

**Name of Narrator:** Morris Butler (MB)

**Interviewer(s):** Samantha Sheppard (SS) and Megan Bull (MB) with the permission of Morris Butler for the research project “Boat Stories”

**Primary Investigator:** Dr. Jennifer Sweeney Tookes, Georgia Southern University

**Others Present:** No other people were present.

**Transcriber:** Megan R. Bull

**Date of interview:** January 29, 2022

**Place:** McIntosh County, Georgia

**Duration of Interview:** One hour, fourteen minutes and seven seconds (1:14:07)

**Repository for the interview:** The audio recording will be uploaded to the website, Voices from the Fisheries (<https://voices.nmfs.noaa.gov/>)

**Context for the interview:** Student interviewers sit down with Morris Butler, a local shrimper.

General Description of Contents: Morris Butler talks about his various experiences on fishing vessels in Georgia over the years. He discusses his close relationship with shrimpers in this community and how his father first introduced him to shrimping at a young age.

**00:00**

**SS:** All right. This is an interview with Mr. Morris Butler on January 29, 2022. This interview is being conducted in Belleville, Georgia. As part of the research project and interview collections titled boat stories. The interviewers are Sam Sheppard and Megan Bull. All right, could you tell us about your current or most recent fishing vessel? What's the name, did it have any other names before this?

**00:31**

**MB:** You mean the last one I was shrimping on? Last one I was shrimping on is the boat name is *The Sundown* from Valona, Georgia, that's the home port, and I would have still been shrimping now but I had a health issues and that caused me to you know, retire early. But uh, thank God I'm still here. I mean, you know, all my buddies they keep me up in shrimp and fish so, I must have willed some good to me when I was shrimping. And it was a whole lot of fun but I had fun doing it. You know, doing shrimping and did some long line fishing too. They call it, and you go off shore, they called it 200 mile rake fishing, where you catch the big ol' group of them, from 20 pounds 40 pounds. That was a lot of fun. It was an experience, I had fun doing it and we made a little bit of money, you know, at times, but not every time we went out and we found fish. That is, it's a nice experience but the shrimping that was the best time of my life because we shrimp from here off the coast of McIntosh, all the way up to Freeport, Texas, you know, and it was a lot of fun. Lots of fun and made good money at it at times. Most of the time I made money, so I raise five daughters on the shrimping industry so I thank God the most of it was mighty good. And, you know, if I still could have been able to do it now, I still would be doing it right now but I'm not, you know, health wise, I'm not able to do it anymore, not to go shrimping, but I thank God for the good times I did have on the shrimp boat. Yeah, traveling and meeting a whole lot of different fisherman's and it was just an experience, you know, you had to have been a shrimper to experience those things. I mean, you know, we just, we all had a bond, you know, like, you know, we had each other back or whatever and it was just a lot of fun. You know, going shrimping, just to actually see, how, you know, how does it the operation works, like catching shrimp, its a art to it, you know, some people do good with it and, you know, some people don't do that well. But thank God the last 10 years I shrimp, I shrimp on *The Sundown*, and you know, he's one of the, he was one of the greatest fishermen. He was Godfathered in from his dad, I worked with his dad and then years later, I got a job with him and his son Fred. But it was a whole lot of fun and shrimping with Fred, he very rarely stayed out on the boat, we'd mostly go four o'clock in the morning, mostly four or five o'clock in the afternoon. We you know, we headed back home sometime later than, you know, in the afternoon but he very rarely

stayed. We go four o'clock in the morning, but we mostly coming back home 99.9% of the time, we're coming back home in the afternoon. And thank God for taking us out and bringing us back home safe is because some people you know, just don't make it a you know, something happen to them on the boat, you know injury or whatever. Thank God for covering the vessels to go shrimping and find some shrimp. But it was just an experience. You know, if I had to do it all over again, I would be willing to do it again. And it was just a whole lot of fun. And you know and made money, you know doing it. And I just thank God for my dad. He was a shrimper and I got into shrimping. I can remember going shrimping, when I was somewhere around 10 years old and I couldn't sleep at night when I knew I was going out on the boat with my dad the next morning. Any noise someone make, someone walk or whatever that night you thinking thats him up getting ready to go shrimping and I didn't want to miss that. He wasn't gonna wake you up the day, where if you going in the morning you better be ready, that was his words and we used to go four o'clock in the morning, but three o'clock come I be watching the clock, get dress, get me some soda pop, water, whatever else I was gonna take on the boat, I'd be ready. When he come out of his room to go I be ready to go. It was just fun and I was a young fella and I just said, Man, this is what I want to do. And it was just a experience, you know, to see the porpoises and just you know, and what you bycatch and stuff like that it just was a whole lot of fun.

