

**Interview with Tyler Chadwick, commercial fisherman and seafood dealer**

**Occupation:** commercial fisherman; seafood retailer/wholesaler

**Port Community:** Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina

**Interviewer:** Sarah Schumann

**Date and year:** January 14, 2019

**Location:** Newport, North Carolina

**Project:** The Graying of the Fleet Part II: How and Why Young Fishermen Choose to Fish?

**Transcriber:** Sarah Schumann

[start of interview]

[00:00]

Sarah Schumann [SS]: My name is Sarah Schumann. I'm in Newport, North Carolina. It's January fourteenth. I'm with Tyler Chadwick. Right?

Tyler Chadwick [TC]: Yes.

SS: What is your occupation, Tyler?

TC: Commercial fisherman and retailer/wholesaler of seafood.

SS: Ok. What's your homeport?

TC: Really, Beaufort Inlet, in that area. I guess you'd call it our homeport. It's what we have on our trip tickets.

SS: And for your seafood business, it's right here in Newport?

TC: Yeah.

SS: Can I get your age, please?

TC: Twenty-two.

SS: Twenty-two. So you own your own vessel?

TC: Well, yes. Me and my business partner do.

SS: Ok. And what's the name of that vessel?

TC: We actually don't have a name. We actually have several. We have a sixteen-foot Carolina skiff. We have a twenty-one foot Carolina skiff. We have a twenty-four foot Carolina skiff. And we have a twenty-seven foot Carolina skiff. None of them really have names, other than Money Pit [laughter].

SS: Is that four boats? I lost count.

TC: The twenty-seven footer is up on blocks right now. We've got the deck ripped out. That one's not really working. The sixteen footer, the engine's messed up on that, so we're getting ready to put a new one on her. But the other two are running.

SS: Ok. I'll ask you more about that in second. But before I get there, what's your educational background?

TC: That's a pretty interesting story when it comes to me. I of course went to elementary school and middle school like normal. As I was going through high school, I had some problems with high school and decided to start doing home school. Home school didn't work out so I actually went and jumped into the GED program at the local college. I obtained my GED. As I was going through GED, I actually got interested in public safety. So I went to school to become a North Carolina EMT. And of course, all this time, we were fishing. I was going through EMS school. Fishing was paying the bills. When I graduated EMS, I started working full time EMS, for a little bit. Then I'd come back to the fishing industry, because I couldn't quite shake it.

SS: How did you first get involved in fishing?

[03:08]

TC: The Chadwick family actually came over here from England whale fishing. That's how we came. I'm not sure how the whole story played out, but I know we landed here whale fishing, back in the 1800s. My whole family grew up commercial fishing. My grandfather commercial fished and worked at the state port. Then when he got older, he eventually went and started working fulltime for the state port, because he couldn't quite keep up with the hard labor when it comes to fishing. My dad did do some commercial fishing when he was younger. But he left the industry.

SS: Was that before you were born?

TC: Yes. That was before I was born. He left the industry and went into the Air Force. Then I was born. Growing up, we would always go fishing recreational, and there was always a drive in me to do more. Like, I wanted to do it. The other side of the family were still fishing. So I'd work with them on shrimp boats. I'd go flounder gigging. I'd set flounder nets. Usually when I was in school, I had to focus a hundred percent on school.

SS: What age were you then?

TC: This was all the way starting through middle school. Elementary school was sort of the phase for me when we were fishing. Middle school was always that phase for me when I knew it was something I really loved to do. Then when I started going through middle school, I started working on shrimp trawlers and stuff like that. My father did get out of the industry, so I didn't really learn a whole lot from him. My other side of the family, I learned a lot from. Then, once I got to a certain point, we started fishing. Our first fishery we got into was actually crab pots.

SS: When you say "we", who is that?

[05:19]

TC: Me and my business partner.

SS: Who's your business partner?

TC: His name is Norris Hill. He's twenty-three. Me and him are actually born on the same date, just one year apart. One year and three hours apart. That's how apart we are. I met him, actually, in a duck blind at four AM in the morning about ten years ago. Me and him started fishing just with crab pots.

SS: Ok, so it was as team effort between the two of you—two friends.

TC: Yes. It has always been me and him. We've sort of been joined at the hip. I don't see it any other way. We need each other to keep each other going, in certain aspects.

[06:06]

SS: Now, what's his background? Does he also come from a fishing family like you?

TC: Yeah, he does. His father was a full-time fisherman. Then his father also got out of the industry and sold boat paint for a living. He was a sales rep, but when he was home, he still went flounder gigging, fishing. He focused a lot towards wahoo, mahi, stuff like that, offshore. Then a little bit inshore fishing, but not too much inshore fishing. That was sort of his background.

SS: Ok. So you first started out with Norris in crab pots.

TC: Yes. We started out, me and him, fishing with just a fishing pole. I would say we were probably thirteen. We weren't very old. It was just me and him on a boat. We weren't very old at all. We might have been fifteen, but we weren't very old. I looked at him and said, "Have you ever thought that you might like to do more than just fish for a couple, you know, [unintelligible] fish or some kind of bottom fish?" He said, "Yeah, I've always wanted to do something a little bit more than that out on the water." I said, "Why don't we start running crab pots?" We talked about it, and it started from there.

SS: You were out on the boat fishing and you had this conversation?

TC: Yeah.

SS: And it was a major turning point for both of you?

TC: For both of us. Now neither of us knew that this would be the start of our endeavor to where we are today. Back then, pre-teens, we didn't have no money, so we went around. We knew a couple of fishermen who were in the crab pot industry, or in the crabbing industry. We begged and begged and begged. "Can you just spare us some crab pots?" They actually gave us crab pots. They were some of the most beat-up, rusty, probably some of the worst crab pots ever. But we thought we were given a gold mine. We took them back, and probably the crab pot was made more of zip ties more than anything. But we fixed them up and they caught crabs. We just started selling to family and people who wanted crabs

SS: Now did you get a commercial license for that? Or were you just still operating recreationally and selling to friends and family.

TC: No, his father actually had a commercial license at that point.

SS: You could use his father's license?

TC: Yes. And once we got older, he went and purchased a commercial license for himself. Sort of how we work that, is he keeps all the commercial stuff in his name, and I keep all the retail stuff in my name. There's no need to have two licenses—as expensive as they are. You know, one of each is sufficient. But that sort of how we started.

SS: The guys who gave you those falling apart crab pots, what was their attitude, when you came as fifteen-year-olds and said, "Hey, we want to do this"? What did they say back to you?

TC: They thought we were crazy. They said, "Why? You're so young. Why?" One of the things that shocked me the most is one of them said, "Why do you want to get into this industry?" I was taken

aback because at first I didn't realize everything going on in the commercial industry. We were still in school. We ran into some problems with some old rusty commercial fishermen on the water. Some of the older generation think that they own the waters, and that we need to go to them first for permission before we used their waters. We butted heads with them probably up until two years ago, three years ago.

SS: What finally resolved that?

TC: They gave up, because we told them we weren't stopping. That's the nice way we put it. We had some heated discussions. Certain people; that's not all the fisherman on the water. Don't take it that way. It's just certain people. Just like any industry. We told them that we weren't stopping, and eventually they just stopped messing with us. Now they're actually pretty cool with us. Now they call us and they're like, "Who's this new guy on the water? Who's this new guy who's got pots in the water? What's going on here?" Now we're in that niche.

SS: It sounds like it took you a long time to get there, to earn that respect from them?

