

[00:00:00]

Male Interviewer: Experience on the water and the environment stuff. And it's just basically...

Bill Burk: I won't do with these candidates where they - I got to figure out if I'm going to leave anyone.

Male Interviewer: Well, I'm doing chemo. So, I don't know.

Mandy Karnauskas: Oh sorry.

Male Interviewer: Well, it's just, it takes about half an hour...

Male Interviewer: You just come over to the academy we saw that's half day and view you but if you're, you know, only get Guy Willis (*phonetics*) he is a graduate [00:00:21] [Indiscernible] [00:00:23] he went there.

Bill Burk: Oh really. He's not on the - he doesn't have a charter boat here anymore but he runs a private boat around here somewhere.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. But we can also have this interview being part of the oral history. So, it's we'll decide at the end but if you're interested, you know, we're not going to ask you anything confidential about your business or anything. But at the end if you want to sign the form and have that included.

Bill Burk: What business, well I'm here.

Mandy Karnauskas: All right. So, we'll go ahead and get started. So this is Mandy Karnauskas, it is February 19 and we're here with Captain Bill Burk.

Bill Burk: Burk, right.

Mandy Karnauskas: In Clearwater. All right. So, yeah, if you could go back and we're going to try and think about the past Red Tides that you've witnessed in the area. So, you can go ahead and you've mentioned is that 70s one, the first one, that you can recollect or...

Bill Burk: The first one that I - because I didn't start working around here until, like 1970.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: You know, full time. But one in the - I don't know, exact date in the 70s.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. So it's okay.

Bill Burk: Probably the mid-70s, somewhere around there.

Mandy Karnauskas: Mid 70s, okay.

Bill Burk: You know, 74 something. And then it was bad and it started from the south. And it just killed hundreds of thousands of fish. I mean, you just seem floating for 40 miles offshore just everywhere. And it was a lot of grouper.

Mandy Karnauskas: Lot of grouper?

Bill Burk: Lot of grouper and the goliath grouper. It just - it was devastating. It took all summer [00:02:00] to do it but it did. And then we went years without any around here. I know there's always been some down in Charlotte Harbor and I always thought that probably had something to do with all the phosphate from, you know, the phosphate dock and loading the phosphate because they always had problems weather down that way. Where we didn't have it up this way all the time.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Male Interviewer: Yeah, it spills and stuff and...

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: I just wondered, you know, coming out of the Peace River, whatever, you know.

Mandy Karnauskas: So that 70s event was that inshore-offshore, we're actually hoping to draw if we can on the chart here.

Bill Burk: Well, as far as I remember, it was, because at that time, we didn't really fish real far off shore. It was where we went and we just quit, you know, doing it. You know, we didn't really bother pushing through it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. So, you just...

Bill Burk: Because we went through the summer and then you get into the fall and then you get into - we did different fishing. It's not - right now, it's all year long. It seems like there's pressure on the bottom fish, the grouper and stuff like that. And we didn't do it a lot because we traveled, we left. We went to the Keys in the winter because generally the weather was bad up here and there wasn't business.

So, we go South in December and not come back till almost April. And then we fish kings. And then sometimes boat I was on we tarpon fish (*phonetics*). And then we come

back and we went even bottom towards the end of the summer. Other boats that I worked with, I mentioned Jimmy in the list, you know, he bottom fish lot but we never even bothered where a group of fish until Jim.

Male Interviewer: So, that Red Tide in the 70s, you said it started in the south and it moved up this way...

Bill Burk: This way.

Male Interviewer: How far in the North did it go?

Bill Burk: I wouldn't. I couldn't tell you because [00:04:00] at that time, you know, we just didn't.

Male Interviewer: You wouldn't so it was - you know it was there. But you weren't -- no it wasn't likely we're running North to get out of it or anything like that we just didn't do it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: And when we see in the 70s at my age then there's a lot of party on the beach. We weren't really worried about it, if we had any money.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah, all right. So, do you remember generally was it inshore-offshore?

Bill Burk: It would but what I was familiar with it was in inshore.

Mandy Karnauskas: Inshore. Okay. And do you know, do you remember kind of how long you took off fishing to get you know you said...

Bill Burk: Didn't last long.

Mandy Karnauskas: How long it last?

Bill Burk: Probably, it's several, couple of months, anyway.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. And you mentioned grouper guy of to, do you remember were there any other species that died off from that or?

Bill Burk: Just all the reef fish.

Mandy Karnauskas: All the reef fish.

Bill Burk: Just the reef fish. They can't handle it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Then we have another Red Tide. And I don't remember exactly what it was and it was out but it's, the Red Tide, it's here, you could fish right next to it and catch them. Splotchy.

Male Interviewer: It was a splotchy one.

