

MARITIME AND SEAFOOD INDUSTRY MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

AN INTERVIEW WITH
BOB JONES
FOR THE
TURTLE EXCLUDER DEVICE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
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TRANSCRIPT BY
FANTASTIC TRANSCRIPTS

Stephanie Scull-DeArme y: Okay. It looks like it's working, so I'll go ahead and start. This is an interview for the Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum and the University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Bob Jones, and it is taking place on March 30, 2010, in the morning in Florida on Bob's end and in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on my end. I am the interviewer, Stephanie Scull-DeArme y. First, I'd like to thank you, Bob, for taking time to talk with me today, and I'd like to get some background information about you, which is what we usually do in our oral history interviews. So, I'm going to ask you, for the record, could you state your name, please?

Bob Jones: My name is Bob Jones.

SS: For the record, in case all the labels are lost and damaged sometime in the future, how do you spell your name?

BJ: B-O-B-J-O-N-E-S.

SS: When were you born?

BJ: I was born September the 30th, 1933.

SS: Where were you born?

BJ: Born in Palatka, Florida.

SS: How do you spell that?

BJ: P-A-L-A-T-K-A.

SS: Sounds like an Indian name.

BJ: Yes, it is.

SS: [laughter] Could you tell me your current position and describe what you do?

BJ: I'm currently the executive director of Southeastern Fisheries Association, which is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit seafood trade association that was founded in 1952 in Jacksonville. I've been the director since 1964.

SS: Wow.

BJ: I manage all aspects of the association. I host annual conventions. I serve on and have served on most every kind of commission around. I write a monthly newsletter, and, like I say, conduct annual meetings and serve in a wide capacity related to the seafood industry.

SS: Sounds like a really interesting job.

BJ: It's wonderful.

SS: [laughter] Good, good. Well, we will dive into the questions that the museum would like to have answered, first of all, to be sure that we cover our obligation to those questions. Oh, I meant to ask you, Bob – how long do you have to do this this morning?

BJ: As long as you do. An hour or so?

SS: Okay. Well, I'll tell you that the interviews have been running from two to three hours. You may not think you have that much to say, but it tends to go by real fast. If you need to stop, just let me know. If we don't get to finish today, we can take it up another day.

BJ: You better get me while I'm here.

SS: [laughter] Okay. That's fine also. First of all, let me ask you – what role did you play in introducing TEDs [turtle excluder device] to the shrimping industry?

BJ: I played a major role. I had been working for the association for quite a few years by then and was very familiar with all aspects of fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. We, as an association, and me as an individual, had previously been part of a State Department advisory committee on oceans, and it gave me an opportunity several times a year to meet in Washington, DC, representing the Gulf of Mexico and south Atlantic at the same table where all other fisheries of the nation were represented, from tuna to halibut to cod to trawling in Georges Bank – everything. So, it gave me a pretty broad view of what was going on. When the environmental community was able to shut down the very powerful tuna fishery on the West Coast because of porpoises, I didn't think you had to be a rocket scientist to understand that the law had enough power to shut down any fishery if it was interacting with an endangered species. That included shrimp and turtles. So, my role was to try and get that information out to the industry, making sure that they realized that the law was that strong and that you could no longer depend on a state senator, your state legislator, even your US senator to stop an action that was going to be taken under the Endangered Species Act. So, the involvement was constant there for several years.

SS: For the record, could you define what you mean when you say the industry?

BJ: When I refer to the industry, I refer to all types of commercial fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico and the south Atlantic, from shrimping to fishing to crabbing – any type of sector of the fishery that harvests seafood for consumption by the citizens of the world.

SS: A question arises for me when I hear you talk about getting information to the industry. You were the messenger, not necessarily the composer of the message, but you understood that this is the law, and it will be enforced. What was your personal opinion? Did you think that was fair? What was your opinion about it?

BJ: I had mixed emotions about it. When I came to work, we had a turtle fishery in Florida, where they (gleaned from the little store?). That was an ongoing, sustainable turtle fishery, where turtles were caught in Florida and in the Caribbean. They were brought to Key West. They were slaughtered and used for food – all types of food. So,

my background when I got here – this was ongoing. Then as the world changed and the environmentalists took up the cause of the turtles, I knew something was going to have to change. Everybody who was in the turtle business would no longer be in any business. That was a transition, that that particular segment would have to figure out what to do after the law went into place. The fishermen always felt – the ones that I talked to, ones that were members of mine felt that the turtle population was very sustainable, that they hadn't seen any decrease in numbers. It wasn't multi-thousand turtles or anything like that, but they didn't feel there was any problem with the critters at that particular time.

SS: Would that be 1964, when you –?

BJ: Yes, early 1960s. I had been around enough and seen enough – like I said, the background with the State Department and knowing how the law – I just knew it was coming. I just knew it was coming, just like I know that maybe not in my lifetime, but in somebody behind me's lifetime, NOAA will end up charging a per-pound fee for every fish that's extracted from the ocean. That's coming just as sure as you and I are talking on the phone right now. Not everybody realizes or can see that's the way that it's going. That's off subject. Put me back on where you want me to go.

SS: Well, getting off the subject is par for the course in an oral history interview. We take lots of side trips. The questions that I sent you are kind of a skeleton, just to get you thinking about what we're going to talk about, but they're not the whole story by any means. So maybe we'll revisit that per-pound fee from NOAA later on in the interview.

BJ: Okay. It's already started. Yes. That'll be good to do that. But I took your questions, and I answered every one of them – just a brief summary just to try to get a background and see if that would help us in the process.

SS: Terrific. We'll probably take a few side trips, at least. So, what was your initial opinion of the turtle excluder device itself?

BJ: It wasn't good. Philosophically, I'm a Pollyanna-type person, so I always figure there's a way that both sides can figure out a compromise where everybody can win. That's just my nature. I just feel there's common ground just about on every issue there is. I didn't think this was that much different. But I had the benefit of knowing the power of the law, and I knew that it was coming, but the shrimpers and the people involved said there's no way. We'll never pull it. They'll have to pull my net out of my cold, dead hands before I ever pull a TED – all that kind of rhetoric, which is all that it was. So, I had some mixed emotions about that, yet I knew that if the turtle really was in danger, and really did need protection, that the best thing that you could do was work towards getting that protection and still letting the shrimp industry survive. And the reason that I had some dismay at the beginning was that the first TED that we saw was like a big steel box, that if it was dangling around above fishermen's heads on the deck of a boat, it could wipe out a couple of guys in short order if something happened. It just didn't seem like it was very effective to me. But I didn't think hard enough that this was model number one, and that like anything else, by the time you get to model number 12, most of the negative features are going to be addressed. And it was. We also had a lot of shrimpers in Florida and Georgia who had what was called a jellyball shooter. It was just

a metal grate that they would put in their nets when they were into high concentrations of jellyballs. They had been using something to shoot jellyballs out of their nets long before the idea of turtle excluder devices came along. So there was right from the start a feeling that maybe we could figure out a way to utilize it in this form and make it work. So that was a very positive aspect of trying to make it work. Bottom line is, though, I knew there was going to be a law. I knew that it was going to come. The law was already there. I knew that there was going to be impact on the shrimpers. So just trying to walk through the minefield of personalities and demagogues.