[10:56]

TC: Yeah. That's really what it was, was earning the respect. Earning respect and giving them—I mean, we did have respect for them. They had been on the water a lot longer than we had. But we, as young fishermen, as young people, we wanted to get into the industry. So I think there's an initial break-in. Getting into the industry. Commercial fishermen seem to have a very strong barrier. Because they are attacked from so many different points of view, from so many different organizations. I think that comes from them thinking they were trying to protect the industry.

SS: I'm having a hard time seeing how two fifteen-year-old kids wanting to get into the industry is a threat.

TC: Well, I mean people are special. Some people are just special. But like I said, it's kind of a resolved thing now. We're moving on. We've grown a significant amount as well. That's kind of, I think they've seen us growing, and they're like, "Ok, well, let's just let them do their thing. They're not going anywhere soon."

SS: Yeah. You proved you were serious.

TC: Yeah. I almost think it was kind of a way to make us reconsider. You get a lot of that in this industry. I don't know why.

SS: You mean they don't think you're making the smartest decision to get involved in it?

TC: Yes. I don't know why. Well, I do know why. But I think it's crazy, because I don't look at this industry as a dying industry.

SS: Say more about that.

TC: Well, it's not going to be a dying industry. Not as long as I'm alive. I was involved with an organization called Fish Camp. I'm sure—they do something similar in Alaska, I think.

SS: Yup.

TC: There were a lot of people involved in it. There were a lot of young people. Well, it was focused towards young people, of course—to bring all us young people together. There were more than I thought there were.

[13:10]

SS: How many were there?

TC: I would say twenty-plus. This was just for our area.

SS: Right, because they did it in different areas, right?

TC: I think they did it in three different parts of the state. I can't remember. I think they said we were one of the smallest groups.

SS: Really?

TC: Yeah. So they had had a great turnout.

SS: Yeah. Twenty young people.

TC: Yeah. There's more people than that, that I know, and weren't at that event. I think telling somebody that the industry is the "greying of the fleet" or that people are getting too old to where people can't make it in this industry, I think that that gives people who are trying to shut this industry down a pleasure. I'm not going to give that to them. Because I'm going to fight for this industry. Because this industry provides for me and my family and it's in my blood. I don't plan on giving up. I refuse to do that. I'm hardheaded. Now, it's not easy. As any young person—especially anybody young with a family that commercial fishes—you don't have a regular paycheck every week. You have to make that happen. I'm not going to give them people that pleasure of hearing me say that.

SS: Do you think that the phrase "greying of the fleet" feeds into that? Do you think we should reconsider using that phrase?

TC: Yeah. Yeah. I don't like that phrase. I get the purpose behind it. But I almost think it fuels that. I almost think it gives the market or our consumers a bad vibe, because it's kind of a little bit negative, almost. But that's just how I feel.

SS: Do you have any other ideas for phrases that could be used to describe what we're seeing, with just the increasing average age of fishermen and not enough replenishment?

TC: I don't.

SS: If you think of one, let me know.

TC: I will, for sure.

SS: We need some new language around this.

TC: Yeah, I think new language around it, and also maybe some better education. Because a lot of my customers don't know the struggle—license, permits, not only from the state government but the federal government, rules, regulations. A lot of people don't realize that back in the seventies and eighties, they didn't have all these strict regulations. Now, by no means am I saying that we don't need regulations, because we do. We need some regulations. Do I think there are some fisheries in our state that are way overregulated? Oh yeah. Do I think there are some that could probably use a little more protection? Yes. When I look at this, I look at it from both sides. I don't try to just put my horse blinders on. Which I think is a lot of the older generation fishermen. They have their ways that they want to do things. I kind of think that they have a hard time with accepting something new or different than what they're used to, which is ok. That's how they grew up. But that's just sort of how I feel.

SS: Now, how would you explain the difference in your attitude, versus theirs?

TC: Open-minded. Some of them think that their way's the only way. I think that we need some of that attitude a little bit. But we also need to look at the overall aspect of the problem. Now, what I do think is that when it comes to a lot of our problems in the water—especially when they talk about not seeing the populations of fish, the decline—I think they're kind of being overbearing on the one industry that they think is causing the problem. Around here, I think the biggest problem, when it comes to loss of habitat, loss of big amount of oyster population, that biggest problem is there's real estate and big cities.

SS: Development.

TC: Yes. And I think that people have good intentions, but they're trying to make it to where somebody like myself can't produce a living, because they think it's us that's doing it. It's not all our fault. I shouldn't say not all our fault. I wouldn't say it's us that's hurting the population more than runoff, over-development. When you have a house that they backfill the marsh to make a lawn on, that's a problem. When they bulldoze all the trees and bushes along the marsh to build a house, that's natural filtration. That's what Mother Nature put into place to filter some of that stuff out of the water before it gets to the water, if that makes sense. I think that's a big problem that we're supposed to have—that our state and our federal government are supposed to protect. I am for change. I think change is good in some aspects. I would be willing to listen to anybody who has any ideas on how we can stop that problem.

[19:36]

SS: Have you had conversations with other fishermen or other local groups about those? Has there been any movement to try to address some of those stresses on habitat?

TC: We've had this conversation at Fish Camp. I talk a lot to other commercial fishermen, and they feel it's the same problem. I'll give you sort of an example. Harlowe Creek is right over here, and that feeds into the Newport River. At the head of the Newport River, you have the town of Newport and you have the town of Morehead. On the town of Morehead side, you have this nice, gorgeous, big golf course. It's pretty. I'm not going to lie to you. The grass is always nice and green. You know, everything is always perfect. On the river, there used to be trees and wood line and stuff there. But now it's flattened so when people are playing their golf, they can look at the water. Now also what they do is they take all these fertilizers and pump them into the grass to make it that nice pretty green color. Now, what happens when it rains? What happens to all that fertilizer? It comes into the river. And what does that do? Algae and stuff like that thrive off of that fertilizer. Just like that. It makes grass do that. It makes algae do that and stuff, and grass and stuff in the rivers. Then what happens is all that sucks up all the oxygen in the water. Well, then what are the fish going to breath off of? Then what happens is it makes it so that sunlight can't get down deep into the water. Then everything on the bottom dies and turns into muck. That's a problem. Supposedly, the head of Newport River is supposed to be a protected estuary or something like that. I'm not too keen, but that's supposed to be where the baby fish grow. Well, they're not doing a great job of protecting it, if you ask me. They're protecting it extremely well from commercial fishermen. Extremely well. But they're doing a poor job of protecting it environmentally, if you ask me.

SS: Yeah. So do you have interaction with regulators and policy makers? Is it something you've brought to their attention?

[22:11]

TC: Well, I've talked to one of the representatives from the governor about it. She was at Fish Camp and I told her what the problem I thought was. Now, do I think that got anywhere? Probably not. But I

do tell people when I see them what I think the problem is. I think if we address those situations, the industry would start thriving again, even better. Personally.

SS: Addressing all of the non-fishing impacts to habitat would help the future of the fishing industry?

TC: Yeah. It's not just fishermen. I a hundred percent agree with that. But I feel there's too much money involved with that. I think that kind of makes people turn a blind eye to it. But I'm just a young commercial fisherman. I don't have a doctorate degree or anything like that, so people don't tend to listen to me. Even though I'm out there all day long, most every day in the summer. I see it with my own eyes. But people don't typically listen to somebody that's not a specialist or a scientist.

SS: There's a mentality that you have to have a formal education to know what you're talking about?

TC: Yeah. Which one thing I actually am trying to educate myself on—I'm actually getting my associates in aquaculture.