Bill Burk: Yeah, like patches.

Male Interviewer: But that one in the 70s was more...

Bill Burk: All we got it...

Male Interviewer: All encompass.

Bill Burk: We got everything.

Mandy Karnauskas: Encompassing.

Bill Burk: Everything and I'd heard from Kevin Lopez and stuff that they had one in the 40s, it was bad. They had one in the 50s around here where they hired boats in the Marina. The city that they'd pick up fish out of the bay, you know, I mean, it just comes and goes, it seems to me.

Mandy Karnauskas: Huh, that's interesting.

Male Interviewer: So, that one in after the 70s, do you have possibly done in the 80s or is that...

Bill Burk: I don't really remember, I could, you know, I go back, we had the - there was the one last year which really didn't bother us up this way. The water got bad colored, but it wouldn't happen much, [00:06:00] up to about 10 miles. Then there was one in the, like, 205 or two something like that. I think that one went out pretty far in places. We had to go 25 miles to get a grant.

Mandy Karnauskas: That was in 2005?

Bill Burk: Yeah. The boat, there were nice ones out there. And a lot of the fish got away from that because there was something...

Male Interviewer: They moved, fish moved.

Bill Burk: Oh yeah, they had a chance to get away because we had - before the Red Tide really that I'm trying to think. We had a tropical storm go by, a bunch of fish up on some places. And it was unbelievable, some of the grouper fishing. On places they shouldn't have been fished and they were loaded with.

Mandy Karnauskas: This is, you're telling 2005?

Bill Burk: Yeah.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: I mean, there was a lot of them...

Mandy Karnauskas: So there's hurricane effects, yeah.

Bill Burk: They met radical, some of that is the tropical storm moving the fish around, and the fish getting away and they just, you know, they get – if there's something to eat they're going to hang out.

Mandy Karnauskas: Interesting. So, going back to that 70s event, if you can read it, sort of relative to the event we had last year...

Bill Burk: Oh, yeah. Well, I think they had it bad down that way. But up here, no.

Mandy Karnauskas: It wasn't that bad?

Bill Burk: Oh, no.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: No, the 70s event was the worst I've seen.

Mandy Karnauskas: It's much worst, okay. So, like, in a scale of, sort of, 1 to 10, how would you rate the 70s event versus last year's event?

Bill Burk: Well, the 70s was the 10<sup>th</sup>. And around here, the one last year was maybe a five.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: Because it just – it didn't go very far out.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay, didn't go far out.

Bill Burk: Or last that long.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: I know they are paying down that way, for whatever reason. That's kind of one of the things everybody wants to know, it's outcome.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: It's easy blend, but they've one woman who's been studying it for 40 years or longer in Sarasota. [00:08:00]

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: And she doesn't have any definitive answers.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. That's why we're talking to you guys is because a lot of people have been studying this for a long time and there's not lot of answers, so...

Bill Burk: They say it starts offshore and comes in shore. For what reason, I have no idea. It just comes and goes. It's the most I can say.

Male Interviewer: So, you don't really - there's nothing that you've seen that you could attribute to why it develops here or there or anything?

Bill Burk: No, because it doesn't happen up. They get it sometimes in Tampa Bay in different times. But it doesn't - I don't think there's any rhyme or reason to it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: I mean, it just come, you know, whenever the water gets maybe it's salinity or something. I have no idea what makes it all of a sudden, boom, you got it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. So, you don't notice any trigger that becomes before each bloom or, you know, yeah.

Bill Burk: You know, like weather pattern those thing like that. When you know I mean always hope well, maybe the windows break it up. Maybe this will happen, this will happen. I think it's got its own mind.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. It's seems...

Bill Burk: On what it does. Because it's none of that, ever since recorded history.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Male Interviewer: Well, one of the 70s you said it went 40 miles out?

Bill Burk: That I know of, it killed about everything.

Male Interviewer: Oh really? And how far North do you think it came up here?

Bill Burk: Oh gosh, I don't know...

Male Interviewer: That have been go...

Bill Burk: ... party but I was fishing on the other side of it. But I remember, I know down in -- we could hear because we have different radios. We had AM radios that could talk to a 300 miles. So, you can hear other boats talking.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: And you could hear the party boats down in Cortez and up this way and when they got the fishing again, if they could catch like 17 fish in a day and they're talking trash fish. They were doing good and have the fish that good, yeah. You know [00:10:00], they're keeping the big fish, the score what we called the sand [indiscernible] [00:10:04] the scroll fish, everything.

But, eventually presto, you know, and you can go fishing out here in these different areas, it's the same thing. There won't be anything in four years. And then all of a sudden, you leave it alone and then all of a sudden you go back and there's fish. Things changed. I know that [indiscernible] [00:10:30] about 18 miles one time the shrimpers went through their business back in the 70s, about 20 boats went through there really toward the bottom up. There wasn't anything to catch for about five years. It came back but it really tore up.