SS: For the record, can you tell us what a jellyball is?

BJ: A jellyball is a cannonball jellyfish. I think its scientific name is *Strombus gigas* (sic). It's a short-lived, round, gelatinous mass that is very prevalent in certain times of the year in certain locations. It's also probably the most consumed seafood product in the world.

SS: Really? People eat it?

BJ: You can't hardly have a wedding in Japan or China or a lot of Asian countries if you don't serve some type of jellyfish in a salad or – it's just a cultural dish that's been around for eons.

SS: Yet US fishermen wanted them shot out of the nets and weren't interested in them as a commercial fishery.

BJ: Absolutely, because they would clog up the nets in the back and mash up all the shrimp. So, they had to get out of that. There was not any desire to develop a cannonball fishery at that time. The shrimpers mostly – always just wanted shrimp anyway.

SS: Would it be reasonable to say that a lot of shrimpers were already using a turtle excluder device by using the jellyball shooter, but they just didn't realize it?

BJ: Yes, yes. I think that would be a very wise – a very honest statement for certain parts of the Gulf of Mexico and the East Coast. They didn't refer to it as that, but I believe that concept – as soon as the TEDs started being developed, I believe that concept was plugged into the development of the TED, because you were looking for something that would shoot the turtles either out of the top or out of the bottom. How do you get them out the quickest for their own protection and to keep them from clogging up the net and causing a reduction in the amount of shrimp that could be produced?

SS: You kind of touched on the next question, how TEDs were viewed by the shrimping industry in the early days. Is there anything you want to add to that?

BJ: Well, it was anathema to particularly the shrimpers in Louisiana and Texas. Most of the hardcore rhetoric and leadership against the TEDs came from the Louisiana group, led by Tee John Mialjevich. If somebody wants to take the time and go look at newspapers of that era, they could see he was very well covered. In Florida papers, they had him in the back of a pickup truck in Key West talking about his favorite turtle recipe.

When I saw that, I said, “That’s just about a dumb a thing as I’ve ever seen.” That picture of a shrimper or a shrimper representative holding up something and talking about shrimp recipes will only fire up the environmentalists, and rightfully so in some regard, and that picture will come back, and that picture will be planted in the minds of young people. When they think of shrimpers, they’ll [inaudible] somebody standing up, wanting to kill all the turtles and make a recipe out of them. That was what I felt the impact of those kind of things did. I still feel that way.

SS: At the time that was happening and Tee John was doing that, were there shrimpers who were trying to comply who didn’t get any press?

BJ: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. But the shrimpers who were trying to comply in some places got under some severe peer pressure. You know how subtle that can be, and you know how little boys and little girls at school could pick out somebody and work on them pretty bad. The same thing applied to the ones that wanted to work with National Marine Fisheries Service, because the opposition was just adamant that you’re never going to make us do it. You just aren’t going to do it. You can’t make us. Just don’t tell the federal government that or the state government. If they pass a law, you’re going to do it, or they’re going to put you in jail. Some people don’t realize that.

SS: Right. Yes. Can you think of some examples and just paint us a visual picture of how the shrimpers who were trying to comply were treated negatively by those who did not want to pull the turtle excluder devices?

BJ: Well, it was more verbal than any physical. It was more radio talk, dock talk, and the words that I don’t want to use [with] you against the person. It’s just something that a lot of the guys, a lot of the shrimpers who were trying to help, they went ahead and helped anyway. They were just as tough as [the people] trying to put names on them. But it was a verbal thing, and there are just subtle ways that you can put heat on people. They did it.

SS: This may seem like a stupid question, but for the record, why would shrimpers not want to pull the device?

BJ: They don’t want to cut a hole in their net, number one. Two, they didn’t think they needed it in all places at all times, and they were right – right then and right now. They didn’t think that they would be able to catch the amount of shrimp. They thought of the economic loss. But there are certain places and certain times of the year where the turtles are not there. There’s inshore places. There’s all sorts of places where they’re not there. But when you get into government regulation, government just doesn’t have much – maybe it’s opportunity or the authority to be more site-specific. So, they tend to just say, “Hey, it’s one size fits all. You all got to pull this.” Now, in their defense, they did – NMFS [inaudible] Pascagoula – they did try to develop a series of options of different kind of TEDs that worked in this bottom, in a sandy bottom or in the mud or in different bottoms. They tried to go with the soft TED, which is where, instead of using the metal grates, you use a large mesh piece of net in a certain configuration that shoots the turtles out, but the mesh is big enough where the loss of shrimp is minimal, and the shrimp tend to go right on back to the codend. But the law enforcement people of NMFS – Coast

Guardsmen and NMFS enforcement – thought that measuring the soft devices was too difficult, so the ones the ones we wanted to use never didn't make the cut. It's still a bone of contention, because that's because we have soft TEDs that can shoot a fifty-five-gallon drum right out of a net if it came across it and still not lose any shrimp. But that's just not approved. That's just one of those things. It may never be approved.

SS: Are lobbyists still working on trying to get that approved?

BJ: What do you mean by lobbyists?

SS: Well, maybe that's not a good word to use. Is anyone working to get that approved, to get the soft TED approved?

BJ: Not to my knowledge. The foundation – the Gulf and South Atlantic [Fisheries] Foundation, which has been the leader in trying to disseminate the information between government and the governed and has reached a very high plateau in being able to do that in a good manner [inaudible] – they tried to set up a situation where experimentations and tests can be done on that. But we feel that policymakers at NMFS and NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] just don't want to bother with it. Any time that we start something going on some of the soft TEDs, particularly down around South Florida, Tortugas area, we just don't get anywhere. So, we don't have that many people that lobby or participate or try to help the shrimpers in the first place. You've got one person like me, really, that's been around for a long time that helps all the industries. You've got Tarpon Springs, who is helping shrimpers, but more on other things rather than TEDs. So, we just don't have the people. The industry itself never has had a cadre of hired people – had an awful lot of free people, but not many hired people that could go and make the changes that need to be done.