SS: Oh really?

TC: Yeah. In that program, they talk a lot about water quality. Checking the oxygen levels, all that stuff. I just started it so I can't really talk. I don't know a whole lot about it yet. But I plan on learning and sort of doing my own thing out there. I want to go take water samples. I plan on doing my own thing to see if I can show them, "Hey!" Maybe it's something they already know. Maybe it's something they see. Maybe it's something somebody's not talking about. I don't know. But I'm one guy. I'll try to make a difference if I can, because it's an industry I love.

[24:16]

SS: So, let's go back to where we left off. You guys were just getting started with the crab pots.

TC: Yes.

SS: You were facing some pushback from the established fishermen.

TC: Yes.

SS: Now, what happened between then and now, in terms of building your business?

TC: *A lot.* We started getting to the point where we started getting more and more crab pots. We got like a hundred fifty, two hundred crab pots at this point. I'm just going to turn this ice machine off or it's going to start making a whole lot of noise, and you won't be able to hear me. We started doing that. We started getting into other fisheries a lot, like gillnetting and flounder gigging and stuff like that. Then we started selling to wholesalers. At first we weren't interested in retailing. I wanted to stay out of retail. I didn't want to do any retailing. Well, we started noticing something. This was like 2015. We started noticing, "What is the US Foods truck doing at a fish market? What's going on here?" We didn't pay no mind to it. We thought maybe they were coming to pick something up. Well, then we started realizing that they weren't picking up. They were actually dropping off. There's a lot of people that retail shrimp from China, different parts of Asia, that sell these shrimp for fresh local shrimp. At first, me and Norris were like, "Are you kidding me?" We were blown away. Like, why would you do that? That's hurting the industry more than anything. Why would you do something to hurt the industry? Anyway, after a certain amount of time, it got to us and we were irritated, so we told the wholesalers, "Forget it. We're not supporting you no more. You're not getting any of our stuff." In 2016, we started Chadwick Seafoods. We started retailing our stuff. Now at first, it was a culture shock for us. But I'm a natural talker, I would say. I learned the language and stuff like that, and started talking to people. 2016 went by. We started in sort of in the beginning in 2016. We kind of dipped in a bit at the end of 2015. But I wouldn't say we started until 2016. All of 2016, we started it.

Then in 2017, we started having locations. Then last year, we opened up our first brick and mortar retail establishment at Cedar Point.

SS: First you were doing like drop-offs?

TC: First, we were just popping up a tent. Farmers markets are a really big thing. The Beaufort farmers market. We were going to Durham farmers market. We started noticing something. People want this. They want fresh, local seafood. They don't want the crap you get from China or somewhere like that. They want it and they don't mind spending a few extra dollars to buy it. Our motto and our goal was to, one, supply nothing but fresh North Carolina seafood. We do dip a little bit into the salmon industry in Alaska. We do carry that. Other than that, we carry North Carolina product. We started doing that, really focusing on that: one, give people fresh North Carolina seafood, and, two, be honest with them. If there's any day of the week that you come to me and you want to buy a piece of fish, I'll tell you exactly where it was caught and exactly who caught it and exactly how it was caught.

SS: Are you just telling them that verbally or do you have information that's attached to the fish?

TC: No, we just sort of verbally tell them that.

SS: Ok. It's part of the conversation.

TC: It's part of the conversation. We started off with just two people, me and my business partner. We've got three employees now. We've really grown a lot. Because it's just simple. You just give the people what they want. You're providing good product. In North Carolina, when you go and catch fresh North Carolina seafood, providing them with a good product is easy. Because we have some of the best seafood around here. North Carolina produces a great seafood product. I think that has to do a lot with how close we are to the ocean. Getting that fresh, salty ocean water in. We have such a huge tide difference.

SS: Hmm. I didn't know that.

TC: Oh, yes. Huge tides. If you go running in the river at low tide, you best know where you're going or you're not going much of anywhere. The boys say, "Yeah, there's a lot of water out there. It's just not very deep." But yeah, that's how we started. Now we've picked up some pretty major wholesalers. Actually, it's pretty exciting for me to be able to say this, but you can actually find some of our products in the Harris Teeters and Lowes Foods and stuff. Not saying that all the time they'll have our product, because we sell to a big distributor who deals with them. But there's been several times where I've seen our product sitting or being delivered on their truck to that facility. Our person who buys our stuff tells us, "Hey, just to let you know." So that's exciting for me to produce to a big food chain like that. Even though it's not a lot. It's a little bit. But still, so people know. Some food chains do try to do as local as they can. Right now, one of the biggest, biggest challenges we're taking on right now, is we have an oyster lease. I would say as a young fisherman, that's something you really need to consider is aquaculture as well.

SS: As part of the portfolio?

[31:00]

TC: You've got to. I feel like it's very important. In the state of North Carolina, we're so young at the aquaculture industry, that we don't really have a big and diverse crowd when it comes to working on different things. Now, they're working on it. They're working on techniques and affordable ways to do it. But there's no doubt that the world's population is growing. There's no doubt that people want seafood. There's no doubt that we can't depend on a hundred percent natural resource. Anybody you talk to will tell you that. It's just something that we just got to realize. I think that the United States can do a much better job at making it more competitive for their aquaculture industry leaders or



farmers or producers to thrive. There's no reason why we should be important crappy seafood from other countries.

SS: Are you growing anything on the lease yet?

[32:12]

TC: No, not yet. We just obtained the lease and we're getting ready to plant.

SS: What are you going to plant?

[TC]: Oysters. We're starting with oysters. My plan is to get one species at a time nailed. We're going to do oysters first. Then my plan is to go to clams. Then, I would really like to do some kind of finfish. The two that's really giving me high hopes are the hybrid striped bass, which is already done—

SS: Is that done around here?

TC: Uh-huh, yeah. And red drum.

SS: Is that also done around here?

[TC]: No. Something new that they're doing. They're trying to see if they can do it affordably. It's looking like it's something that could be done. It's going to take some work on getting the how you grow them, stuff like that. It's something very new. But I'm very excited about that. With the wild red drum industry around here, we're extremely restricted. Commercial fishermen can only keep seven drum. Seven fish. That's it. No more. No matter what. You have to throw them back overboard. No matter if you're wasting the fish or not. You got to throw them back overboard, which blows my mind. But anyway, we won't get on that subject. It's hard to find red drum here in the summertime because everybody wants it but you can't produce enough of it. So I'm kind of excited about those two things. That's probably five to ten years down the road, but it's something I'm really looking into.

SS: That's in the cards for the future?

[33:50]

TC: Yeah. For sure. For sure.

SS: So, tell me a little bit about your brick and mortar.

TC: Our brick and mortar isn't much. It's not big. It's a metal structure. It's got a little porch on it. We've pretty much got a long wooden table, and we bring in our cooler and put our cooler on top of it. We've got refrigerators. We sell a lot of frozen product, like alligator meat, different unique things that a lot of places don't carry.

SS: Now, where is it?

TC: Cedar Point, which is about forty-five minutes from here.

SS: Are you open regular business hours or are there specific times?

TC: During the summertime, we're open seven days a week. We're closed right now until March. But during the summertime, we're open seven days a week, because we are slammed. We stay extremely busy, because we're a tourist-driven economy around here in the summer.

SS: Is that who most of your customers are?

TC: During the summertime, yes. But I have a large following of locals, really large following of locals.

SS: How would you describe the people who buy from you, age-wise, or income level, any of that?