### **06:05**

You know, to go shrimping and you know, be able to tell my classmates when I get back to school, about shrimping, and the year I graduated from school, my a bunch of my classmates, their dads were shrimpers too and it was just fun, you know, talking to each other about what we caught over the weekend, and it was just, shrimping is just a different world. I mean, you know, you have to have been there to, to really, you know, get the experience and, and get to really know what you're talking about. And some people don't make shrimpers, you know, they just can't, you know, they can't cut it. They can't cut the work part and the motion of the ocean and some people just can't do it. But now thank God I was fortunate that I was 10 years old, my dad and up until I quit shrimping a few years back I was I was very, very fortunate because I never got seasick because it was just a whole lot of fun. I guess because my dad you know I want to have my work and you know picking the shrimp up and separating the fish and just just doing whatever I could do to help because it was fun for me. And you know, gave you a little, little money at the end of the week. But mine was the beginning of the week because we had to go back to school Monday, I used to go with him on Saturdays and Sundays and summer came, oh man, that was a whole that was a different ballgame because we used to go every day. You know to get

it was just a thrill, every day to get up there to go out on the boat, it was just nice. Something, different world, it's a different world out there. You know, smelling the salt air and you get to eat all the shrimp and fish that you want. I mean, you know, I mean until you get tired of it. You just don't know no more back when I first started going on, that's mostly what my dad used to cook is shrimp or either fish or either crabs or something off the ocean. They lived off the ocean. Like a lot of people said they lived off the land, we lived off the ocean, either fried shrimp, shrimp and gravy, I mean shrimp and something, we was like Forrest Gump back in the day. I mean, we mostly had shrimp four times a week but we you know, it was just different until you just didn't want no more. Shrimping and like I say, shrimping is a different world. I mean, you have to really go out on the boat to really know what I'm talking about. We had good days and you know, you have good days and bad days. You know, some days, shrimp were plentiful and some days they were not. And the days they were not those are the days that you come you know you go and come back early, you know, but if the days they are plentiful, you know, God gonna catch you that day, you know before you get you shrimp all day long, much as long as possible until the sun started going down and then you start taking the nets up and going home. Back when I first started with my dad, you could have shrimp and they still have the sounds open. We had like Sapelo sound, that was the most popular, then you had Doboy Sound and that's the right around here but you had a Altamaha sound, you had a Cumberland Island, Cumberland Sound, you know all different sounds towards the southern, they used to open at certain time of the year, certain days of the week and that was it was plenty shrimp back in those days because they used to open this, I figure when they used to keep the sounds open there was more shrimp because it kept the shrimp moving back and forth in and out the sound but I used to like those days because the old days when the sound open, I didn't go to school that day because it mostly was in September. Oh no, I say no man I'm going shrimping with daddy tomorrow and I used to always go on the boat it was just a whole lot of fun. Back in when I first started going out with my dad we only had two nets but a

### **11:00**

I'm thinking 19..maybe 19 I'm not gonna, I reckon its gonna be close, maybe 1979, went to four nets instead of two nets somewhere around 1979. And it was a struggle at first because you know trying to get it right you know where the, get the nets where they can spread, you know prop where they don't get together and stuff like that but, but finally and then within a year's time you know we all got it all figured out. And it was just different in the catch, you know you catch a third more than you would have with the two nets and you know with the four nets it was just amazing. You know when they were kids

but also you had double the work if you had a problem you get em tied up together or you know bogged up or whatever but we all through the years you know you got it magnified, you know. That was the way to go four nets, and they did everybody went to four nets from East Coast all the way over to the West Coast it was just that was the way to go to catch shrimp, the most production in shrimping but shrimping is the thing. It was a thing and I still have a few friends I have, I think maybe two classmates that, that is all we did. You know most 90% of the time that's all we mostly did because our dad was shrimpers and it was just it was a it was a great living. I mean, you know you get to have all the shrimp and fish that you want or crabs that you want or whatever else you want to catch to bring home and give to your friends and you know, you stay and you made money off of the shrimp because that's most of what he was out there after was shrimp and it was just a whole lot of fun and we got to travel because we... farthest I've ever been on a shrimp boat is Freeport, Texas. We left from here from Belleville, Georgia and went all the way to Freeport, Texas and it took us a whole week to get there that's traveling day and night, nonstop and we went all the way to Freeport Texas and it was it was just an experience, not my sky and water. I mean, you know for a weekend, all the rest you needed. I mean, it was just a whole lot of fun and we got blessed and last time we went over there, the weather was real I mean it just was peaceful and we got to travel and the boat made good, good speed and went from Belleville all the way to Freeport, Texas and how long we stayed over there and shrimped, maybe two months, that year, and then we took us a week to get back and it was just a different experience because the shrimp over there are pink shrimp. I mean, I mean, I'm sorry, the shrimp in Key West are pink shrimp and Texas are brown shrimp and it was just the grow. They start off small and every week you go out, they grow a size you know until they get to maturity and most people try to catch the biggest shrimp, that's you know the biggest shrimp the more money that they bring in. Shrimping is the thing you know it's picked back up within the last couple of years it picked back up a whole lot even the price you know for the product, at one time it was on the low low side and you know the costs of equipment was almost overtaking you know the industry and now the price of shrimp is up and