SS: On the other hand, why do you think –? What was motivating the shrimpers who were willing to pull the TEDs in the face of verbal abuse?

BJ: Well, I think a lot of them were listening to me and to the shrimp people that I had and still have in our group. I think the leadership of [inaudible] and some of the old-line, old-name shrimp fishermen who knew what was happening, who had a broader picture – their scope was just focused on one thing. I think they realized that you're going to have to do this, like it or not. Like paying income tax, you're going to have to do it. So, when you're going to have to do something, you need to go ahead and try to make it work as well as you can for your own survival. Beginners are going to come along later, screaming and crying and bitching and moaning and everything else, but they're coming. They're coming if the law says this is the way it's going to be. So people that I represent and who were willing to do that were in a great minority compared to the number of shrimpers in Louisiana and Texas because Louisiana's where most of the shrimp are caught. Texas is where the most valuable shrimp are caught. Florida's about third in our harvest and everything.

SS: Is there anything else you'd like to add to how TEDs were viewed in the early days by the shrimping industry?

BJ: I don't think so.

SS: Okay. Third question – how are TEDs viewed today by the shrimping industry?

BJ: They're viewed better, because they have been fine-tuned to where the shrimp loss is a lot less than it was when it was first developed, and there are about eighty percent less shrimpers in the industry now than there were in the industry in 1964.

SS: Did you say eighty percent?

BJ: About eighty percent.

SS: Why has there been that decline?

BJ: Well, any number of reasons. One of the major ones is the massive import of [inaudible] shrimp from China, Vietnam, and other countries. Shrimp has become a commodity instead of a medium-priced to high-priced seafood item that it was when it was being produced domestically. So, you had imports that started particularly after normalization with Vietnam, and China got to where it is. China supplies most of our seafood anyway. Ninety percent of all shrimp consumed in the United States is imported. You're talking about a ten percent share of the market. So, where we had six thousand boats in our heyday in the '70s and those types of years, I would be surprised if there were over a thousand offshore shrimp boats fishing in federal waters today is all.

SS: Do you think it was just survival of the fittest?

BJ: I think it was gasoline prices and overregulation by the government and not enough support from the government to make fair trade. I think the government in some regards was more interested in what they call free trade, which means anybody in the world can sell anything they want to on our market – anything they want to. That has just taken the shrimp industry down. In some cases – last year, I believe, the shrimp were getting less per pound than they were getting in the 1960s. That's all documentable by getting with [inaudible] and seeing the values. But you see shrimp landed in Louisiana for less than a dollar a pound. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that things are not too good for that particular industry.

SS: And when we compare gasoline prices in 1964 to what they are today –

BJ: Unbelievable.

SS: What do you remember about gasoline prices in 1964? What were you paying?

BJ: Whatever it was – we could find out, but whatever it was, it wasn't a major item. We were more worried about insurance costs – the [inaudible] insurance. We were more worried about other things – where you could shrimp and where you couldn't shrimp – than we were about fuel costs. It was not enough to cause you really any great concern.

SS: I know diesel costs more than gasoline, but I guess when I think about the 1960s – and I was just a kid, but I’m thinking like thirty-five cents a gallon for gasoline was what my parents were paying.

BJ: You’re probably in the neighborhood. If someone takes a look at it, those kind of figures – I’d love them to be in a document, but I’d love to see them from some kind of quantifiable source, like some statistics from NMFS and NOAA. I can’t remember the actual per, but I can remember that they weren’t that big a deal and that it never did seem to stop anybody from going shrimping. But it was a different world then. The whole world was different.

SS: Right. I’d love to ask you how. How is it different? That’s a big question.

BJ: The main thing is there was far less government intrusion in all aspects of our lives. Not that I’m against the healthcare bill, because I’m not. And I’m not involved in the discussion with the current or past administrations. It is what it is. But government is more involved in our lives in every aspect than I think it should be, and particularly in the fish business. We could spend a long time talking about where they’re going and how they’re going to put catch shares on shrimp recreational fishermen, and everything else, which will put government in the position of being able to count every fish that’s extracted from the ocean. That’s where they’re going to want to get their royalty. That’s down the line. Just don’t go down that.

SS: [laughter] Okay. Is there anything else you can think of regarding question three, TEDs being viewed by the shrimping industry today?

BJ: I don’t think so. We just have a lot of programs going on under the foundation right now to try to make them better and to try to continue to fine-tune them, trying to use different kinds of webbing, trying to use different kinds of doors – anything that would make the nets more efficient. They have to include the TED, so a lot of work is going on to try and make it survive. But there’s not all that great animosity, angst, and hatred against the TEDs that were there when they first implemented.

SS: It seems like the shrimp fishermen who would have been around in – was it the 1980s when the TEDs really started being put on the boats?

BJ: Yes.

SS: Those fishermen maybe are retiring now, and the younger guys have just been pulling them all their career. Would that be a true statement?

BJ: I think so, and I think that’s the way society works. I think that’s how federal or national policies come into play, and that’s how they’re able to change the national focus by doing that from generation to generation. If you’ve been wearing seatbelts, like all of my kids that wear seatbelts, or you have to put the babies in special chairs, that’s all they know, and that’s what they do. When I grew up, there was no such things as seatbelts. You took the baby and you put it and you sat right there by you. You had five of them. I know one of them would be up on the back, laying across the back window to get out of

harm's way with the other four. But nowadays, I wouldn't think about taking one of my grandchildren or great-grandchildren without putting them in a car seat. It's no different than it is with TEDs.

SS: Right. Our sensibilities change, don't they?

BJ: Yes, they do. A lot of it for the better.

SS: You talked a little bit about number four, the challenges faced in developing TEDs. Do you want to speak to that any more?

BJ: I don't have much more to say. If you have any other questions, I'd be glad to add to it. But I don't think there's a whole lot. It was a bad, bad period, as I told you in that little story I sent you – two sons and two past presidents who were so opposed to it that they just didn't speak to me, still don't, off of the TEDs. That's a real issue, but there's nothing I can do. They felt that strongly about them. They felt that the association was turning on them, and that was based on the information they were getting from the Louisiana and Texas leaders. So I can't do anything about it. I pray for them and move on.

SS: For the record, we're referring to a narrative you wrote entitled "Riding with (Rayburn?)," where you mentioned losing some personal friends, and it caused you pain to not be in contact with their families.