Mandy Karnauskas: So, the Red Tide, you think tore up the bottom?

Bill Burk: No, the shrimpers tore that up.

Mandy Karnauskas: Oh the shrimp, okay.

Bill Burk: Because they, you know, they drive - they used to drive change.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Male Interviewer: But that was an area they hadn't usually shrimp or?

Bill Burk: Oh, yeah, yeah, because the shrimpers don't come in close anymore. You don't ever see them. Hardly see any shrimp boats anyway, I don't think - I think it's too expensive to do it, you know.

Male Interviewer: But you went, in the 70s you used to see a lot more shrimpers in shore close by?

Bill Burk: Oh yeah.

Male Interviewer: Well, we may have some big fish out at Tampa

BillBurk

Bill Burk: Oh, yes, they did. Oh yeah, that's how the whole thing go into Camp PG and stuff, okay?

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: You know, they have big fleets, carbon depth, even down in John's Pass.

Male Interviewer: Were they affected by the Red Tide. Can you remember I mean?

Bill Burk: I don't know if it affects shrimp. You'd have to talk to a shrimper, they know.

Male Interviewer: Yeah.

Mandy Karnauskas: We've heard that they know, the shrimpers tell us they don't really affect the shrimp. They say they can pretty much fish right there's a breakthrough of it, yeah.

Bill Burk: Really on, I guess.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. That's what we've been told. So, between this big event in the 70s. And then you mentioned the one [00:12:00] in 2005, do you remember any other sort of major Red Tide events between those years?

Bill Burk: I think there was other ones popping up here and there, but I don't remember the dates.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah or even the decade like in the 80s or 90s...

Bill Burk: Well, there might have been one in the 90s. But, you know, it didn't have a big effect.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. So nothing that you...

Bill Burk: It really didn't, you know, affect us because it didn't hang around long. Nothing like they had last year. So, they set down in south Florida, where they hung around for over a year along the beach. That seem weird.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Okay. So, what's kind of the 80s you would see it come and go like two weeks, three weeks or how long?

Bill Burk: I mean, you know, you'd see it start - the water start but it never, you know, stay forever.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. So, maybe a potential patches and then in the 90s, you said but never long...



Bill Burk: Uh-huh. Here and there but nothing like it would, you know, it would just devastate, you were - we couldn't fish or couldn't go someplace where [indiscernible]  
[00:13:04]

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Okay. So, you don't - Red Tide, it sounds like it hasn't really affected your business. So, you never except for this one in the 70s you've never have to take off of it or you'd never?

Bill Burk: No.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: Not really. We fished on the other side of it. The one in 2005, we just had to go forward.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. And how would you kind of on that scale of 1 to 10...

Bill Burk: That was in the summer too, I don't remember, it was warm weather.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. How would you rank that one in 2005 on that scale from 1 to 10?

Bill Burk: I don't - probably, how it affected us it didn't affect the business but...

Mandy Karnauskas: So, the severity of the...

Bill Burk: Yeah, the Red Tide. Because once it went away, really the fishing wasn't that, you know, it didn't hurt the fishing.

Mandy Karnauskas: It didn't hurt the fishing?

Bill Burk: No, the fishing came back right away. It's not like it killed areas where it took several years.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. [00:14:00]

Bill Burk: Because I mean, you know, within - when it went away. So, obviously because a lot of times you'll see it on the surface but it may not be on the bottom. So, you have no way of, you know, knowing. It may not go all the way down.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Male Interviewer: When like, so if you run across the Red Tide you guys test it to see if it does go all the way down or you just...

Bill Burk: I just avoid it.

Male Interviewer: You just avoid it all?

Bill Burk: Right.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Mandy Karnauskas: It's a mix in, expert saying...

Bill Burk: You know, because, you know, sometimes people get affected by, you know, with the...

Male Interviewer: With the fumes and...

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: It doesn't bother me that much. So I just - but if you have customers they get affect down.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: You know, I don't run around, you know, you see people sometimes, drama, they freak out consequences.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: Put your big boy pants on.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. So, the 2005 event, would you be able to draw out it at all or so is on the chart, how far it went?

Bill Burk: Oh event in the 70s where we at.

Mandy Karnauskas: So here's, let's see Clearwater is up here, right? Are we making it the bigger chart out. Oh, here's Clearwater, here we are, right here, yeah

Male Interviewer: We found Clearwater.

Mandy Karnauskas: Clearwater, there's an arena right here.

Bill Burk: Well, where we were fishing then it's, these in the bottoms of the.

Mandy Karnauskas: In soundings and feet.