### **15:47**

but the one thing now, as the price increase on this, on the product, on the shrimp, the price of fuel is increasing too but thank God the price of the shrimp is overtaking the price of the fuel so you know the boats to be able to operate. But thank God for you know, the University of Georgia they be helping the fishermans out, like with grants and you know, just funds that the government have to subsidize you know, they catch. So I do thank God for that within the last few years on that part and like I said, we

went from first of all we used to fish with one net and then they went to two nets and now you see now they're up to four nets and it's just it's just a different world with the four nets instead of the two you know, two nets they call it the two rig. They have four nets now and more power in the boats and the more power take more fuel and the more power you have and I say power that means two motors, some boats have two engines some of them have one big, big powered engine and the more power you have I mean the faster you can move the nets and your catch is greater because you can cover more territory. I love the shrimping all the time that I did it because it was a it was just a different experience from when I was a kid until I started doing it on my own. Yes, I can remember when I got my first job on a shrimp boat. It was, it was a summer I graduated school in 1975. I got a job with a man, his name's was Clarence, Captain Clarence Baker and that was the summer of 1975 and I got a job shrimpin' with him and it was it was mostly fun to me because I was really young out of school and got a paycheck every week and I can tell you, like I said, you know you have shrimp this, whatever your bycatch is that you don't sell but most of that beyond the boat that means you know trying to sell the shrimp or fish and when I say fish I mean whiting or flounder but all the rest is fish you catch, you know that's mostly they call it bycatch you know you can't sell so, it's be good product you give it to someone or take it home or just whatever. You know you could do with it people be around a dock asking for fish but it used to, fish used to be real plentiful back in the day like in the 70s and the 80s, and when the 90s came about we start pulling the turtle excluder and fish-eye, and when I say turtle excluder that means is a round device that you put in in a web and then put it in the net and it's shoots the turtle out the net so it won't get drowned, you know by catching it in the all the way down into the net and the fish-eye it puts down helps down on the bycatch, you know it shoots the fish most of you know 90% of the fish it shoots it out the net so you won't have a boatload of fish you know that's going to be dead. You know they get out and so they could live. But I say shrimping is, it was just a different experience, especially if you ever been out on a boat before, you know exactly what I'm talking about. If I had to do it all over again I would from day one up until now, you know, I had no regrets and no remorse about it. But uh, you know, like I said we had some good days and I say good days I mean great catch and then sometimes it was nothing and you had a different change in the direction of the wind,

### **20:31**

Whether it get stormy for a few days, when I say stormy, I mean the northeast wind be blowing but you know after the northeast winds gonna stop you know, the water gonna be muddy and wow, it's just a different world. I mean God, then sometimes you can load the boat in one day and then sometimes you

know, just just be you know, enough to make proper profit to get by on one day. But like I say, shrimping is great. I'll tell any man now see if he didn't have a job, shrimping is a thing you can get into now, make some fast money for a few years and yeah, he could survive because the price of shrimp is way up from what it used to be, you know, used to be like, 3 or \$4, now the price of shrimp is over \$7 a pound. So that's, that's great. I mean, you know, you go out and catch you 20 boxes, that's \$14,000 and then sometimes you have one of them, you caught 20 boxes in one day and you know, but you know, don't get like that all the time but that's a, with the way the price is, that's great. I'm gonna just thank God for looking out and blessing the fishermen through the years. You know, to to be able to go out and find shrimp from the East Coast all the way over to the West Coast and you know, we had some great captains who really know how to shrimp, to go and find out, you know, the best spot best fishing or bottom but I gotta say shrimping is great. I trying to remember the best time I ever had shrimping was in Freeport, Texas.