BJ: That's what I'm referring to.

SS: You dated this November 1, 2006.

BJ: That's the day I wrote it.

SS: The day of the writing? Okay. Maybe you could talk a little bit about how early TED models compare to the ones today. I know you described the first one as a big, dangerous box that was swinging around on a boat.

BJ: Yes, and probably would take several strong men to pick it up. It was just a design that the boys over in Pascagoula came up with because that's what they were told to do. There's really no comparison with the original TED and the array of TEDs that we have today, other than there is a slanted device somewhere within the device to let the turtles escape either on the top of the net or on the bottom of the net. I believe they're all shooting out the top nowadays.

SS: In your opinion, do the TEDs work, the current TEDs?

BJ: Yes. Yes, they do. I think that's been proven by any number of observers. I think one of the biggest proofs that NOAA tends to overlook, and the environmentalists would never give us credit for anything, is that of the thousands of boardings the US Coast Guard and the National Marine Fisheries Service law enforcement officers have performed, I think the number of turtles that they actually saw on the boat when the nets

were being retrieved has to be miniscule. What that says is that they're not catching them, that the device is working. And the only thing that NMFS did find one time that I recall was that a Coast Guard report or something indicated that the compliance rate by the domestic shrimpers was ninety-eight percent.

SS: That's pretty high.

BJ: Yes, it was. That don't surprise me because the fines are almost like – cut your leg off if you violate it, if you killed a turtle. So they got that message across loud and clear. If you do that, you'll have an unforgettable experience for you. But you always obviously go before the NOAA judges. I think their record [inaudible] about ninety-nine percent. That's how that works.

SS: You talked some about your experience with protests against the TED regulations. In "Riding with Rayburn," you talked about Governor Edwin Edwards in Louisiana. I'd like to get that on the record.

BJ: Yeah, that was a big meeting. It's pretty much like I said in there. His quotes are direct, right out of the news clippings and other information that I had. It was a pretty good case of demagoguery. When you've got 300 people all leaning in one direction, it'd take a hell of a person to come in there and say, hey, you guys are wrong, wouldn't it? Particularly if you're a governor of a state and you're running for office, and you got to come in there, and you're going to fire up those people and give them false hope. That's what he did. That's what he said. All it did was add fire to the environmentalist point of view, where they could hold up a newspaper, the *Times-Picayune* or whatever it was, to their constituency, which is far greater than the shrimpers' constituency. Well, this is what the governor of the state that produces most of the shrimp has to say about TEDs.

SS: Do you remember a quote to put it on the record?

BJ: It was something to the effect that if it comes down between pulling TEDs or hurting the turtles, then all I can say is goodbye, turtles. Something to that. I'd have to pull it back up. But it's in that context that said, you know, so long, turtles. That's when the crowd went wild and everything else. I wasn't at the meeting. They would have tarred me right there in the hall.

SS: You think so?

BJ: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. There was enough of them to do that. But that's the way – we did not protest TEDs. Our association did not protest TEDs. We tried to work with them from the start, because our board of directors took a stance that the endangered species law was going to be enforced. The best course we could take would be to try and work towards some type of device that could be used and would keep us in business.

SS: Where does your funding come from?

BJ: Well, our funding comes from the fishermen and the fish dealers themselves. And there's not much, at that. They pay a fee to join the Southeastern. There's no federal

grants, no state grants, no any kind of grants. All the money comes from fishing businesses that are members of the association, and they can fund one person. That's me.

SS: When you took a stand to support pulling TEDs, did your contributions drop?

BJ: Oh, yes. [laughter] Oh, yes. Yes, they dropped. We survived. They dropped. We survived. We had been through a fight just as bitter as that in 1964 – the first time I came to work. It was very bitter and very divisive. I was in the shrimp industry. Our association had taken a position that there should be an area set aside in the Tortugas area where the pink shrimp are where no trawling is allowed. Zero trawling, no trawling. Well, this didn't sit well with the people who wanted to catch the hair and eyeballs and anything they could get.

SS: The what? Catch the what, did you say?

BJ: Pardon me?

SS: What did you say they were catching?

BJ: Hair and eyeballs. They were so small, that was about all that they looked like. Going to the nursery here, when the shrimp was so small, that's what they looked like – hair and eyeballs. Just a small size. And what you'd do is you'd cull through many pounds of the small shrimp and pick out any of them that were a bigger size that you could use. That's the kind of the shrimp that was in the nursery here. So anyway, the board voted, and they lost some people at that vote. Then we started working on it, and over a period of maybe ten or twelve years it took, we got it passed through the state legislature. We set aside three million acres where no shrimp trawls can ever go.

SS: Wow. Three million acres.

BJ: Yes. That was about '76 or so. You don't ever see that on any environmental flyer or anything. There's never any mention that the industry itself set aside 3 million acres for no trawling long before [inaudible] were even formed or before the EDF [Environmental Defense Fund?] or anything else. But that fight was far better, because it was within the very membership of Southeastern Fisheries – you know, our base group of guys. I had been in fights before – excuse me.

SS: That's Okay. So, I had a question about that. What was my question? The Dry Tortugas were the nursery areas for the shrimp?

BJ: The pink shrimp, right.

SS: What was happening to those babies that they didn't keep and threw overboard. Did they die?

BJ: Oh, sure. But just because they died overboard, doesn't mean they're totally wasted, because there's all kinds of critters that eat them before they probably get to the bottom. The word bycatch has turned out to be something very nasty. People would have looked

at a bycatch of a porpoise or something like that. But a lot of these critters down there that have been taking in bycatch for a hundred years are short-lived, one-year-old critters that you or I wouldn't know the name of – they recycle. You don't put them in a dump. You catch them and put them overboard, and they're food – right back into the system. Their energy goes right into another critter. That's what happens to the bycatch.

SS: When you're talking about a nursery, and the bycatch is the young hatchlings, so to speak, how does the death of those hatchlings affect the reproduction of the species?

BJ: On shrimp, hardly at all. Each shrimp can do a million eggs. So, if all the eggs lived, you'd be up to your whatever – all the way up in Hattiesburg if every shrimp lived. [inaudible] You don't need that many. But if you have a nursery area like we have, there is no trawling in there. So, there is no bycatch. There [are] no juveniles getting killed or recycled back into the system. The way that area was set was based on scientific evidence that indicated that the preponderance of the juvenile shrimp were located there, and as they grew week by week, their trajectory took them into an offshore course. When they got outside – not all of them, but the preponderance – when they got outside of a certain line, they would be of a size – [inaudible] heads on or seventy tails, which is a size that's big enough to have total reproduction and a size big enough to offer value to the people that are catching them. That's what was used to set that aside, and that's still in play today.