Bill Burk: Oh, it's in feet?

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: Because we were fishing where's Clearwater, that's Clear – oh, okay. That's cool. See we generally, because at that time when we red group a fishing stuff, it's bottom fish, we went in June we started out 240. And then we followed the fish around. And then by the end of the summer we'd be up there fishing 285, 290 out of Clearwater.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: You know, long in, anywhere from 35 [00:16:00] to 40 miles offshore to, you know, 40 miles offshore. We just go that way and then follow the fish, man there was a lot of fish too. I mean, we could - thousand pound stops, oh yeah. We stopped one place down here and a little pothole only about 30 miles. And we used to, even fish recharge electric rails to hook rigs and almost like up North Florida. We stopped, broke all the lines, had to re spool all the wheel. And then fish and I cut one. Now, this is only in about 100 foot of water, I cut one out of the wheel I got caught on to the boat, it weight 42 pounds. I dove under and got it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Wow.

Bill Burk: I mean there used to be some fish around. Caught them up there off [indiscernible] [00:17:00] 25 foot of water would weigh almost 30, trolling, not anymore.

Male Interviewer: But that's 70s Red Tide, you guys were fishing it was as far out as...

Bill Burk: Oh, you know, almost up to 25. And we didn't go past that because we're running day trips, we didn't have the time lemons like we did it now. Because – and we were selling fish a lot of times we go out at 4:00 in the morning. And you know, start fishing at daylight. Run out, start fishing at daylight and we just fish and then come in or the, you know, we didn't. Nowadays we run these 4/6/8 hour trips, you know, or 10-hour whatever then we just, it was all day. And we leave whenever, the earlier the better and then get back at 4:00 in the afternoon [00:18:00]. The whole idea was to catch it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: Because that's where the money was. Because, you know, there was probably five or six charter boats around here. We didn't let the people have to fish, that's £100. First 100 and then the rest stayed with the boat. They didn't have that practice South at here. They let the people walk off with them and a lot of fish. I don't know why, yeah that's why we sold them. But they - what would you do if you had 600 pounds of fish? I don't have bullshit today.

Mandy Karnauskas: I'd be really happy.

Bill Burk: Tell me what would you do with them, when you're here freezing?

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: You go bad. So, you got to give them away or do something with it or people just that was the whole thing in North Florida the way they, they have to go the fisher way or the people wouldn't go in about. So in North Florida years ago only had a season from Memorial Day to Labor Day that was it.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Bill Burk: And then they developed in the fall, patrolling, were they Marlin fish and things like that. They didn't have any people around. Eventually they develop this cobia fishing that became a big thing, you know, and they have a run at them. We don't have the cobia around here anymore. Where you'd see schools about maybe 100 of them swimming by.

Mandy Karnauskas: You never have them anymore?

Bill Burk: Nothing like that I've never seen that in probably 40 years, where you'd actually see big, migrate, you know, migrating north. Big bunch of them.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. That's interesting.

Bill Burk: But I've seen a whole lot of them, dead in a fish house in [00:20:00] the marathon caught in us stabbing in Florida Bay.

Male Interviewer: Overall.

Bill Burk: All the same size. I think those are the legal amount I think. They just, because down there in the keys they buy anything because they'd put - no good for eating, it's crappy.

I've seen a guy with a private boat went over to cage stalls and come back with £800 of barricades...

Male Interviewer: With cade stall.

Bill Burk: ...over their archives, case all banks the rocks, where you can see Havana. And the, yeah just caught a bunch of barracuda over there, but six cents a pound.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Wow.

Bill Burk: But they - have we got it even when I was young, the folks I was on, we wouldn't even keep little fish, small grouper and stuff like that. There were no point in. Then the state came out with the - that they come out with first 15 inches then it went to 18 and 20. And it was crazy because when 11 started coming out first it was the Federal

was only 12. So, you know, the State at 15, the Federal 12, what do you do with a 12 inch grouper?

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: Now it just seems silly.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Putting a sandwich, I guess.

Bill Burk: Just – before, a lot of them died.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Do you see a [00:22:00] snapper at all affected by Red Tide or just the grouper?

Bill Burk: I'm trying to think because the one in the 70s there wasn't any red snapper around. I didn't catch them one time on a boat. I mean, I caught some that still had the black dot on her tail, only ones. But, they weren't around.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Okay. How did that 2005 event, you'd mentioned, do you see, I mean, do you see a lot of fish kills in that event?

Bill Burk: There was some floating, mostly, let me see, with that - yeah, if they're [indiscernible] [00:22:33], you know, out 20 miles and things like that. But, you know, you don't see a whole lot because I'm not going to make the same mistake and go that way again. If you run into it, you're going to try to go where there isn't.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. So, how far you mentioned you had to go further offshore? How far did you have to go then to avoid it back in 2005?