### **23:00**

That was back in 1981, yeah, that's the most shrimp I ever seen in my life. We had a smaller net, we had the four nets, which had a smaller net called a trinet and you pull it out to test see what you catchin' while you're dragging. There was so much shrimp over there, you could... the fisherman said you could walk on em, it was just that thick, and I never seen shrimp like that in my life. You could fit your shrimp over there at night, and uh we started off time the sun goes down and get dark and we had to quit about 10, 11 o'clock. Still the next morning it was just that many shrimp, you caught that many enough. So you had to try to get them you know process and get them on ice and it lasted like that for about maybe three weeks and you know it fizzles on out, but thats the most shrimp ever seen in my life full of, full the boat up with shrimp in five days, five nights as the most obviously the fastest I've ever seen in my entire life, and not only we were able to let, there was hundreds of boats over there, back then it was plenty boats and went into the dock to unload the shrimp nothing but boats and everybody had a boat full of shrimp. I mean it was just they were just plentiful that year. I think that was a record year over in, in the Gulf but I prefer shrimping over here and on the East Coast, you know it's just a different thing about white shrimp, pink shrimp and brown shrimp. Most everybody say that the white shrimp that we catch here on the East Coast is better shrimp, they have the best taste, but the pink shrimp, they have like a to me they have like a iodine taste and the brown shrimp that you catch over in Texas they still have like, not it's not a sweeter taste than the shrimp we catch here on the east coast, most of the time we... you catch enough here to make ends meet, when I say ends meet me I mean boat have expenses like fuel,

ice, and oil you don't have enough to operate and you know then it fizzle down to the crew making you know a paycheck this you know it was a whole lot of fun, you know when I did it. Right now I thank God for fixin' it where the shrimpers are really getting paid right now for the shrimp that they catch. I mean \$7.50, \$7.75 a pound that's a lot of money. For what it used to be 2 or \$3 a pound for shrimp. It's so expensive now for this shrimp you can't you can't afford not to go out shrimping. You have to try to follow the shrimp and try to catch what they can catch because there's only take a small amount, enough to make it profitable. You know, I took my hat's off to the guys who still are shrimping because it was just a great thing, to be a shrimper. We have some ladies shrimp too, you know, they fathers had boats and they just really liked it too, shrimping is great.

**27:25**

**SS:** Do you think you could talk about *The Sundown* a little more, what was it made of?

**27:31**

**MB:** Well, it's a 60, I think it's like 60 foot boat, it has two motors and when I first worked on that boat back in the 80s it was with Captain Bobby Todd, and he was what do you call, was one of the greatest shrimper on record. He caught the most shrimp, and he only went mostly to the one place and it's called blackbeard hole and after he got sick and died, his son Fred, got the boat and he was godfathered in because he had all the equipment on the boat, had all the readings, and had all the plot lines and all he had to do, anyone except a blind man could could go take that boat and catch shrimp because it already had mapped out and he was real good and he, well he's still good because he's still kind of young. He's in his 50s still and he was a very easy, he is a great shrimp catcher because the most shrimp on the East Coast he caught at a place called blackbeard hole ever since back in 50s and Fred is a godfathered in from his dad and he pulls a four nets and has two motors with about, I don't know 7-800 horsepower that's a lot and it gets you covered the ground in a time and a half more than most of the boats to shrimp and it just it was a nice boat to work on. In the last 10 years I think I shrimp with Captain Fred, you know on that boat. Made a whole lot of money most every year, I didn't ever not make any money, at the end of the shrimp season.

**30:00**

**SS:** What was your role on the boat? Were you captain, striker?

**30:03**

**MB:** No I was a striker, Fred was the captain. Oh yeah, I was striker and I had to be the cook too, cook mostly one meal of the day, breakfast you know, cause they mostly coming home, eat a sandwich in the

middle of the day from lunchtime you get hungry or whatever sometimes we stayed out, but mostly came home every day.

**30:37**

**SS:** Do you know if this boat had other names before *The Sundown* or if anyone owned it before?

**30:41**

**MB:** No, when it came brand new built it was named *The Sundown* never had a different name change it was always named *The Sundown*. Well when I was talking to Captain Fred he was telling me he was a little boy, little young boy 18 years old, he went with his dad to go get the boat when it was built brand new. That's all his family did too was shrimp. It was always named *The Sundown* and everybody know the way that *The Sundown* works from sunup to sun down so he gives the rigger the proper name, *The Sundown*.

**31:38**

**SS:** Is that boat similar to other boats currently operating in Georgia?

**31:42**

**MB:** Yes, yeah well you know it's they have a lot of boats, it has two motors in it. It was, it was one of the first ones that had two, was built with two motors back in the '60s, 1968, '69 or whatever like that, but it's been repowered you know it started off with like a low power and then now its up to the highest power almost to the highest power you could have in a shrimp boat.

**32:17**

**SS:** Is there anything unique or special about this boat?

**32:20**

**MB:** Well it has a whole lot of power and it's shallow built, when I say shallow built is get up on top of the beaches, it don't get the draft is real real fine, real small like maybe five foot, and it's not many boats you know could fish where he fish on low tide. He's, uh it's real speedy because it had the power, difference those two small, two motors it can travel fast yeah, because from the the home port to the fishing ground maybe an hour and 15 to 20 minutes you could be working and by the time to go home hour to an hour and 20 minutes you'd be home you know you'd done be back at the dock from fishing or from shrimping so don't take long, it travels fast that boat does, is one of the fastest boat on the east coasts *The Sundown*.