SS: That's a great accomplishment.

BJ: It really, really was. And the state had no money to enforce it, so Captain Pete (Toomer?) and his wife (Jeanette?), they donated a shrimp boat to the State of Florida for use as a patrol vessel [inaudible]. The state used that as the enforcement vessel, which I have pictures of. The state further didn't have much money, so the shrimp industry ended up buying the fuel – of course, it was cheaper at that time – in order to have the state be able to take a shrimp boat as a patrol boat and patrol the area out there at night, which is fifty, sixty miles offshore – some of the parts of where it's located. So, we did an awful lot to protect that resource and to keep that area closed.

SS: Would it be too much trouble and would you be willing to email a copy of that photograph for archiving?

BJ: Sure.

SS: That would be terrific.

BJ: Take a note of that if you would, and then when we finish, Stephanie, if you just say, Bob, you're going to do such-and-such, Okay?

SS: [laughter] Okay. Between the two of us, maybe I'll remember. If I forget it now, I'll email you later about it. Going on to question number eight, have you ever been involved in enforcing compliance regarding the use of TEDs?

BJ: No.

SS: OK. Number nine, how has compliance regarding the use of TEDs changed over the years?

BJ: I just told you, and I think it's still in that ninety, ninety-five, ninety-eight percentile. People are using them. They're pulling it. There are records from the National Marine Fisheries Service showing all of the violations, and I think I saw recently where they issued charges against a boat in Texas, I believe it was, that the TED was sewed up – sewed shut so shrimp could get by. Those statistics for that kind of law enforcement are readily available for you, and I think you can draw your own conclusions as to how significant a problem that is. Having people use them now is not a problem.

SS: Number twelve, how have TEDs affected the shrimp industry?

BJ: Increased costs of operation, the hassle of boardings at sea. Those are pretty much the way that it's affected them. Sometimes, the TED can get clogged up, and then you lose all the shrimp in that particular tow. Things of that nature.

SS: So, shrimp loss, for sure.

BJ: Shrimp loss and hassle.

SS: Do you have any idea what – just ballpark figure – percentage of shrimp loss there might be?

BJ: No. It would vary by shrimp fishery, location, all those things. But I might be able to send you a website or a person within NMFS or at the foundation, (Judy Jameson?), who could give you a lot of background, if that's what you'd like.

SS: Really, I think the museum is just interested in hearing –

BJ: Oh, what I have to say? Okay.

SS: Your words. So that's fine. Thank you, though, for that offer. Oh, I wanted to tell you something that is just a feel-good. I hope it'll make you feel better today. I interviewed a shrimper in Biloxi. His name is Frank Parker. He's an inshore shrimper. He has a small boat. He's the third generation of shrimpers in his family. It's his belief that the TED increased his yield.

BJ: Oh, that's great.

SS: How about that? He's pretty smart, too. He's college-educated, studied marine biology, could have worked in the field of marine biology, but loved to shrimp and just decided to keep on doing it. He's found a way to survive in the current market. He retails some of his own shrimp as well as wholesaling it. He also crabs in the offseason. His wife enjoyed that so much that when he goes out shrimping, she keeps the crabbing going with another little boat. But he just sees the difference in the debris that gets picked up without a TED and the lack of debris and bycatch when he pulls his TED.

BJ: That's not the first time I've heard that. That's good.

SS: I'm sorry?

BJ: Yes, I said that's good to hear. That's not the first time I've heard that. Because it's true; if you can reduce the trash and debris, the bycatch – they have bycatch reduction devices, too, BRDs, on the side – any of that to make a cleaner tow, you have less weight, you have a tendency maybe to get more miles per gallon, less wear and tear. There's just a lot of reasons. So, a lot of people – now, you'd have to admit this person is very well educated, and he knows what it's going to take for him to survive. That's what we'd like to get everybody to understand – that same thing. And more and more probably are.

SS: Would you say you've heard any anecdotal reports that when it comes to sorting out what's kept and what's thrown overboard, that the TEDs give a little advantage there?

BJ: Sure, they do. [inaudible] advantage. We can't get any credit from it from NMFS at all.

SS: Well, is there anything else you wanted to add about TEDs affecting the shrimp industry?

BJ: No.

SS: Okay. Number thirteen, how have TEDs affected the sea turtle population?

BJ: Not much, evidently. The NGOs have a petition filed to make loggerheads endangered, and they were only threatened. So that indicates that the turtle population has gone to hell in a handbasket, which it hasn't.

SS: The loggerheads?

BJ: Yeah, which is the main one that we catch over here. I don't think that some of the environmental organizations will be satisfied until there are no more shrimpers – we're not there – until we're gone. That's my personal belief, and that's my belief that's been honed over many, many years of just dealing with people and seeing how they operate and how little respect our industry and our communities get from the more militant environmentalists who just don't see much use in people like us. Hunters and gatherers – time for us to disappear.

SS: Do you get the feeling that they think we should rely on farming shrimp?

BJ: Well, some of them, like Sylvia Earle, who used to be the chief scientist at NOAA, and is a very world-recognized deep-sea diver and spokesman for the environmental community – she said in the *New York Times* when she was the chief scientist for NOAA, which was in the [inaudible] – her quote was “I had just as soon eat a cocker spaniel as I would a grouper.” What she said was that we really don't need to eat any of those critters. They should be left there as they were originally. We could eat other things.

We don't need to eat anything with a face. And there are a lot of people that feel that way, that we should eat vegetables and fruit, nothing that's alive or has been alive like that. That's quite prevalent in a lot of the people that I have to deal with.

SS: I don't know why that sparked a question for me that I haven't thought to ask anybody until now, but thinking about live marine resources and how they can be used and how they should be used, in all the years that you've been in this business, what do you think is happening with pollution in the ocean making seafood unsafe to eat? I know I'm just blindsiding you with this question.