Bill Burk: Twenty five miles.

Mandy Karnauskas: Twenty five miles off shore, okay.

Bill Burk: And that was - it was fine. I mean, the party boat head to run out that far to catch ground. And they don't like to go that far unless they absolutely have to...

Male Interviewer: In that 2005 that wasn't the entire coast was that splotchy, did you see, I mean?

Bill Burk: No, I think it went most of the coast. I think there was some splotchy areas down to the southwest here of John's Pass, that had a lot of grief around it for a while. And not that far down there probably 18/20 miles from here. Now, whether it changed around or whatever happened, because it just didn't go down that much. You know, I don't know how it affected the boats down that way. You know, and a lot of times you don't see, you know, we don't go down there that much. I don't personally, some boats do, you know, run that way. I kind of, I got this big Arc 30 miles and now I don't even

go up north anymore because it's crowded [00:24:00]. Really, just so many yacht or boat.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Male Interviewer: So, you're fishing about 30 miles south and 30 miles north?

Bill Burk: That's where I - that's most of the time where I go. I stay within that, the boat it's old, it's not fast.

Male Interviewer: Did has that over the years as it - did you use to go – you used to go further?

Bill Burk: Sometimes not often didn't have to, catch all you needed within that.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. So, pretty – would spend focus in this area?

Bill Burk: Right, yeah. You know there wasn't any need for me to go any farther because I've touched on the fish. But there was more fish around. Now, it's hard to do.

Male Interviewer: So, the 70s Red Tide you basically had just go past at the fish?

Bill Burk: Well, we quit going.

Male Interviewer: You quit going?

Bill Burk: Right, when it got up to here and it got to the end of the summer, we're going to stop doing that kind of fishing anyway. So, we're just not aren't going to do that. We switch over it that event, you know, shift over into doing something different. You know, in September all the boats went to dry dock, because the bottom paint wasn't as good. So, you had some, you had to pull the boat twice a year to clean it instead of going, yeah.

Male Interviewer: And then the one between that the 2005 you said that and it's just not – just kind of splotchy it was...

Bill Burk: You're right. Yes. Right, here and there not any, you know, definite thing where you had miles of nothing.

Mandy Karnauskas: Did you say there's fish kind of in between the splotchy...

Bill Burk: Yeah, you could find areas that didn't have it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Male Interviewer: When that - like when that came did you, do you guys talk about it, so you know that there's areas like that or do you just come [Overlapping Conversation] [00:25:44]

Bill Burk: Well, it moves around on its own but...

Male Interviewer: So, you basically discovering it.

Bill Burk: The boats around here, no.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

They know where people go and all that kind of stuff. In general, it's most, you know, they're going to lie to you or whatever, they want to, you know, I've got a - [00:26:00] I had a real good friend - yes, sir.

Male Interviewer: Did you guys buy this boat?

Bill Burk: I didn't know.

Male Interviewer: Oh, I thought somebody said you guys bought that boat.

Bill Burk: No, no, no. No, John got retired.

Male Interviewer: Did he?

Bill Burk: Yeah, he sold it to a man named Brian Strickland (*phonetics*).

Male Interviewer: Okay. I was just curious about the beach that the stuff they put on it.

Bill Burk: I think he sells that stuff too. Yeah, they're pretty fancy isn't it?

Male Interviewer: Yeah. It is fancy. Thank you.

Bill Burk: Where were we?

Mandy Karnauskas: We were talking about [Indiscernible] [00:26:37]

Bill Burk: That guy, he's stolen this boat. He got his first charter boat in - he grew up on a beach. He got his first charter boat in 1966, when he got out of the Navy. He's a little older than I am. And he found after 50 years he find. He said the boat was sale for probably 10 or 15 years. But not really, but he's a businessman and he didn't need to...

Mandy Karnauskas: Didn't need to sell it.

Bill Burk: I don't know. So, he wait around till he got his prize, which was...

Mandy Karnauskas: Oh, there you go.

Bill Burk: But he was the first guy around here that amberjack fish.

Mandy Karnauskas: Oh yeah interesting.

Bill Burk: Oh, yeah. He pay for the boats with it, he owned this one.

Mandy Karnauskas: Really?

Bill Burk: Yeah he had two boats. This one and that one was called the 86 percentile. Yeah, when nobody wanted Amber, the commercial boats didn't want the amberjack because they weren't working on it. John Carter had a market for him. You know, for somebody who like smoking grass or something like that...

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: And yeah. He was making, [00:28:00] kill them on it, which was good business because you could sell the fish and he was paying for the fuel that the boat both boat to use all year. It was perfect, when you couldn't do that anymore, he got sick at fish...