TC: Yeah, so you're sort of looking at like our captured audience. We've done a lot of market research on our captured audience. Our captured audience is, most of the time, people that are going to be in their thirties or older, for the majority. We're not really going to have anybody younger. The vast majority, or the majority, or a good part of the majority is between thirty and fifty. Then fifty-plus is a big part of our majority. Most of our customers have an income of at least seventy thousand dollars or more a year. They're more financially stable, I guess is what I'm getting at. That's sort of our target clientele that we cater to.

[35:50]

SS: Are you buying fish from other fishermen as well?

TC: Yeah. We started off just doing fish that we caught, but then it got to the point where there's no way humanly possible that we could meet the demand. At first, we just started with inshore stuff. Then I went through the task and the process of getting certified and getting my federal dealers' license, which is through NOAA of course. I got my federal dealers' license to buy snapper, grouper, triggerfish, the offshore stuff.

SS: You need a federal dealers' license to buy federally managed species? Is that how it works?

TC: Yes, and you need a state license to buy state-managed fish. There's different categories, too. You can't just get one license and do it. When you go to the state, you have to buy a finfish license, you have to buy a crab license, you have to buy a shrimp license, you have to buy an oyster license, you have to buy a clam license, you have to buy a menhaden license if you want to do menhaden. They're a hundred dollars each. Then, through the federal, you have tuna, you have shark. Shark, you can't buy new ones of anymore.

SS: Oh, they're not issuing those?

TC: Yeah. You have swordfish. Then you have grouper-snapper. I think each of those is maybe fifty bucks. Each category. Then you have filing fees, stuff like that. Anyway, we started getting big into the offshore fish too. I would say a big majority of our sales is offshore fish. Retail sales.

SS: You're not catching those fish yourself, right? You guys are just catching in state waters?

TC: Yes. Unfortunately, we don't have permits to catch in federal waters. A federal grouper-snapper permit—just the permit itself—is going to cost you eighty grand. By the time you add a boat to it, a good boat will cost you a hundred, hundred and fifty thousand. Right now we don't have that capital laying around.

SS: Maybe some day.

TC: Some day, yes. I honestly think our next move—we've been talking a lot and I think the next move for us—of course, we're going to purchase another boat. We need another boat just like you need a raging headache. But I think our next goal is to tap into the shrimping industry. During the summertime, we sell thousands of pounds of shrimp a week. Right now, we're trying to go through somebody who has a shrimping boat, because we don't have one. If we could get our own shrimping boat, that would really help us out. We go through a lot of shrimp—a lot. So that's kind of our next industry to hit up.

SS: That and the aquaculture.

TC: Yeah. We got a lot going on.

SS: You got plans.

TC: We got a lot of plans. Probably the boat, the shrimp boat—I'm thinking another four or five years. Five years and we'll be there.

[39:08]

SS: How hard is it to get a shrimp boat and license around here?

TC: Oh, it's not hard. Not as long as you got the money.

SS: Right. It's just the financial barrier.

TC: Yeah. Actually, you don't need a special license. You just use your standard commercial fishing license for a shrimp boat.

SS: Ok. So that's in state waters?

TC: Yeah. Um, well some boys do fish off into the ocean. But I've never looked into that. I don't know. I think with shrimps, since it's a state-managed thing, I think even if you go offshore into federal waters, it's still like a state thing. I'm not sure. Don't take that to heart. I've never looked into that. Which is probably something I'll have to look into to see what we have to have.

SS: Yeah. Before you jump in.

TC: Before we jump in overboard with it. But I don't think that you have to have a federal license.

[40:00]

SS: The four boats you have now, why do you need four? What are they each used for?

TC: The smaller boat's used for floundering. Flounder gigging. If we don't have to go out and do a whole lot of work, we run the smaller boat because it's more fuel friendly. Now, the twenty-one footer is probably the most versatile boat we've got. We use that boat probably for everything else. Now, the twenty-four footer, we use that when we're moving a large amount of gear in the water, because we need the room. And the twenty-seven footer, we actually haven't started using that one yet. But we plan on using that for moving an even larger amount of gear. We actually were considering maybe even putting a little shrimp net on it to get us started on a small, small scale.

SS: Do you trailer them or do you have a slip?

[41:00]

TC: Yeah, mm-hmm. Yeah. We trailer all of them.

SS: Do you drive to different ramps to put them in or do you always put them in at the same location?

TC: No, we drive to different public ramps depending on the body of water we want to fish in.

SS: How many miles between the furthest ones? Like, what range are you covering?

TC: I would say not much.

SS: Staying close to home?

TC: Yeah, staying close to home, because most of the time when we launch, we have to run a long ways. We'd much rather run a long ways in the boat than in the truck. There's not as much traffic, not as much headache, better of a view. Not if it's really, really cold; then we're going to stay in the truck and launch at the closest ramp. But if it's in the summertime, we'll launch one place and we'll go everywhere in the water.

SS: Are the boats in Norris' name, just like the licenses?

TC: Yeah. Well, they're in his name but we both own the company. So they're technically—

SS: Oh I see, so all the company is one company?

TC: Together. Yeah. One company. Chadwick Seafood. Everything funnels underneath that.

SS: Yeah. You said earlier that a lot of what you've been able to do is due to your partnership with Norris.

TC: Yeah.

SS: Can you go into that a little more?

[42:22]

TC: When me and him first started, he had already had the sixteen-foot boat. So that was a big help, because we didn't have to go purchase a boat. His dad had a commercial license, which helped. To be honest with you, in this industry, if you have somebody that you can trust and work with, and work together, and sort of separate and accomplish some things, it's a big, big help. Plus, to the company, both of us are free labor, so we basically work ourselves to death.

SS: You guys go fishing together?

TC: Well, during the summer, when we get real busy during the summertime, we have to separate, because there's not enough time in the summertime for both of us to do both.

SS: Ok. So he does the fishing and you do the—

TC: He'll do the fishing during the summertime when we're extremely busy. I'll stay here. That's getting ready to change, because we're training a manager right now. We're going to let them take over this aspect, because I'm kind of getting sick of getting stuck here.

SS: Yeah, especially in summer—nice to be on the water!

TC: Yeah, I want to be out there catching the stuff. We're sort of working on that, getting that situated. But yeah, that's what we usually have to do in the summertime. During the wintertime we usually stay together, because we're not that busy. But sometimes we have to break up a little bit.

SS: Working together, it sounds like, has really helped in terms of knowledge sharing, and just faster—two people conquering a learning curve instead of one?

TC: It's much—yeah.

SS: And moral support?

TC: Yeah. I would say that. Really, it's just because we're just so close friends too, that it really helps.

SS: Makes it more enjoyable?

TC: Yeah, makes it more enjoyable. We don't have a trust issue. When you start talking about getting a business partner and people that you don't know and dealing with large amounts of cash. It's hard to say that you trust somebody. But with the two of us, we don't even worry about that, because we just know. We're always on the same page.

SS: Is your guys' vision of the future is aligned?

TC: Yeah. It's definitely good when you have a business partner like that, to sort of lean on each other like that. I'd definitely say that that is probably one of the things that's gotten us this far, is working with each other.

SS: You're lucky to have that.

TC: Very much so. A lot of young fishermen that I know don't have that. I sort of think it's one of the downfalls for a lot of people too. We don't let each other give up. When we both start talking about it, we're like, "Are you kidding me? Come on, man! Let's go. We can't—We're not going to let them win. We're not going to be just a statistic." You know?