**33:41**

**SS:** Do you have any really good memories or any funny memories on the boat?

**33:46**

**MB:** Um yeah, I can remember one day we went out shrimping and it was before the beaches open, we call it roe shrimp, catching roe shrimp that's when the beaches open and we went out one day and we had a new guy on the boat and he never seen shrimp like that and that day it was just shrimping was just great because we came out and made two drags and I think we had like 50 baskets of shrimp and still was back home before the sun went down and it was just great. I can remember that day and I can remember another day we went to South Carolina for their beach opening and we went up there like on a Sunday and the beach opening was on like Monday and we shrimp that Monday up there in South Carolina and we had like a nice day and he, Fred said that a northeast is blowing, it won't take us long to get back home we ought to catch plenty of shrimp off of blackbeard hole... shrimp that day till dark and then we ran that night all night till about time we got back up here like four o'clock that the morning and we dropped the anchor and got some rest in but Tuesday morning we started dragging and they, and there was so much shrimp out there that Tuesday we caught 30 boxes, one day 30 boxes of tails, we headed 30 boxes. It was just unbelievable how many shrimp were out there. That was one of the best days shrimping, you know, we had on *The Sundown* we caught about 30 boxes and I think we started like maybe seven o'clock that morning and think about maybe five o'clock no before five o'clock by about four o'clock that day we was headed back home we just, we had the boat full from South Carolina and Georgia shrimp and came on in and we didn't even go shrimping the next day because we had to you know unload the boat and get it cleaned up and get ready, get ready for the next day but most most every day that we went out on that boat it was profitable, 90% of the time you know you caught shrimp but only 1% of the time you know things weren't you know that profitable that you didn't catch, but 99.9% of the time it was profitable, me and Captain Truck, we work together on that boat like five years five or six years and we had some good days over the years until he went to work for the university. It was it was fun, one of the best boats to have a job on. I tell any man if he could get on that boat he'd make some money, and you know he treat you real good. You have a lot of fun and when I say fun I mean you know he's if he could get back there to help you get the shrimp processed you know to try to get them on ice he would. He's a great captain, one of the greatest. He is the greatest I've ever worked on catching shrimp. That Captain Fred Todd, a whole lot of fun working on on that boat. Tell you what, I don't have a dime in it [Laughter].

**38:42**

**SS:** Were you on any other boats besides *The Sundown*?

**38:44**

**MB:** Oh yeah, a boat called *The Turning Point*. My first boat ever work on *The Thunderbolt* and worked on a boat named *Sea Walker* then work on a boat named *Four Ladies* then I think thats about it. It was a whole lot of fun all through the years but thats 40 years, 40 some years of shrimping. you know on all those boats.

**39:33**

**SS:** Were you always the striker on that boat? And if so, who did you work for?

**39:40**

**SS:** On *The Turning Point* with Captain Dave David Reed, and on *The Thunderbolt* Captain Clarence Baker and on *The Sea Walker* I worked with Captain John McIver and on *The Four Ladies* I worked with Captain Reggie Sawyer. I think that's about it.

**40:12**

**SS:** Do you know what's happened to those boats now?

**40:16**

**MB:** *The Four Ladies* is still in operation and *The Sea Walker* it sunk and *The Thunderbolt* it was that was the first boat I shrimp on back in the 70's but it was built in 40's and it's gone, it done serve its time and what's next?

**40:50**

**SS:** *Turning Point*?

**40:52**

**MB:** It been, it sunk too. It sunk too. It was Captain David Reed. He was a great shrimper too.

**41:09**

**SS:** Have you seen any changes in the water, the weather, or the sea life over the years that you've been fishing?

**41:14**

**MB:** Well I would say you don't have many boats like we used to have back when I first started shrimping. The boats are whittled out to very few but in the last couple of years its we are saving a dying industry but now it seem like it's picking back up over the last couple of years with newer boats being bought and newer boats have bigger power. Better equipped boats. Most of them have air conditioning, just equipment that they could go out and stay and be comfortable you know at night. They have air conditioning, washer, dryer, I mean it just compared to being home I mean you have all the stuff and

have more freezer boats now than we did back in the day. Hardly had very few freezer boats but now we have a whole lot of freezer boats to catch the shrimp for head on shrimp to put them down in the freezer. But back in the day very rarely you heard about a freezer boat. It's no changes to me not on the way we shrimp back then and the way we shrimp now. There's only that now is that the boats some boats when they go out they stay out a week, 10 days or just whatever. Back then most everybody go shrimp that day and came home that afternoon but now the boats are equipped they could stay. Some people stay out a week, some people stay out 10 days, 12 days. Now just whatever the board is a equipped to stay out on.