BJ: Oh, no, I'm very up to date on that. The biggest issue on that type of situation right now is the methylmercury. The mercury issue is being pushed as something that impacts anybody that eats fish. And all the information that's available and out there from Centers for Disease Control, American Heart Association, American Medical Association – all the real organizations that studied these things – those groups, every one of them, says seafood should be consumed. Seafood is good for everybody. Seafood helps slow down dementia. Seafood is good for the heart. Seafood has all of these wonderful attributes. Yet we have a few militant mercury organizations who are in the business to spread their poison that we should not eat fish and that methylmercury is a curse on us. They're wrong. They're wrong. There are several species of fish that have more methylmercury in it than others, and that would be the shark, and that would be the tilefish, and that would be king mackerel. But the levels that's being used by those groups primarily are levels that have been designated by the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], which is one-half the amount of levels of concern of the FDA [Food and Drug Administration]. So, from my perspective, that's one of the biggest things. The pollution part, where you're putting fuel waste and everything in the water, is a big problem. Thankfully, it doesn't seem to get into the meat of the fish. It may have it in its stomach, but it gets filtered and is not the concern. The question that came to my mind on that was this about pollution, thinking of all of the comments that are made about it over time and everything. Then I look at [Hurricane] Katrina, and I'm saying, you know, every bit of stored chemical toxins, waste, or everything else in that city when it got flooded and the levees broke, and it all went into the Gulf of Mexico – was there an impact on seafood? Did it make it all poison? The answer the government has put out – it has not, that the dilution took care of pollution. Which I don't think is the way we should handle it. I think we should handle it ourselves, and we should make our sewage better than just having septic tanks and all those things. But the pollution part of seafood, particularly seafood taken in offshore waters, is a non-issue.

SS: That's interesting.

BJ: We have an ocean outflow coming out of Dade and Broward County – that's the two southernmost counties.

SS: An ocean outflow pipe?

BJ: An ocean outflow pipe. And the Environmental Protection Agency has issued a permit to the cities of Miami and Fort Lauderdale and others that you can put three hundred million gallons of your sewage into the ocean every day. Every day. It's been

that way for fifteen or twenty years. They assume that all of the pollution that goes through that pipe received tertiary treatment – third-degree treatment. They’ve taken the solids, they’ve taken a little bit more out, and then you find you’ve got tertiary-treated water coming out. But we don’t think there’s any way possible that those antiquated facilities can get that water to tertiary. Anyway, it goes in there, and nobody seems to bat an eye in the government. Nobody seems to care. But you let a shrimp boat put a drop of oil to cause a sheen, or you get some dead fish or something into a [inaudible] dumpster, and it’s like the whole world down on you. That leads people like me and others in this particular area – if you’re big enough, it really doesn’t matter what you do.

SS: So, the shrimpers are easy to scapegoat?

BJ: We are about the easiest there is. And if you want to raise a lot of money, you want to start a new group, save the whatever it is, get a picture of a shrimper – it might be from Bangladesh or Russia or wherever, but anyway, it’s a picture of a boat with a critter in it – and just go around to your friends and say, “We got to save this. We’ve got to stop these shrimpers today.” It works, Stephanie. It works. The bad part is you tell enough people, particularly young people, you give them stories like that, they honestly believe it. So that when they move out from the indoctrination or the one-sided forum that they attend, and they go stand in front of Kroger or Publix and hold up a sign that says we got to stop the whatever it is, they’re honestly thinking – they actually believe what they’re saying, and there’s no way you can change them. I had that brought home to me with the Florida net ban. I would approach the young girls and the young college men and say, did you know that the last porpoise caught in a net in Florida was caught by a marine lab? [inaudible] oh, that’s not true. I said, oh, yes, it is. But it didn’t matter. Nothing that I could say mattered because I’m tainted. I’m one of them. I’m on the other side. Whereas, my professor out here at FSU [Florida State University] has told me we got to stop all this trawling over coral, and we need to stop it today. I say, the first time a net trawls across coral, the net’s gone.

SS: The coral utterly destroys the net?

BJ: Totally. You avoid hangs. You avoid any outcropping – an old concrete block or a piece of airplane or whatever – you avoid that like the plague.

SS: If you know it’s there, you avoid it.

BJ: Absolutely. Otherwise, you just might as well give up your net. But you can look at pictures of a giant trawler off of Zimbabwe or someplace pulling a giant trawl over the bottom, and it’s just taking everything. Well, that trawl probably could be – a lot of it could be almost like a metal trawl. It could have a device in front that just knocks down corals and does all those things. We don’t have that in Florida. We don’t have it in America.

SS: Good.

BJ: Who would want to do it? Who would stand for it? It’s a false issue. But it is really a hard issue if you tell somebody that this is happening right on our shores, and we’ve got

to stop them. Please send me a hundred dollars. It works. It works. So we run up against that all the time.

SS: Interesting. Do you think that some of the conflict that exists between environmental groups and shrimpers may be motivated by somebody wanting to raise funds?

BJ: Without a doubt. Without a doubt. Friends come and go, but a good enemy will last you a whole career. That's what we have. You've got to have a crisis to get something going, and we're handy. We don't have an office that has people that say, "We saw this in this newspaper, and it's wrong because of these reasons," and then give them the reasons and give them a URL site or some quantifiable information that can back up your point of view. We don't have anybody who can do that. You have all the organizations, particularly environmental organizations like EDF and Pew Trust and Biological – whatever that guy's name is out in California. They have unlimited funds, and a lot of it comes from the government. Unlimited. But I don't think that's what you want to get into [inaudible] because I've been fighting the PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] people down in [inaudible] and other places for years. They had a program out – and they had it on the internet teaching the kids that fish is the same as kittens. "Johnny, you wouldn't cook a kitten, would you?" Programs to get them to adopt a fish. Doing things like that – comparing fish to kittens and putting that in the child's mind to me just crosses the line. PETA people have no morals or anything else as far as we can tell, as far as their opinion of human beings versus animals. It's not a question.

SS: That is very interesting. I'm glad that you touched on that. If it weren't for time limits, we could talk about it some more. But I guess we should move on in these questions.

BJ: Yes, ma'am.

SS: [laughter] So you talked about TEDs affecting the sea turtle population. Question number fourteen is why are sea turtles important?

BJ: Let me say this. Like any other critter in the ocean, we think turtles are part of the entire ecosystem, and we think they should be protected. They should never be extinct. Unfortunately for us, marine turtles have reached almost a spiritual level. Many of the activists to us look like they're worshipping at the altar of the turtle. It seems to us that the turtle is more important than the human being, and that if anything is going to be done that's going to have any interaction with the turtle by the human being, any anthropogenic contact at all, then the human has to leave. I think that's wrong. I don't think they deserve that status.

SS: You talked a little bit about the penalty for netting sea turtles. That's been covered, actually, quite well in other interviews. So, is there anything you want to add to that?

BJ: Not really. The penalties are high. They're punitive. You can go to jail. They should do that. Now, you can probably go out and bring in five hundred pounds of marijuana and get a week in jail, but if you [inaudible] with a TED, you may go to jail.

