, and I think I've been hooked once or twice, hauling gear.

Interviewer: How did you take care of your health?

Glen Brooks: Well, when I crushed my hand, of course, I went to the hospital. That happened here onshore, but, whenever something happens offshore, if you get hooked or anything like that, or cut real bad, you usually just have to tend to it out there, and we keep little medical kits on the boat, and lots of duct tape, and we clean it and bandage it and wrap it with duct tape and finish the trip.

Interviewer: What was the longest time you've been out on the water?

Glen Brooks: Probably about eighteen days.

Interviewer: Where?

Glen Brooks: In the Gulf. It probably would have been one of my trips down to the Dry Tortugas.

Interviewer: What would you say the best tide to fish at is?

Glen Brooks: I don't know, because I never really play the tides much in our operation, because my boats are all bottom longline, and we just repetitively just keep throwing our gear out and

picking it up, and pretty much, no matter what the tides are and what anything is doing, we just keep working.

Interviewer: Is it better to fish when it's cold or when it's warm or in the middle?

Glen Brooks: It probably doesn't make a whole lot of difference when you're that far offshore, because you've got the water temperature down at the bottom, where the fish are, that pretty much changes for other reasons other than atmospheric conditions.

Interviewer: Do you catch less fish after storms?

Glen Brooks: Less fish after storms? It depends on how bad the storm is. If the water is real muddy, if it muddies the water up real bad, it will keep the fish from biting, but, normally, after the water starts clearing up, the fish will sometimes start chewing real well.

Interviewer: Do you have a particular fish that you aim for, like perhaps a high-paying fish that you --

Glen Brooks: Our main target fish is red grouper, and that's our main target fish, and that's what we catch the most of, and so that's our target fish, but we like catching black grouper, gag grouper, scamp, snapper, now that we're able to catch them and have the coupons for them.

Interviewer: Then do you have a gear preference, like preferred fishing equipment?

Glen Brooks: For my boats, it's bottom longline.

Interviewer: Any particular reason why?

Glen Brooks: Because it's the most efficient gear there is for catching grouper, because grouper is spread out all across a big area, like a football field, versus some of the other fish, where they come in in pods, and you can go there with a fishing pole and sit there and just keep picking out of the pod, and you can't do that with grouper, because they are spread all across. You might catch one here, and, 200 or 300 feet down the line, you might catch another one.

Interviewer: What type of line would you specifically need to catch a

grouper?

Glen Brooks: Well, we use circle hooks and monofilament clipped on the cable, which is our main line that we string out, but there are bandit guys and rod-and-reel guys that they just use monofilament all the way.

Interviewer: What were some of your concerns when the Gulf oil spill happened, if you had any concerns?

Glen Brooks: Well, I guess our biggest concern was the stuff they were dumping on there to try to make it disappear, because we knew that stuff had to be pretty bad and poisoning everything, and it was being dumped on the oil and just making it sink to the bottom, and we felt like it probably wasn't getting rid of it, but it was just kind of an out of sight and out of mind type of thing.

I actually had a boat fishing in the northern Gulf, out to the west a little bit, and, as that oil spill kept getting bigger and they kept closing areas, I had to keep calling him to have him move further east and then move further south, and just trying to stay out of their designated closed areas.

Interviewer: What do you see as the biggest dangers to fishing?

Glen Brooks: The biggest dangers to fishing? The recreational sector representation, CCA.

Interviewer: Have you seen a decrease or an increase in any fish populations since 1980?

Glen Brooks: Increase.

Interviewer: How big of an increase?

Glen Brooks: A huge increase. Over the years, as we were being regulated -- At one point, we got put on trip limits, and our trip limits were 6,000 pounds a trip on grouper, and the snapper guys were put on trip limits of 2,000 pounds, and we had 200-pound trip limits for snapper where we were, but our grouper trip limits were 6,000 pounds.

My guys would stay out fourteen or fifteen or sixteen or eighteen days, and they couldn't catch 6,000 pounds. Now, with the IFQ in place, the populations have rebounded to

where 6,000 pounds is a bad trip. Some of my big hitters will come in with between 9,000 and 15,000 pounds of fish.