**43:40**

**SS:** When you think about the future of commercial fishing, is it going to be based on boats like the ones you've worked on? Or do you think they'll be more like the ones you're talking about?

**43:50**

**MB:** Well now they within like I said within the last couple of years they're getting, they're buying boats, the boat owners are buying more boats with more power and more power I mean, they could pull bigger nets, bigger doors and they get to stay out. They call it trip fishing and go stay out a few days til they get a trip. And then they come in and unload and take a few days off and then go back out. But the problem on that is, is everyone at one time said shrimping was a dying industry but is building back up now because there's not that many boats in the game like it used to be. I think and why at one time there'd be like 150 boats right here in McIntosh County that buys the shrimping license but now I think its only done like maybe 25 or 30 and I say that's bad but you know from what it was what it used to be. Through it all, the name of the game is survival. The longer the strong survive.

**45:24**

**SS:** How have the changes in the industry over the years affected you?

**45:28**

**MB:** Well I had to get used to the devices, the fish eye and...

**45:48**

**SS:** TEDs?

**45:50**

**MB:** Yeah, them. Yeah I was trying to figure out the correct name for it but it's TEDs yeah had to get used to those and keeping them straight that's the main thing and once you get used to that it was just a daily routine, was nothing to it, just had to get used to getting them straight where they'd be able to work properly and once you got that it was just a routine thing. But other than that its no different when

I first started shrimping. Just had to make sure you put it overboard straight and it's gonna come up straight but if you put it overboard twisted thing you just wasted that drag on that net, it's not gonna produce it's gonna shoot everything out. Yes ma'am. So no, we had to have it straight for it to work properly but once you get it put it overboard straight and it works properly.

**47:07**

**SS:** Do you have any other recommendations for the future of commercial fishing?

**47:11**

**MB:** The only recommendation I could think of is they could upgrade on turtle excluder and the fish eye. They could upgrade on those two things and another thing is they could keep the increase on the price of shrimp to keep that going up and stay up to help provide for the shrimpers. Those three things and any kind of help they could provide for the shrimpers it would be highly appreciated from the shrimpers because like I say only the strong is going to survive in this game now because it got so bad years back, only the great shrimpers was able to operate and nobody wanted to do it anymore because it wasn't profitable but now it's bouncing back. With the catch and with the price and we have more nicer boats to go shrimping on so that's the great thing.

**48:55**

**SS:** Have you worked on different types of boats like wood hull, fiberglass, steel?

**49:00**

**MB:** Yeah, well, *The Turning Point* it was wood but *The Sundown* is fiberglass over wood. Okay, in *The Four Ladies* it was fiberglass over wood but *The Sea Walker* it was strictly wood and it was bought brand new and it was strictly a wood boat and it had plenty of shrimping power. We traveled on that boat, that's the boat I went out to Freeport, Texas on.

**49:55**

**SS:** Which one of those types of boat is your favorite to work on?

**50:00**

**MB:** I prefer to work on *The Sundown* because it had the big power and it was real quick. No boat like *The Sundown*.

**50:17**

**SS:** What do you understand about fishing vessels now that you didn't when you first started?

**50:23**

**MB:** Um, what I-well back then we didn't have too many regulations you know like I said the fish eye, the turtle excluder, then you have the Coast Guard approve. We didn't have to worry about any of that stuff back then. We just get to go shrimping but as the years changed you had to be Coast Guard approved before you can leave the dock and then if they go out shrimping and you're not Coast Guard approved and they board you and you don't have the fire extinguishers, whatever it is you need to have, supposed to have, they're gonna send you to the dock to get it all straightened out which and that's great thing because you need to be alright like with the fire extinguishers and the bilge pumps and the know all in the bilge and just whatever the recommendations are. Back then and our first thought is shrimping from up to now. Do you, we used to go shrimping in almost every day. But now you have almost as much time off as when you go shrimping now because of the kind of the weather and then most boats now when they go out they don't come back the same day, they stay out a few days, a week, or just however they plan to go before they leave. You try to make them days. They call it a trip fishing. Some boats. Have a lot of friends now that there's a lot of trip fishing but I never did like that. Didn't like trip fishing. I like to be home at night with the family. Now today you have to do whatever you got to do to survive. And I thank God the industry is picking back up now from what it was five years ago. Back then, five years ago, I guess it only just grown to survive and now that the price of the product, everybody's you know, surviving. It don't take as much that the maker makes some money. But the, the price is, like I say \$7, little less than \$8 a pound. So that's a lot. That's a lot of money.