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: The incentive wasn't there. Yeah they for the guys that used to, you know, they grew up doing it and stuff like that all of them restricted the - all the drive to do it, took it away. So, he's not going to run it, you know, run out there 40/50 miles again just to catch one - just to say caught an amberjack, you're only allowed one per person. Economically that...

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: You don't want to put them hours on your motor just to say, you got it right. That's the way I look at it. I don't - I'm that way with kingfish. You know, they're simple to catch and they -- when you catch and release them, they most of them die.

Male Interviewer: Oh, really?

Bill Burk: Oh, yeah, they don't do well. And because they, you know, they shake their heads or whatever. Nowadays, a lot of the recreational anglers will tell you, oh yeah, you know. It ain't helping them. How would you like to get you? And then he haven't let you go and then maybe catch again tomorrow.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.



Bill Burk: That just -- it hasn't done them any good.

Male Interviewer: Well, go back that 2005 that was a 20 but because it was splotchy, so that affects the way that you're fishing in that area?

Bill Burk: Yeah, we just go it's just...

Mandy Karnauskas: You just go around it?

Bill Burk: Yeah. Go around it. And the ones before it was nothing like the one in the 70.

Male Interviewer: Well, go ahead. [00:30:00]

Bill Burk: Yeah. They said it was real bad. The one in the 70s was real bad in Tampa Bay.

Mandy Karnauskas: Huh, so went over into Tampa Bay?

Bill Burk: Oh, yeah. And I think down that way they have - they generally have it more often than not this way.

Male Interviewer: Down in here of just...

Bill Burk: Yeah, just anywhere down here -- they have - they've got more susceptible to it over there then this way in North.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: All though the one in 205. Is that the one? They had one up there. When was the last one that, you know, from Crystal River, they didn't get it right along the beach, but it went all the way out to the middle ground.

Mandy Karnauskas: That's 2014 maybe?

Bill Burk: Yeah. Oh, yeah. And it really hammered up that way. But we didn't get anything.

Mandy Karnauskas: You didn't get it here. So, 2014 there was no...

Bill Burk: It came all the way down towards Danube in different areas. But they never got it here. Isn't that crazy?

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah, it is crazy.

Bill Burk: But, I know, guys that were commercial fishing out of [Indiscernible] [00:31:11]. And yeah, they got pounded.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Okay. So, between 2005 and this last year there's no other events that you can...

Bill Burk: Not right...

Mandy Karnauskas: Not right here?

Bill Burk: In this area.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: Not all in Clearwater.

Mandy Karnauskas: All right. And then this last year, so you mentioned it wasn't as bad as that 70s event, but did you have to, was it patchy? Was it thick or or was it...

Bill Burk: Well, last year?

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: It was along the beach.

Mandy Karnauskas: Along a beach?

Bill Burk: And it was – and it went out to about 10 miles.

Mandy Karnauskas: Went out to 10 miles. Okay. So, did that impact your fishing?

Male Interviewer: Well, you just had to go...

Mandy Karnauskas: Just go beyond it.

Bill Burk: Yeah, go on the other side of it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: And you didn't see a lot our grouper kill. There was some. [00:32:00] But it was mostly trash fish, and some grounds and things like that. But mostly just the – these, what do they call them? Tom Tates (*phonetics*) and things like that.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay...

Bill Burk: Fished it on very hardy. You know, the hard fish that don't do well.

Mandy Karnauskas: So, you sell those photo is on den or?

Bill Burk: Yeah. But not a lot.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay.

Bill Burk: It's same, but they – it was maybe there wasn't a lot of fish to kill. You know that's a possibility.

Male Interviewer: And then did that affect your entire fishing range that of all the way North or was it last year?

Bill Burk: The one this past one?

Mandy Karnauskas: Yes, this past -- this most recent one.

Bill Burk: We're just fishing on the other side of it. But we control along a ensure -- in close here in catch macro.

Mandy Karnauskas: Okay. how far off the shore?

Bill Burk: I mean, right off the beach.

Mandy Karnauskas: Right off the beach. Okay.

Bill Burk: I mean, you know, you could see it. Watching boats come out of Bellair down there to drag up fish and, you know, to clean up the fish kill. And you can follow and go right down there off the same key and get macro bites, really the water look like how. But, you could get bites.

Male Interviewer: That's interesting.

Bill Burk: And so, the - you know, in the bait, you'd see bait and stuff like that.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: And then you'd look over here and you'd see some dead [indiscernible] [00:33:23].

Mandy Karnauskas: Do you think the Red Tide push some of the fish closer to shore or?

Bill Burk: I don't know. You know, it's the weirdest thing, is it the same target doesn't affect mangrove snapper.

Mandy Karnauskas: I've heard that actually.