SS: That's right, yes. Other people have mentioned with repeat offenders that they might take the catch, they might take the boat, and they might suspend a license.

BJ: Yes, repeat offenders need to be treated different than first-timers.

SS: So, there's some pretty stiff penalties, and they act well, I think, to get people to use the TEDs.

BJ: Sometimes, you have to use the hammer.

SS: Right, yeah. Well, that covers all the questions that the museum was interested in. If I had been doing this interview with you strictly for the Center for Oral History, we would have started out with question number sixteen, just to find out a little bit about you. I don't know if you have time to do this. We've been at this an hour, and you had mentioned that was the time that you had. So, it's really up to you if you want to go through the rest of the questions or just stop here.

BJ: We can go through a few more. I was going to tell you, on sixteen and seventeen, if you wanted, I would send you a little story.

SS: Yes, I'd love that.

BJ: I think you'd like that. I got one that I did – I write for my grandkids primarily, because I know I'm not going to be here when they're going to want to have a lot of questions. So, I do things like that. I did one – a little short story, "Living at the Foot of the Bridge," that tells a little bit about where I came from, what makes me what I am. Then the same thing for seventeen – a little story on that.

SS: OK, great.

BJ: And eighteen was I'm executive director. Nineteen was I do ten or more hours a day solving problems, sometimes seven days a week, a lot of times six days a week, and it's because I have a job that I love and that I know that I am involved in trying to save a culture. So, doing that now instead of being out ten years, saying, "Oh, why didn't I do such-and-such" because they were taking the culture away? I just feel very blessed and involved knowing that if there's anything that I can do as an association executive to protect and maintain the fisheries and fisheries community, then I have given a little bit to saving our heritage and our culture, and I'm willing to donate those hours that I have to do to do that, because I think that maybe there's a higher power that has pointed me in that direction. So, I tend to go in that direction.

SS: That's in response to what a typical day at work is for you?

BJ: Typical day – they call me the fireman.

SS: The fireman?

BJ: Yes, the fireman. I put out fires. I solve problems. I had a call just before you came on the line from Darden Restaurants, which is Red Lobster and all those things. They wanted to know about how to handle inventories for their crawfish that they had in their freezer now that the crawfish season is over on April 1. I told them. There'll be things like that all day long in addition to – I'm sort of the go-to man for anybody that has a problem with FDA, with maintaining their proper fisheries regulation. That's a go-to thing. We have a group of environmentalists, the Environmental Defense Fund, that's trying to make every fisherman have a catch share. There would be no more open fisheries at all. All fisheries would come under their thumb. I'm fighting on that. I'm working with the mercury task force.

SS: So, for the record, how do you define catch share?

BJ: You define catch share as the government awarding of a certain number of pounds to a fisherman based on his historical landings that can only be harvested by him. They give him the fish. Like if your record shows that you caught hundred thousand pounds of red snapper the past few years, and you have records that demonstrate that, then they set up a total allowable catch, and they say anybody that's caught more than eighty-five-hundred pounds a year is in the pool, then you get your number of fishermen and you take that total allowable catch and you divide it among the lucky fishermen that were selected for catch shares. Then once you get your hundred thousand pounds – and you can catch that any time of the year, any way you want. It's a different thing. It has some advantages for the person knowing they've got the catch share, because he doesn't have to go out when the wind is blowing. He doesn't have to race out there the first ten days and catch his allotted quota – things of that nature. But the downside is only the lucky ones who are assigned to catch shares get to remain in the fishery. The rest of them become plumbers or whatever it is they can do. You'll know probably better than I do if you come from particularly a rural coastal community – [if] you're a fisherman. If you lose your job, the job market is not very big – what you have to offer. So, your life is interrupted and changed in a way that'll never be the same.

SS: Very profound change.

BJ: Oh, unbelievable. So, I'm working on that full time. That's just an example of what I do. I mean, I'm not bragging. I'm just an old, pretty well healthy senior citizen who has accumulated a lot of contacts over forty-seven years in fishing, and I'm able to do things with a phone call sometimes that somebody else couldn't do in a week. Just the way it is. It is what it is. Your next question was something about Gulf of Mexico.

SS: What kinds of turtles are found in the Gulf of Mexico?

BJ: Loggerhead, green, Ridley, and leatherback – all four of the main things. The next one you wanted to know [inaudible] sea turtles – before TEDs, turtles could be entrapped for hours. In other words, there was no rules for it, and you had no TED. So, if you was on a trawl for two hours or three hours or whatever, then whatever got into that net at the first part of the tow was going to be there at the end of the tow. So that TED could be brought through the water that whole time, and they don't have enough strength to maintain their breathing if they're under the water and going through that motion. So

when you had the TEDs come out, then you were able to shoot the TEDs out the top or the bottom, so the death rate has to have gone way down.

SS: So, the sea turtles can stay in a net for a certain period of time without drowning.

BJ: A short period of time, right.

SS: But if the tow time is long and they're caught in the net, then they just run out of time and drown?

BJ: That's right. That's right. That could be avoided with the TED. There are really no gillnets out there that I'm familiar with.

SS: For the record, what is a gillnet?

BJ: A gillnet is a fishing device composed of webbing of differing sizes stretched either in a straight line to catch fish or is used to encircle fish as they are in the ocean. The size of the mesh in the gill net predetermines the size of the fish that's going to be caught. That's one of the most efficient devices for allowing small, juvenile fish to go right through the net and only harvest the [inaudible] fish that you wish to harvest. So, they've just [inaudible]. It's not allowed in Florida at all.

SS: Does bottom trawling harm the ecosystem of the Gulf of Mexico?

BJ: Absolutely not. I'll tell you why, from my perspective. Shrimp trawls don't drag over coral, like I told you before. If they dragged over coral, they wouldn't have a net. If they dragged over any heavy outcropping, they wouldn't have a net. They mostly drag over smooth, hard bottoms or mud, depending on the type of shrimp and the time of the year. Shrimp trawls have been trawling out there for over hundred years – a hundred years. It's so different than the environmentalists who show a bulldozer underwater taking out big coral trees and beautiful plants and everything. It's just a fire to inflame people that that's what bottom trawls do. It's a big lie. They do not do that. In many instances, the shrimpers shrimp in the exact same places that they've been shrimping all their lives, because that's where the shrimp congregate at that particular time and that particular size, and there are certain things that the shrimp likes, and the shrimper goes to catch them. But he's not bulldozing. The picture of the shrimp trawler morphed into a bulldozer is a powerful tool for raising a lot of money for these groups who – I think they just want the money so that they can have a steady job, so they can build their coffers by using real people as targets. That's my take on it. I'd be glad to answer any other question that you have on that.