[45:30]

SS: You give each other a pep talk?

TC: Yeah, yeah.

SS: And get back in the game.

TC: As a young fisherman, it honestly is challenging. It's extremely challenging.

SS: Say a little more about that, because generally you've been pretty positive during this conversation. Tell me about the challenges.

TC: Yeah. When I talk about challenges, I talk about just the sheer amount of money that has to go into this. We're twenty-two and twenty-three, so we don't have assets, or we don't have a 401K, or an eight hundred credit score. When it comes to us growing, that's challenging, because we have a hard time getting that working capital. Another really challenging thing is having so many regulations, so many licenses that we have to buy. I can't tell you how many thousands of dollars we spend on licenses each year. Which might not seem like a lot in the whole scheme of things, but it's a lot of money to keep it up. We do see a lot of change when it comes to different fishing areas and stuff, sort of like we were talking about earlier. As a young father, I have a one month—one month and five—I'm sorry, a one year and five months—my bad, sorry. Whew!

SS: It flies by.

TC: Yes, it does. That, I would say, sort of added to the stress a little bit. Because, you know, you got to make sure that you're providing for him. Me and my wife kind of talk with each other, and we say, "Do we want him to get into this industry? Do you think this industry's still going to be around when he's still here?" I have to remind her, and I have to start telling her, that we're not going to be those guys that were those guys towards us when we were fifteen. What I'm going to do is to build a

business to where he can step into and he's not going to struggle like we've had to. Build it up. It's been extremely hard, but there's a lot of rewards. I would say probably my biggest reward of it all is not even taking home a paycheck. Now that helps, because you need the paycheck. But my reward when it comes to all this is when the customer that buys my seafood comes to me week after week after week after week, and says, "I can't get this quality seafood anywhere else. I can't find this good of a product anywhere." They tell me how much they enjoy it. Not only is that helping our company. That's helping the industry. That's not just helping Chadwick Seafood. That helps us a lot, because it gives us a good reputation. But people say, "Hey, if you want good seafood, you need to get those North Carolina shrimp." Or, "You need to get those North Carolina tuna steaks." Or whatever the case may be. So, I would say being young is challenging, especially for somebody whose father or their immediate family weren't really into it. It took a lot of learning for me. I'm still learning now. But I've learned a lot. I'm still learning. There's always room to learn new, different techniques and tricks. There's been a lot of commercial fishermen I would say that have helped us a tremendous amount. When we were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old, a lot of people took us underneath their wings. Their trade was, "I'll bring you out on my boat and I'll let you see how we do it. But you're going to work for me." That was our trade. There were many times when I was on that boat working, just to learn.

SS: No pay?

TC: Just to learn. That's all I wanted to do was learn. Now most times, if we had a really good day, they'd slip me a little bit. But I went out there to learn. That's what I wanted to do. To get a young person—and I kind of think it's a little bit of society too—to get a young person to work that hard for nothing, and to get into an industry that's physically demanding, I think that's hard. I think, kind of, the society that we're raising now or that's growing up is kind of a give-me society, if I may say. Sort of, you know, "I don't want to work like that. I want to sit behind a desk or sit at home. Or do this or do that and draw a check." They don't particularly like the hard work. I'm not saying that I'm fairly fond of how hard it can be sometimes. But the reward and the giveback to me is, like I said, the customer. That's kind of what does it all for me. Of course, knowing that I'm providing for the family. That's kind of how I feel.

[51:16]

SS: What do you think, early in your experience, made you different from a lot of people your age who just expect to sit behind a desk and have a regular paycheck?

TC: I think you have to be born with it. I think it's something you just got to have a drive for. When I was starting in late elementary school, early middle school, I did a lot other than just fishing. We had chickens. We had gardens. I worked. I'd come home from school, do my schoolwork, go feed the chickens, go pick some cucumbers for dinner, or something in that nature. I think it's, for one, it's how people are raised. I think that has a lot to do with it, because you're learning. When you're young like that, you're sort of learning your footprint. But you have to have a love for it. If you don't have a love for it, you're never going to survive. I've always had a love for the water. I've always had a love for fishing. But I've always had a love for business. I love doing my own thing. I've tried to go and let somebody tell me what to do, and it just doesn't work out [laughter].

[52:38]

SS: Did you take any classes or anything in business, or did you totally just wing it?

TC: No, I've been totally self-taught.

SS: You've used terms already in this conversation, like "captured audience" and "working capital" that sounded like you've at least read up on stuff.

TC: Yeah. All of my stuff is totally self-learned. I've got no schooling other than my GED. Hopefully I'll have my associate's in aquaculture. But business-wise, I'm totally self-taught. I've not gone to any university or anything like that. When I want to do something, I do it. It's as simple as that.

SS: Do you think you're a quick learner, or is it just drive?

TC: I think I'm a quick learner, but it's also drive.

SS: Both?

TC: Because I want this, and I want this industry to thrive. I think a lot of people like to see young people in the industry, because it gives them hope.

SS: People inside or outside the industry?

TC: Both. There are some people that don't like seeing it, but there are people who do like seeing it, that help. There are so many people that, you know, like I said, have taken me in and helped me. Family too. That was a big learning curve.

SS: Financially, to get the capital you needed to start the business up, did you get backing from anyone, or did you have to just gradually get one thing at a time?

TC: Nope. One thing at a time. We started out with a ten-by-ten tent. Right out back, there's a pecan tree. That pecan tree on an old workbench is where I started. We've grown a little bit, but not too terribly much. Now I have a nice carport, lights in it, stainless steel tables to work under. Used to, it was thunder and lightning and rain, and I was out there cutting, because I had to. We had to get ready for market. I had to get these fish ready for market. We've grown a lot. But everything that you see, it's come from us. We have got a little bit of help. Actually, we've gotten a little bit of help. Actually, this past year was when we started getting the most help, because we started growing so much. I would say this past year was probably a really challenging year of us, when it comes to—especially the hurricane and stuff. Very challenging.

[55:25]

SS: How did that impact you?

TC: Well, we were out of work for so long. The fish left. There was no fishing after the storm.

SS: Ok, so a supply issue.

TC: Very much so. And people weren't buying.

SS: Ok. So a demand issue as well.

TC: Yeah.

SS: Hit from both sides.

TC: Honestly, it got pretty scary there for a while. I didn't know if we were going to be able to pull through. But somehow we did, and here we are. I think that made us tougher and we learned a lot from that experience. But we're still—I mean, two houses down [the street], there's a tractor. I don't know if you seen it when you came in.

SS: I saw it, demolishing.

TC: Demolishing that house. That house was destroyed by the storm. One of my best friends, when I was young, young, like elementary school, lived in that house. His parents still live—well, they did live in that house up until the storm. But it's still going to be a lot of work to be done. But we're getting back up on our feet.

SS: Is your wife involved in your business?

TC: Yes and no. She is, because she helps me a lot at home. But she's employed somewhere else fulltime. She does a lot, she helps me a lot with different literature and stuff like that.

[57:00]

SS: Gosh, you've said so many different things that I know we could probably spend all day talking about. Um, tell me a little bit about other people your age in the fishing industry around here. Are there others?

TC: Oh, yeah.

SS: How do you see them? Are there any others who are doing the kind of thing you are? Or are they focusing on different things to make it work for themselves?

TC: No, they're doing their own thing. I would say we're probably one of the only young fishermen in our area that's kind of doing the scale we're doing. Not only catching and selling our fish to the wholesale market, but catching and selling our fish to the retail market.

SS: Nobody else around here is doing that?