Bill Burk: Yeah, we catch them right in it. That's – isn't that crazy? I mean we had a - well, this has got to be one of the funny calls. But, it was Danielle.

Mandy Karnauskas: So, yeah, I heard that before about the mangrove snapper and not being a [Overlapping Conversation] [00:33:55]

Bill Burk: It was crazy because what, when did we have the one in 205, I think [00:34:00] you could go if, I mean, the Red Tide didn't coming around in the Bay here and you go catch a little mangroves right off the bridge over there. I don't know why. But they don't seem on, they must be me.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah, part of the little guys. Yeah. So, it didn't come into the base at all here the sounds of that last year? There was just kind of [overlapping conversation] [00:34:26]

Bill Burk: It came into the past, I mean the water look bad. It doesn't mean it killed any fish in here. It did because naturally when the tide went out or went the other way. But it came like right off the buoy where they don't have I believes. They got a dolphin marker out there for that where the pass is. You come over the bridge and it looked bad. Excuse me. But, you know, and then die or something later. It's all cleared up. It was crazy.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: Currents or whatever, target some other place where the – at least where the water didn't with that.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: And the city it does a good job of keeping the beach clean with the sea breeze kicks in, blow in some dead fish and stuff like that. They're pretty on it.

Male Interviewer: So, are there any consistencies that you've seen over each of these Red Tides or?

Bill Burk: No. All I know is, it shows up and then it goes away. And I don't have anything you know, anything like it, a trigger. I know that. I listened to radio programs and stuff like that, or people say, you know, they tried to blame it that one time on barging out. Some kind of phosphate stop, somewhere down there off Tampa and dumping it offshore. They tried to blame it on that, blame on this, blame on that. It didn't come around [00:36:00] since before that. So, there's probably been Red Tides that we've -- that people would not believe that it happened hundreds of years ago in a -- just a naturally occurring thing, whatever does it the weather or whatever. It gets together and all of a sudden it shows.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Perfect storm of events.

Bill Burk: Yeah. I mean...

Mandy Karnauskas: All of they are but...

Bill Burk: Hard to say, you know. You know what causes it, and it happens around the world. Now, you hear about it in different places.

Male Interviewer: And so, you've seen the fish recover. And most of these instances fairly well, or is there differences?

Bill Burk: They do, but they don't recover as good, now it's because there's so many people fishing.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Bill Burk: You got to figure how many more -- millions of people are in Florida now. And the modern equipment, you don't have to be a fisherman. Not anymore. You know, with the location and all that kind of stuff.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: So, it's pretty simple.

Mandy Karnauskas: From the artificial reefs and things too?

Bill Burk: Well yeah, they get -- they get people that, you know, divers and things like that. People go to them, they're naturally marked. But other, you know, and now that the amount of pressure offshore is unbelievable with these guys with these folks. Hundreds of thousands of divers and outboard. So, they're running, they're fishing farther out. To me it's just a matter of time. That one guy worked four years ago, he never could understand why they -- in the -- even in the early 70s and stuff, why they -- the guys that fish way offshore.

And most use didn't live bait. Is [00:38:00] there any witch that are teaching the fish not to bite, you're teaching them that that's what they've got to have. So, now everybody goes out there with a ton of a lot of bait. And the fish are bigger now. That's, you know, and eventually and now they go to wider pack, or wider visits with better equipment. They're, you know, you have a private boats out there fishing or just used to be just the commercials. The commercial guys fished out there in recreational boats which we are -- which they didn't close there were no point going out there.

Male Interviewer: But these are private boat, fishermen going out that far now, probably go out 100 miles.

Bill Burk: But they got boats around 50.

Male Interviewer: Yeah and get out of there.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: I mean really. There's a lot of money in this county. I don't have it but some people do.

Male Interviewer: Has the Red Tide, I mean, has it affected your business in these different years?

Bill Burk: Well, I'm an honest person, so people call me and I tell them. If we can do something because I don't feel like going out there just to say I went.

Mandy Karnauskas: Have you noticed, I mean in general, like, for example, this last year at the Red Tide there's a lot of media on it. Did you notice the tourist impact here? Like, just from a perception of not the Red Tide itself but perception of a danger?

Bill Burk: Maybe. But, you know, there's nothing we could do about it.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: You know, it's just the nature of those, the way things are these days the social order is gone now, it's all gone.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: It's kind of like the, years ago the yellow journalism. Now, the, you know, they - so they make it sound like the, you know, the sky is falling worse than what it is. They had a bad answer so down that way [00:40:00]. But, we get the residuals. So, I would think, you know, the hotel has probably lost people can, you know, canceling their stay because, you know, they don't want to - who would want to come down here to the Beach that is full of dead fish.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: So, it's a - there may have been last. But I don't know it can't be any - we got jammed up when they had that oil spill.