SS: I think that covers it. Number twenty-three, are there other alternatives to TEDs that might lessen the harm done to turtles by shrimping? Do you know of anything else?

BJ: No.

SS: Okay. Are there any other methods of catching shrimp besides bottom trawling?

BJ: Not economically. Because the other questions that came after that was about midwater trawls.

SS: Right, that some people say midwater trawling is relatively benign compared to bottom trawling. Did you think that's true?

BJ: It is, but let me tell you this. You could trawl midwater for a hundred years and never catch a shrimp. It'd be benign; it'd be a clean net. You wouldn't have no shrimp in it. Yes, it is. You wanted to know if any of the fish that they had up in New England was in the Gulf. The only one would be squid.

SS: So, we have no cod, halibut, or rockfish, but we do have squid.

BJ: Right. We do have squid. There's *Illex* and *Loligo*, and they're out in deeper water. I don't think we have much of a fishery for them. But they're out there. The other one was the depth.

SS: Yes, to what depths are shrimpers trawling in the Gulf?

BJ: My response was it depends on the shrimp, and it would be from the inside of the bays where you are to the deepest parts of the ocean, if they were going after raw red shrimp. So, you could be down eleven-hundred feet or more to catch raw red. You could be four feet if you were a bay shrimper catching those. So, if you go out regularly on the offshore, they would probably be inside of a hundred-and-twenty feet. But again, white shrimp are always close to shore. The brinies get in there, too, and your hoppers. The pink, by and large, are mostly from Florida, and they're well offshore. They would be in sixty, eight, hundred feet of water out there. So that's where that is. It just covers everything. The next one was you asked me about the dead zone.

SS: Right. What is the dead zone, and why is it there?

BJ: Well, it's an area off Louisiana that has very little oxygen, if any, so there's no living organisms. It seems to be growing, though it has changed in years, bigger and smaller, but it does seem to be growing. And from our point of view, though not any government agency will get on it and fight it, we believe that it's based primarily on all the detritus and toxins and pollution that flows out of the mighty Mississippi because you're picking up stuff from way, way up – I don't know, from Minnesota or Michigan or wherever it starts. You're going down through states and areas where there's farming and manufacturing and every type of human activity, and a lot of that waste gets in there, and a lot of it comes out at the other end. To us, it seems like it could be the culmination of the right mix of the right bad stuff in a certain area that formed that. But that's a hypothesis. I don't have any science or no replication at my disposal to come to that conclusion. But we don't know where else to look at this particular time. The dead zone really doesn't have much effect on shrimp, because you can't shrimp there. If it came over areas where there was a lot of shrimp – if there was a major reef area where you had a lot, of course it'd have a big effect on there. As far as sea turtles, I've not heard of any of them being killed out there. It doesn't mean that they weren't. But they have fins and tails, and they can move on. As long as there's a place to avoid it, I think they will. That

would be different if you had this type of thing at the mouth of Tampa Bay or one of your bays in Mississippi, where you had to go through it in order to get out to deeper water.

SS: Right. Number twenty-eight, are there coral reefs in the Gulf of Mexico, and does trawling harm them? We've talked about how –

BJ: There may be some, but we don't trawl on them.

SS: Right. The shrimpers avoid trawling the coral, because it tears up the nets.

BJ: Absolutely, or there wouldn't be any shrimp in there anyway. You get a ride on some coral, that tends to have a great population of fish. If you were a little shrimp among all those fish, I don't think you'd last long. A lot of things – the coral issue is a red herring, pardon the pun. [inaudible] as far as the living marine resources, you've got all of that right there listed. It'd be too long to mention all the living marine resources that are in the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico is like a cornucopia for the rest of the nation as far the diversity, the amounts, the healthfulness and sustainability of all kind of seafood.

SS: So, it's a particularly rich place in terms of life?

BJ: Oh, highly. And it's set up to continue that way. In some parts, you have a very narrow, shallow shelf, like off of parts of Florida, where you have good water for growing all kinds of things, from spiny lobster to stone crabs to shrimp to fish to whatever. And you can get around to the deeper areas, where you have highly migratory tuna and all kind of fish. We've got just a wonderful area that could support fish forever if we don't mess it up.

SS: How could we mess it up?

BJ: You could just maybe pollute it so bad in certain areas. You could have a natural phenomenon. I'm not necessarily a person that believes in the whole world going to hell because of climate change. It may be we're just in a particular epoch or episode where the temperature has changed, but it's been doing that since the beginning of time. But you could have something that would come in there in, say, Florida Bay, and the water would be too warm, or the water would be too cold, and all of the larvae and shrimp and the other critters get into this water that would kill them. So, if you kill all of the larvae or most of the larvae, then you'd have a tremendous impact on the shrimp and the fish that were depending on that. If you do something to any of your inshore ecosystems, which are really the growing grounds for most all of our fishes, other than the pelagics, you could have a significant impact on the destruction of fish in certain areas. I doubt that we're going to pollute the whole shallow-water area of the Gulf of Mexico by any one event, but you could have events where at the wrong time of the year, it would have a devastating impact. That's what I mean by that.

SS: What kind of sea vegetation is on the sea floor of the Gulf of Mexico?

BJ: All kinds. I said [inaudible] Library at USM all my notes of it. It's all down there – just everything that you want.

SS: We've already talked about what happens to bycatch that die when shrimpers net them. They throw them overboard, and they're eaten by the –

BJ: Everything else.

SS: – the shark and the dolphins that have come to the buffet, right?

BJ: It's every kind of fish and bird, critter that's out there. They follow shrimp boats around knowing they're going to get a smorgasbord as soon as they clear the nets and cull the product.

SS: That's so funny. It's the bird and fish culture. They know. They've learned.

BJ: They have. You better believe it – what lessons have been learned [inaudible] – I learned you got to do what the federal government tells you, and you got to learn to cope with the one-size-fits-all mantra. That's what bugs me. Everybody's got to do the same thing. The last one was is there anything you'd put on the record? I would say this in closing. More federal effort should be placed on saving fishing communities, fishing jobs, and the culture that helps feed America.

SS: Okay. Well, thank you so much for giving me your time and information. I really appreciate it.

BJ: My pleasure. I'm going to send you those two little short stories for you to get a better handle on what one old man thinks, okay?

SS: All right. That's great.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----
Reviewed by Molly Graham 9/24/2021