TC: Well, there's people that do catch their own stuff and sell it. But as in young, my age, I would say we're probably one of the few that do it.

SS: How are other young fishermen around here surviving?

TC: A lot of them are doing it the traditional way. Just a lot of fisheries, a lot of different fisheries.

SS: More than you guys?

TC: Yeah.

SS: More diversified on the water instead of diversifying into the vertical integration?

TC: Yeah, uh-huh. I think it's best for us. But what's good for us might not be good for somebody else. I think, really, the best thing for us is to grow both sides of the industry on our behalf, when it comes to the retail side of our business and the wholesale side of our business and the fishing side. Also, we get to employ people and we get to buy from those same fishermen that are doing that, like I'm talking about. We get to cut them a check every week. It's not just us that we're supporting. We're supporting all the people that we buy from, stuff like that.

SS: How do you buy from them? Do you have a truck you drive around? Or do they come to you?

TC: Sometimes they come to me. Sometimes I go to them.

SS: Ok. A little of both.

TC: Yeah, a little of both, depending on what works.



SS: How did you make those relationships with them? Or were you already close to those people?

TC: No, actually I started just meeting them and talking to them. The biggest challenge to that was earning their trust, because a lot of times, when you pay a fisherman, they got to have that trust. Especially when you pay them once a week. They got to know that they're going to get their check on Friday or on Monday or whenever you decide to pay them. But we've gotten their trust now. See, once you get trust, it's a good thing to have. Because they're going to make sure, they're going to call you first when they get a good load. They're going to say, "You want some of these before we take them to the fish market?" Because a lot of times, during the summertime or certain different times of year, we can buy their full loads. But when we're real slow, we can't buy their full boatloads. They'll call us and say, "We're getting ready to take these to this big wholesaler, or whatever, this big fish house. We'll at least skim you some off and bring it to you." We usually try to give them a better price, too. You know, sort of help their trouble, a little bit, by doing that.

SS: Yeah, makes sense.

[60:37]

SS: What else? Do you have any other thoughts?

TC: I don't know. I was just wrapping my brain around it right now.

SS: Here, let me ask you one. You said that you did work as an EMT for a short period of time.

TC: Yes.

SS: And you switched back into fishing, because you just couldn't stay away.

TC: Yes.

SS: What was the thought process going through your head then? You were at a fork in the road and you chose fishing.

TC: Yeah. To be honest with you, when I first started, when I first got into going to EMS, there's a certificate you get. I was thinking to myself, "Ok. I've been fishing for this long. It's just something I can't do to support a family on. Let me jump into the bandwagon with everybody else and let me go get a regular job." At that point, my dad wanted me to do it. So I said, "Ok."

SS: Were you already married at that point?

TC: No. I went to school, done that. Worked, and actually, I actually still work, part-time. Actually, the thirtieth of this month will be my last shift ever, so it's funny that you bring that up. I worked fulltime for two straight years. That's all I did. I mean, that's all I did. I started getting to the point to where I was like, "Ok, I don't know if I can do this." Slowly, I started fishing again. Slowly, I started fishing. Then the ideas started coming up. Then the ball started rolling. It was kind of like a snowball effect. The faster it rolled down the hill, the bigger it got. It just sort of fell into place. I got to the point where I had to say, "Ok. I'm going to go down the fishing path. I'm going to leave this behind." It's hard to do both. I love working with EMS, but not like the water. It doesn't draw me like the water does. Let's see, 2016, I was still working kind of fulltime, but this was taking up a lot of time. Then '17, it was like, "Ok." I cut back tremendously. 2018, I cut back even more. Now this year, I'm cutting it off. It's a big step, I would say, because it's not that guaranteed check, like I was talking about earlier. But it's something that, you just got to do it. You just have to. You just do it. We've always made it work. We'll just make it work.

[64:00]

SS: At what point did it click for you that you could support a family on fishing? Because it sounds like you have faith in that now?

TC: Yeah, I do. To be honest with you, I don't know if it ever really was a turning point. It was just me saying, "Enough is enough. I'm going to do this. I'm going to make this work." Hunter is my little boy's name. Once he came into the picture, I started thinking to myself, "I've got to be sure he's got something to take care of him and his family when I'm gone." Me working EMS, even though that might get me some kind of retirement or something like that, I'm not going to have a legacy.

SS: Now you can give him more than just money?

TC: Yeah. I can give him the platform. There'll be money. But I'll give him the knowledge and the platform. That's if he wants to take it. I don't plan on forcing him to do it if he doesn't want to do it. If he doesn't want to do it, I hope maybe he picks up plumbing or electricity or something so he can come work for me and do that. Or refrigeration or something [laughter]!

SS: [laughter] Something useful!

TC: Once he gets older, he'll choose his path just like I did. He'll choose his own thing. But I'm going to give him the option of doing it. I looked at the company, even when I'm dead and gone, the Chadwick Seafood name, there'll still be that. They'll be like, "Yeah, that Tyler boy started that way back in the day." I think that was a big thing that pushed me to do it. I guess you could call that a turning point, like a switch.

[66:06]

SS: You've got a pretty cool story. For being only twenty-two, you've done a lot and you're going places.

TC: Yeah. I feel like I've done a lot. But I feel like there's so much more that I need to be doing. One of the things that I haven't really touched on is with our oysters. I've kind of thought to myself, "Oh what am I getting myself into?" But we've started the research and we're actually going to do it. We're going to be able to ship our oysters across the United States to anybody that wants them in the mail. If you're in California, place an order through our website. If you're in Maine, place an order. If you're in Rhode Island, place an order.

SS: It goes through the mail?

TC: Well, we're going to use FedEx, because they're probably one of the best businesses that offer that type of service. We're going to start offering oysters, and then we're going to start offering our fresh fish and shrimp, frozen, because it's extremely difficult to ship fresh. I'm not saying it's impossible. But for right now, frozen is a lot easier to do. So we're going to start offering different frozen shrimp, and do frozen flounder fillet, different stuff like that. We're actually going to start with a local caviar farmer.

SS: Oh, wow.

TC: Yeah. To go with our oysters as well. That's something really exciting. Like I said, the fishing industry needs to have a wider view, or a bigger view. That's kind of, I think what makes us so successful, is because we're willing to do that. So, there's a lot of stuff going on. It keeps me busy. Just to sort of throw something, or to say something, when I first started commercial fishing, I never thought that I—this is not my normal attire. This is my office day. Like a really nice button-up shirt, pants, shoes. I never thought in a million years that I would be getting on planes and going to trade shows around the United States. Never in a million years would I have thought I'd be doing that.

SS: Are you already doing that?

TC: Yes. Matter of fact, next month I'm going to Alabama for an oyster conference. I never, if you had told me that when I was first starting out in the fishing industry, I'd say, "You crazy. I ain't never getting on no plane and dressing up and going to no trade show. Are you crazy?" But you know, it just shows that we're willing to be diverse.

[68:59]

SS: That must expand your horizons a lot, to go and interact with people from different places.

TC: Yes. People don't think—"You're going to Alabama? What good is that going to do?" It does way more than what you think it would. When you start talking with other people, connecting with other people. We've had the opportunity to meet other oyster farmers, and other oyster companies from Alabama or somewhere else, said, "You know what? I'd really like a good North Carolina oyster. Or I'd really like a good North Carolina product. Can you help me with that?" You know, if you make just one connection—now, going to a conference is expensive, I ain't going to lie. Airplane tickets, conference tickets, concert tickets. At first, at my first conference I went to, I said, "What are we doing, spending this amount of money doing this?" Then after that, I never questioned it again. It repays. Even if you make one connection or no connection, it repays itself. Because if you pick up one new customer, or you get three or four more contacts, it's worth every penny you spend on it.