Interviewer: What is the biggest fish that you have personally ever caught?

Glen Brooks: Probably a jewfish.

Interviewer: How big was it?

Glen Brooks: It was probably about 350 pounds.

Interviewer: What was that experience like?

Glen Brooks: It was cool. We took pictures of it, but, at the time when I caught it, that fish had already been put on the protected species list, and so we had to release it.

Interviewer: How many boats do you have in your company?

Glen Brooks: Four, four boats that are operating.

Interviewer: What is the most dangerous fish you have ever seen during a fish trip, and how close of an encounter have you gotten with a dangerous fish?

Glen Brooks: Probably sharks. We have gotten sharks, and the big mud eels out in Louisiana that we used to catch, too. They can be pretty dangerous. If one of them gets loose on a deck, they can be kind of aggressive and actually come after you. Sharks are the same way. If you catch small sharks and get them up on the deck, they can flop around. As they're flopping around, they are chomping at the bit too, trying to get you.

Interviewer: Do you think there is more fishing potential, as far as profit, in saltwater, as opposed to freshwater?

Glen Brooks: You know, I don't know anything about freshwater commercial fishing.

Interviewer: Is there any particular memory that you always think about when you're thinking back upon fishing?

Glen Brooks: Probably what I loved the most was going deepwater

fishing and catching the big yellowedge grouper. Most of the red grouper we catch inside of thirty fathoms, to where the yellowedge grouper will usually be out over a hundred fathoms, what we call tall water out there, and they're just - - It's a different fish, and it's beautiful coming up, and you can see it coming up from way down low.

Interviewer: What do you want to be when you grew up, and did you pursue it?

Glen Brooks: A mechanic. I never intended on being a commercial fisherman, even growing up down there in the village amongst all of it, and I went to school to be a mechanic, and I was working on boats, doing maintenance work on the boats down there, and things got slow, and so somebody talked me into making a trip with them offshore, and I dabble a little bit on the inshore fishery when I was in high school, doing some bay shrimping.

I did a little bit of mullet fishing with a couple of friends of mine, with the nets and all, but I just never got into that, but, when I got into the offshore fishing, I was a mechanic and doing maintenance on the boats, and I went out for a trip, and then actually somebody offered me a -- They had me go look at a boat once for them that was for sale, and I went and looked at it, and they made a deal and said that, if I ran it, they would finance it for me, and so that's kind of how I got into it.

Interviewer: What was the most memorable time for you fishing?

Glen Brooks: The most memorable time? Probably when I got hit by a shrimp boat. That was pretty memorable.

Interviewer: How long have you been fishing now?

Glen Brooks: Probably getting close to forty years now. It's probably a good solid thirty-seven.

Interviewer: How did you get hit by a shrimp boat?

Glen Brooks: Well, it was a trip where I only had one crew on the boat at the time, and so it was just the two of us. We were on our way in, and we were probably about ten or twelve miles off the beach, and we decided to drop anchor, and it was probably like one or two o'clock in the morning, and we

decided to drop anchor and then drive in in the morning, during daylight.

We dropped anchor and went to bed and had the anchor lights on, and a shrimp boat was steaming through there, and the guy that was on the wheel of the shrimp boat fell asleep, and so they just ran right into us.

Interviewer: What injuries did you have, or did you have any injuries?

Glen Brooks: No injuries. My boat got tore up pretty bad though, and I don't know if you know how shrimp boats are, and they've got the outriggers that hang over. Well, the outrigger, when it hit my boat, it hit the side, and it went like that, and the outrigger went down the roof of my boat and took out all the lights and the antennas, and whatever was up there was gone.

Interviewer: Do you have an insurance company?

Glen Brooks: No, we're all self-insured in the fishing industry.

Interviewer: Did it total it, or were you still able to use that boat?

Glen Brooks: Actually, I was still able to use that boat, and I actually kept that boat for like twenty-five years, and I just sold it here about three or four years ago.

Interviewer: How did you get back to shore? Did they have to tow you?

Glen Brooks: No, and we were actually able to drive the boat back to shore. It leveled everything off the roof and cracked the hull down to the water line, but we weren't taking on any water, and so we made it home on our own power.

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