Male Interviewer: Yeah and there was a lot of...

Bill Burk: There was a lot of tourists came here because it couldn't go to Dustin and the Panhandle.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: In fact there was a lot in June. You know, it's when all the people South at the Mason Dixon line, take vacation.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: At that time of year in the summer. And then it tapered off, June was real busy and then it tapered off. So, summer went on but.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. So, maybe you got some more residual this last year from folks who couldn't go further south...

Bill Burk: Maybe, I don't get out that much anymore. You know, because sufficient is not good enough for the customers and different the limits.

Mandy Karnauskas: All right. Well, do you have any questions for us or any other?

Bill Burk: No, not really. I took my paperwork down for my permit last week and he thanked me for filling it outright.

Mandy Karnauskas: Oh yeah don't the permit.

Bill Burk: Well, he would process it. Well, he asked - he said, well, we'll get right on this if we don't get shut down tomorrow.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah, because we have that deadline on Friday. Yeah.

Male Interviewer: Yeah. I don't know how much of bad log they've got over there but...

Mandy Karnauskas: [Indiscernible] [00:41:58] weeks, you know, so...

Bill Burk: I've heard that Dr. Crabtree's (*phonetics*) [00:42:00] given a grace period.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Male Interviewer: Yes.

Bill Burk: So, it'll all work out.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Right, good.

Bill Burk: Hopefully, you know.

Mandy Karnauskas: Well. Thank you. This was really helpful, especially the insights we had on this early events back in the 70s.

Bill Burk: Yeah, because that look bad. Now, they - this last year probably was real bad down South. But, we didn't see it up here. But the one in the 70 was bad because it was so many more fish.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah, maybe, just some...

Bill Burk: Now, you know, you just wouldn't believe the amount of fish. I mean, we could go out here when I was a kid and you might catch especially in April or the first part of May you might go out and spend half a day because 50 or 60 had a kingfish. And then go bottom fish in the afternoon and just go up, you're off honeymoon Island you might catch 400 or 500 pounds of gout grouper. That was that many fish. And not anymore. And I don't think there ever will be unless they just stop fishing for them. Because they don't get a chance. As soon as the season opens, you can hang up there - where I go it'll open in June for guys and you won't be able to hardly get one by in a week.

Mandy Karnauskas: Well...

Bill Burk: Well then so because everybody will go.

Male Interviewer: I get a feeling it's crowded out there.

Bill Burk: Well, I don't worry about it. It can get frustrated, you know, when you go out and you look and you can just see [00:44:00], they're on all the places.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: And the thing is they didn't find them themselves. They got them and went by.

Male Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Burk: That's what, you know, that it's got to be frustrating for a commercial fisherman. That's why they can't get anybody to do it anymore. You know, when they - I know people when - that were commercial fishing went the long line and first started. And he said that they told me, said you didn't even need a sound machine. All you had to do is go string it out there. It started, you know, fishing off for hires and loaded up. So and then - but there was...

Male Interviewer: I'm in the middle of an interview.

Bill Burk: If they just started there were some directions.

Male Interviewer: Okay, great. I'll put over here.



Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: But even Dr. Crabtree admitted it was mismanaged for the first 20 some years.

Mandy Karnauskas: Hindsight is always 20/20 right.

Bill Burk: Well, everybody, you know, you've got the people. You can't do this to me. It's my right. Everybody's fighting that and, you know, you get pressure.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. Changes difficult.

Bill Burk: You get politics involved and when politics gets involved in anything. You know, logic goes out the window.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah, that's for sure.

Bill Burk: It really bad you know.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah.

Bill Burk: I talked to a man on the dock and he bought a condo, this is probably seven or eight years ago. And he bought a condo down here for South into the beach. He was retired. But he was from Maryland. And in the early 70s, when he grad - he was a statistician that was his degree, statistics, mathematics degree [00:46:00]. And I guess, I forgot what he said that they were - the State of Maryland wanted to do a fish survey and different things and put restrictions on the fish and stuff like that. And he said what, it was so crooked because he was working through the University of Maryland. And they were taking the numbers and making up the politicians. The result they wanted to put - to do their fishing thing. He said it was totally bugged...

Male Interviewer: And he's statistics were...

Bill Burk: Were wrong.

Male Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Burk: Were wrong. And, you know, and he didn't have a lot of faith in, and it was because it was controlled by politicians. You know, what an honest assessment. And he, you know, he told me that he said that's, he just said, we gave him the right numbers. But what came out of it wasn't what happened.

Mandy Karnauskas: Yeah. So, any other questions?

Bill Burk: No, no. That's good.

Mandy Karnauskas: All right. Well, thank you very much.

BillBurk

Bill Burk: Yeah. I appreciate it.