**53:19**

**SS:** Do you think your catch was affected by the regulations?

**53:25**

**MB:** No, because with the fish eye and, like I say, the TED if you put it in the net right we'll be shooting at the right angles and stuff. No, really, it helps because it helps you not to catch a whole lot of bycatch. And a lot of places where there's a lot of jelly balls, if you didn't have the TED, you wouldn't have been able to work because you wouldn't been able to drag the net because it'd get full every time you put it down with jelly balls. But nowadays, you got the TED and it shoots it out. Least you could drag sometimes you could drag two hours. And now that means a lot you, can make a drag. Still a 10 minutes, 15 minutes, or whatever but I'll tell any man if you know now for like nowadays, it's a good future to get into shrimping because you can make some money real fast and there's only like six months out of the year and then the other six months you could find something else to do if you didn't save your money. You could do something else until a shrimping season start back up again. But when I shrimp, I

only shrimp the six months shrimping season because I save and prepared for the winter months. That's the best way to do it is save. Try your best to save you a nest egg to kick you over the winter months until time to go back to shrimping.

**55:34**

**SS:** Did you do anything on your months off from shrimping?

**55:37**

**MB:** Well that's what I was saying. Very rarely, hardly none of the time. Most of the time I just sat around the house and waited till he get ready to work on the boat for the winter. Get ready to go back shrimping and that was basically about it. Whoever I was shrimping with.

**56:01**

**SS:** Did you ever bring your daughters shrimping?

**56:04**

**MB:** No. No, took them down to the dock and showed them the boat but they never did want to go. No, they never did want to go. Took them on the boat, to the dock and looked around and that was about it. My wife, she never would get on the boat. Nope. That was not her thing. Just bring the check home. None of my daughters, they didn't ever want to go. Well, they probably would have but the wife wasn't, she wasn't going for that, for them going out on the boat and then I can't remember none of them even asking to go. They all grown and got kids now so I know that's, and I don't do it anymore, so I know that's history now. I don't have to worry about that part no more.

**57:22**

**SS:** Would you want any of your grandchildren to be interested in fishing?

**57:26**

**MB:** Well my oldest grandson, he's in the military and I have another, I have two more grandsons. No, I would rather them go out and go to college and get a degree in school so they can get a really good job that works year round. But I mean if it went down to that's something they want to do, I mean I would I would back them on that 100%. My oldest grandson, he's been in the army like three years. He's stationed right there in Fort Stewart. He never wanted to go shrimping. Never. He'd go down to the dock to take boat groceries or ice up the boat or something like that but so far he's gone, nah, he never wanted to go. Never even asked a wasn't going to ask him and the next oldest grandson, he be 13 in February. And Nah, they don't don't even mention nothing about the boat.

**59:00**

**SS:** Do you have any other great memories on the boat? On any of the boats?

**59:05**

**MB:** I can remember one day we were coming home kind of early one day on *The Sundown* and tide was kind of low and we hit the bank because trying to come through the shortcut to come home and we had to do some hustling that day to get the nets up from getting up underneath the boat and we laugh about that right now. You know we laugh about that right now, but we all only knew our role on the boat was a go to your side of the boat and get a whip line on the net and get it up out of the water so he could back off the bank. It was real funny afterwards or we would've been stuck there. If we didn't get the nets up we would have been stuck there on the bank and then we could have had the nets in the propeller but thank God we got them up and backed off and got on in. So I thank God for that day. And I worked on *The Sea Walker* and, like I say, we travel all the way from here all the way to Freeport, Texas and it was a whole lot of fun. Different experience, met a whole lot of shrimpers them and their, you knew some of their families, but you got to met the uncle or they granddaddy or somebody in their family. That was a whole lot of fun and a lot of old shrimpers knew my dad and he used to shrimp before he died and it was just a different experience. You get to meet a whole lot of people. I mean, a whole lot of people. There's a lot of old fisherman who used to shrimp. They knew of them or whatever but it was like I say, shrimping has always been good. A lot of fun.

To me shrimping always gonna be because there's always gonna be boats. It may be different ones here on the east coast or the west coast but it always gonna be a shrimp boat somewhere and the way the price is now being elevated out there, I think more people gonna be getting into it at the beginning of shrimp season. The banks and the credit union and stuff they was afraid to take a chance on lending money to buy a boat because the shrimping industry was going down but now it's on the incline instead of decline. We thank God for that. Most of all, ask God is to take the fishing boats out but most of all to bring them back safe. That's the most thing you know. It's not a dangerous job, you pay attention to what you are doing because you do the same thing over and over and over every day once you learn how to shrimp. You hear about every now and then, something happened on a boat because you know this person or that person wasn't paying attention but 99.9% of the time it's like clockwork. You do the same thing over and over and over and over each and every day but it all depends on what you catch, how much work you have to do that day and you hope to be tired every day from catching shrimp because you catch a lot of shrimp that means you make plenty money but I don't have no regrets on the regulations because I'm doing it so long ahead. The turtle excluder, the fish eye. I had them so long that

it's a part of the game and like I say if you put them in nets right and at the right peak then yeah, it's no problem. But if you don't put it in right, you shootin' your own self in the foot. It's not going to be profitable.