SS: Hmm. That's amazing.

TC: I'd really like to go to Alaska. I haven't had the opportunity to do that. But if I have the opportunity, I'm going.

SS: For what purpose?

TC: Just to learn the fishing industry around there, maybe even get a few connections when it comes to the different salmon industries up there.

SS: Have you ever been to the Pacific Expo, the one in Seattle every year?

TC: No.

SS: You should definitely go to that, because all the Alaska people go to that—West Coast and Alaska. Everybody who fishes in Alaska, all the Alaska seafood companies, Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute—they're all there. It's major. It's in November every year.

TC: November. I'll have to look into that.

SS: You'd get a lot out of it. It's totally different from East Coast. That exposure would give you a whole window into something else.

[71:01]

TC: Well, we've actually started getting invited to different trade shows for us to—I shouldn't have said trade show, I should have said, they want us to come and set up and let people try our product, which is something new that we just got invited to this year. Now, when I say trade show I mean me going to the show to interact with people, not particularly bringing my product. But yeah, that would be something I would want to do.

SS: Now, you said you do have some Alaska salmon in your offerings for the retail?

TC: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

SS: Where are you getting it from?

TC: Well, right now we don't have a good connection direct so we have to go through a different supplier. It's usually like sockeye or king salmon or something like that.

SS: Ok. I've heard of a few North Carolina fishermen who go up to Alaska.

TC: Now, I would love to be able to go to Alaska, catch it myself, ship it back, and then freeze it, then bring it out. I don't even want to know what kind of hassle or requirements I'd have to get into to do that. That might be a little bit much. I do have a couple of buddies of mine that go to Alaska that go fishing, and they catch—but they just catch fish for their freezer. They're commercial fishermen, but they go do some halibut and stuff like that. See, halibut's something too that I would love to get into, start selling. My problem is I can't find somebody that I can get it from affordably.

SS: Yeah. It's a very pricey fish.

TC: Very much so. Almost like a grouper-type pricey.

SS: Grouper's like that too?

TC: Groupers are pricey fish down here. Like, grouper sells for twenty-six, twenty-seven dollars a pound. Scallops, like our scallops are expensive too. But that's one of our most expensive fisheries. It's a learning curve, and I do want to start providing people with different unique items like that, that aren't particular to North Carolina. It has to meet our quality standards. If not, I'm not going to tarnish our name for something from another state that I'm not pleased with.

[73:12]

SS: Anything else? Do you have any recommendations for how we could all be supporting young fishermen a little better?

TC: To be honest with you, probably my biggest recommendation is don't make it so expensive to get into, when it comes to paperwork and licenses and permits. I mean, honestly, that would probably be the biggest help. Then another thing would be to support different things like Fish Camp. I don't know what NOAA or different state entities have to do when it comes to granting money or stuff like that, but if we could figure out how to do that to support a Fish Camp type of thing around here, I think that that would probably help the industry a lot.

SS: Yeah. It sounds like a good model that people should be looking at.

TC: Now, when I was at Fish Camp, they talked about a big thing like that in Alaska.

SS: They do a summit every year.

TC: I think, I mean, if that was going to be my recommendation to the federal government or to NOAA or to North Carolina Marine Fisheries, or to anybody that wants to keep commercial fishing going, I would say "Try to find some funding and stuff for these different organizations."

SS: To support the knowledge transfer among young fishermen but also to connect them to other people who can connect them to other pathways, other resources?

TC: Yes. Just networking.

SS: Networking.

TC: Yes. That's what we need. I mean, sometimes when people look at getting into fishing, they look at all these different permits and licenses they have to get, and they say, "That's too much." Scares them.

SS: Just understanding how to navigate that, you mean?

TC: Yes. Maybe even offering some kind of lottery. Some kind of lottery allotment or something like that for saying, "Hey, we're not going to charge you for anything. But we'll give you your licenses and let you learn. And we're going to pair you up with this fisherman, this experienced fisherman." Something like that. If we had a lottery program. You can apply for a standard commercial fishing license, and they give you a commercial fishing license. They issue you a commercial fishing license. But you just can't give people a license and then go do it. You have to show them.

SS: Like an apprenticeship?

TC: Yeah. Yeah. Something like that would be great.

SS: With a temporary license that you don't have to pay for but that allows you to get your feet wet?

TC: Yes. And allows you to start making that income.

SS: How long do you think that people should be allowed to keep that license before they have to start paying for it?

TC: That's a good question. I think that's something that would have to be researched. Because it takes—I would say more than a year. You'd have to have more than a year.

SS: Takes some time.

TC: I'd say a couple, three years. But that would be a good step to getting the industry back up—to get rid of the "greying of the fleet" title.

[76:46]

SS: I take it that here in North Carolina, there's no sort of student license or apprenticeship license like that? It's just all or nothing?

TC: Yeah.

SS: How much does that cost, to get your license?

TC: Well, you have to buy it from an individual.

SS: Oh, ok.

TC: Because they don't issue them. You got to find someone who's got on who wants to sell it. Most of the time, you're going to spend a couple grand on it.

SS: A couple grand?

TC: Yeah. Which might not seem like a lot of money. But go to a twenty-two year old and say, "Give me two thousand dollars."

SS: Especially if they haven't had the opportunity to know if they can do it or not, successfully.

TC: Yes. Then, go to a young guy and say, "I need twenty thousand dollars to get you a boat. Oh, and I need about seven, eight thousand dollars to get you crab pots. Oh, and I need two or three thousand dollars to get you gillnets. Oh, and—" It all adds up.

SS: Are there any places where young people can go for financing, for loans?

TC: No. No.

SS: Nothing at all?

TC: The banks don't want—and that's what irritates the tee-total-tar out of me. Young fishermen can't get financial help. Not just young fishermen. Any young person. I would say the person that's helped us out the most of the Small Business Administration, the SBA.

SS: What kind of help have they given you?

TC: They've given us a loan.

SS: Was that for the retail business?

TC: It was just for the business in general. It was a disaster loan, after the hurricane. But they give you low interest. It was like 2.57 percent. Our loan was for like twelve grand, and they give us fifteen years to pay it back. It's like ninety dollars a month. In the first year, you don't pay one dime on it.

SS: So the Small Business Administration is willing to work with young commercial fishermen.

TC: Well, I would say any young person. But the SBA is really helping a lot, or really helped us a lot.

SS: Ok. Good to know.

TC: Now I'm not saying that, if it wasn't a disaster, that they would.

SS: Mmm right. Special circumstances.

TC: Yeah. That was the one place we found to get financing. But the problem is, young people, they don't have credit. It seems like a traditional bank wants you to have eight hundred credit score, too, before they give you anything—which is a perfect credit score. They don't want to see late payment or partial payment or whatever. I don't know if people understand, the banks understand, when somebody's young like us, you live paycheck to paycheck.

SS: Right, you don't have any history. You have to start somewhere to build it up.

TC: Yeah. They don't make it easy to start anywhere. Like, how are you supposed to start? Like, you can't go get a vehicle loan—anything—without a co-signer. You can't do *nothing* without a co-signer. I've been building my credit. I got my credit started when I was eighteen years old. I still can't get anything on my own. That's just what you call the big corporate America, really.

SS: That's just young people in general. Let alone what industry you're in, it's just hard.

TC: Yeah, it's hard. It really is. But I guess that's kind of my story.

SS: Alright. It's a really interesting story and I can't wait to talk to you again in ten years and learn what else is happening then.

TC: There's no telling what else is going to be happening then. Who know's where the industry is going to be in ten years? Where's the industry going to be at in two years? I don't know where the industry is going to be at. But I know where we're going to be at. We're going to be right there with it. We're strapped in and we're ready for a roller coaster ride.

SS: [laughter]

TC: [laughter] Just seems like that's what it is.

SS: You've got a great attitude.

TC: Yeah. I think that's another big thing too, for fishermen to have a great attitude. Because many fishermen are old and salty. I'm like, "Come on man, put a smile on your face!" I said, "You're letting them get to you. Don't let them win." I'm in pretty much the North Carolina Fishermen's Association. I stay updated on all the situations. I go to the meetings. Especially when there's big events happening, or big topics being discussed. I think it was about a year or so ago, they tried to introduce this great big bill for shrimping that was going to try to stop all inshore shrimping. You had to go three miles off the beach to shrimp, to do anything. for our industry here, that would eliminate the industry. It would eliminate through over-regulation. Remember earlier, I was talking about over-regulation? But we didn't let that happen. I wouldn't say it's totally dead yet. Stuff like that. You have to stay informed about your industry. You have to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em. Know when to say, "Hey. We're not budging on this." And you got to say, "Ok. We're giving a little bit on this. But don't think you're getting a whole lot." You know?

SS: Yeah.

TC: We have great leadership at the North Carolina Fishermen's Association. It has all spectrums serving on the board. They have a paid president that deals with everything and goes to these meetings. It's good to have a group like that fighting with you. They try to do different things. One thing they were trying to work on was getting a group insurance policy for all commercial fishermen, like if you go to a business.

SS: Health insurance?

TC: Yeah. Yeah. Stuff like that. Do I think our state could help us out a lot more? Yes. When I look at other states like Alaska, stuff like that, you know. Alaska, the fishing industry is a pretty significant industry. Well, in North Carolina, it's a very significant industry as well. It brings in a lot of money to the economy. Kind of makes you think, what's your state's agenda? You know what I mean? I will say I'm pleased with our governor, though. He helped us out a lot. He helped us out as much as he could—as much as he could give, when it comes to the hurricane and stuff. I was very pleased with that. He dedicated like twelve million. It didn't cover the losses that we had. But he got us what he could get us. He got us twelve and a half million, I think, of financial aid from the government to help us with that.

SS: Ok. That's good.

TC: Our industry, our port lost twenty million or something.

SS: So that twelve million is just for the fishing industry alone?

TC: Yeah.

SS: That's good.

TC: Just for the fishing industry, because there was a lot of fish houses that got totally destroyed during this hurricane. There's a lot of aquaculture, because I'm big into the aquaculture industry now. Well for instance, we're going to grow oysters in floating bags. Each bag has about two hundred oysters in it. I know a guy who lost three hundred bags. Do the math on that. He gets fifty cents a piece for his oysters. That's a chunk of money.

SS: Yeah.

TC: But, we're resilient. Fishermen always have been. You can knock us down, but we get right back up. So, I would say we're doing pretty good when it comes to the battle between people who want to shut us down and Mother Nature battling us too. Mother Nature tends not to be very forgiving.

[85:19]

SS: [laughter] Well, it really sounds like you're finding a way to make it work. That's impressive. I'm glad to see that.

TC: I hope maybe this gives some idea how we do to make it work.

SS: Yeah. It does.

TC: I really think what makes young people, or people like me in the industry that make it work, is their dedication and love. I mean, that's all there is to it. Dedication and love to the water. I think that's really the key point behind everything. You got to be dedicated and love it.

SS: Mm-hmm. It comes from the heart.

TC: Yeah. It's not something that, you're sitting on the couch and you say, "You know what? I'm going to be a fisherman." I don't think it quite works like that.

SS: [laughter]

TC: It's kind of like a calling, almost. Just like a lot of people. For instance, agriculture—whether that be growing pigs or plants or chickens—is a very big industry in our state as well. The government is behind that a hundred percent and does a lot to sort of shape that and financially help that. I think slowly, we'll eventually—especially when it comes to the aquaculture side of things—we're getting tied a lot into that.

SS: You can piggyback on that.

TC: We can piggyback on that. Which I'm hoping if the aquaculture can piggyback on that, eventually the commercial industry can piggyback on something similar to that.

SS: Ok. So aquaculture is sort of a steppingstone between wild harvest commercial fishing and agriculture, in terms of sort of changing the mentality and driving some of that policy support? Is that what you're saying?

TC: Yeah. Yeah. Well, for instance, our oysters grow just like a wild oyster does. The only difference is we're putting it in a bag that's protecting it from predators eating it. That's all we're doing. It feeds off of plankton and algae and other stuff in the water, just like a wild oyster does. There's nothing different between how the wild oysters and my oysters eat. So you get the same taste. The biggest thing is you get that nice shaped oyster that's perfect for a half bar situation., I think that aquaculture industry's going to help, eventually when it gets built up, take the stress off the wild population, and



also help a lot when it comes to policy makers wanting to be so strict on it, I think. Sort of share that weight. But like I said, it's so new. It's so very new.

SS: How many farms are there around here?

TC: I don't honestly know. The whole state in 2012, there was only like two thousand acres leased. But it is growing rapidly every year. That was in 2012.

SS: Yeah, I'm sure it's changed a lot.

TC: Yes. I think they only used to get like ten or so applications per year. I think they're getting fifty-plus applications in a year. I mean, it's growing,

SS: Are the farmers people who come from the fishing industry?

TC: A lot of them are. Then there's some of them that don't ever stay around very long. They're somebody from the Western part of the state, Raleigh, who says, "You know what? I'm going to start growing oysters." They'll go on Google Maps or they'll go on, they have a siting tool, and they'll pick four points. That's where their oyster lease is going to be. They have no idea what kind of water is there. They have no idea if there's a natural shellfish bed. They have no idea what the weather is there. They have no idea how often it's closed there. They have no idea whether it's traditionally used for commercial fishing. They have no idea. They just said, "Yeah, we'll do that." Most of the time, those people aren't around very long. There's a big push to grow the aquaculture industry. There was some legislation—bills—put forth that wanted to grow the industry. I'm all about growing the industry. But I'm all about growing the industry in the right way. I don't think a big corporation from China should be able to come over here and buy two hundred acres of leased bottom to grow. No, no, no, no, no. That's not going to fly for me. You should have to be a North Carolina resident. Simple as that. There's a certain cutoff of how many acres somebody should have.

SS: A cap?

TC: Yeah. Like a cap. There is a cap right now. I think it's a total of fifty acres. Which isn't a lot when it comes to these big industries. I think in Maryland or Virginia—I think in Virginia—in 2012, I read the bylaws of 2012, and I think one person can have three thousand acres.

SS: Wow. That's a lot.

TC: In the Chesapeake Bay, they can have up to five thousand acres. So, the industry, the aquaculture industry in Virginia is much more advanced than we are. But we're getting there. I see a bright future. So just sit back, relax, and enjoy your ride.

SS: [laughter]

TC: [laughter]

SS: Well, great. Thank you so much for your time and for telling me your story.

TC: I hope that kind of gives you everything you need.

SS: Yeah. It does. Thank you.

TC: So will you just take it and put it in there and sort of edit it—

[91:20]

[end of interview]