**1:04:15**

**MRB:** Could you talk a little bit about what retirement might look like as a fisher?

**1:04:20**

**MB:** Well, if you shrimp and when you file your taxes and you get 62, you know, you have no problem where you could draw your social security but you have taxes paid in because most shrimping is self employment, and you pay your taxes and then you don't have to worry about it but if you don't pay your taxes, never not leave nothing, I mean if you don't put nothing in, you get the minimum. If you pay your taxes you stand chance to getting paid the maximum on the shrimping. That's what a lot of shrimpers they did. They do other jobs like in the off months, job thats taking out taxes and paying taxes so to have some bigger income you know, time to draw social security, disability or whatever. And that's what you have for the look for but the best thing to do is, if you're going to become a shrimper or already a shrimper, pay your taxes. File your income so that means you have to save money. Say make \$1,000, you know good and well you're gonna have to hold at least \$300 of that money in the bank for taxes. Just have it put up somewhere. But it's a great job, especially if you got a little salt in your blood, like your dad or your uncle or something. Like Captain Curtis right now, he's 70 maybe 75 years old and he's still shrimping and that's a great age. That means he really liked it. If I didn't really get sick I woulda been trying to shrimp til I get, let's see, I'll be 65 in a few days, I was gonna try to shrimp til I get at least 67 and that was it but I had to retire due to health reasons but thank God I'm still here. That's the main thing and shrimping brought me through. It helped me raise five daughters. So y'all ever been out on the boat before?

**1:07:39**

**SS:** We went out on *The Bulldog* in November and we went shrimping.

**1:07:44**

**MB:** It was cold?

**1:07:50**

**SS:** Not as cold as it is right now.

**1:07:55**

**MB:** Okay, okay. Ya'll went shrimping?

**1:07:58**

**SS:** Mhmm. I see why you like it.

**1:08:01**

**MB:** Oh yeah, it's a different experience especially when you know you're pulling nets in and lettin' the nets out and you see the birds back there chirp, chirp you know. Yeah, it's good but you shoulda went out like in June or July when it's warm and the catch is greater. So I know when y'all went out in November, ya'll probably didn't catch much then because the season is winding down. I'm glad you had fun but it's just like clockwork you do the same thing over and over and over and over.

**1:08:43**

**SS:** You said you've seen a few injuries?

**1:08:46**

**MB:** No, I mean I've heard of people like getting hurt on the boat like a rope pulling the nets and the rope catch their shirt, or sleeve, or something like that and yeah heard like that on the winch but other than that, very rarely. Very rarely but that's the main thing everybody be staying trying the best to stay away from is injuries. Everybody be looking out for one another.

**1:09:31**

**MRB:** You talked earlier about some changes that you've noticed over the years. Have you noticed any changes in the water or sea life?

**1:09:39**

**MB:** Well, yeah, on the turtles. When we pull in the TED, you don't see nearly as many turtles that we used to catch when I first started. I used to see them turtles like wow. Hurry up to turn them upside down you know, beating them on the chest but nowadays very rarely you catch one in the trinet and everybody know what to do. Flip them, try to get them flipped over and you know taking the push bowl and beating them in the chest a little bit til he start spitting the water back out and then throw him back over board so he can live. He or she or whoever. I ain't seen nearly as many as I used to years ago, that now than 20 years ago, 20 to 25 years ago. Now it's just a thing in the past. You'd see two or three of them in the run of a day but you didn't have turtle exclusion. When I say turtle exclusion I mean the TED. With the sharks too. Used to be big sharks too.

**1:11:08**

**SS:** You said there's less sharks now?

**1:11:12**

**MB:** Well, I think there probably the same amount back then as is now but it seem to me like they're more meaner now or, I don't know, they're hungry now man. I mean they, woo. Them jokers are rough. I mean you take up the net and you look back there and all you can see is sharks, sharks, sharks but back then, it didn't seem like there was that many 'cause we used to tie different color chafing on the front of the net and didn't have that many problem with them, not compared back then as to now. You go out there now you might have to shore for two days patching the holes from the sharks. I mean if the government could do something with them, get some kind of device or you know, whatever, any kind of help with the sharks that would be great. That's basically about the only problem I have being a shrimper to talk about, you know, how bad the sharks are.

**1:12:35**

**SS:** Do you have anything else?

**1:12:43**

**MRB:** I don't think so. I think we covered just about everything.

**1:12:47**

**SS:** Is there anything you wanted to ask us or talk about?

**1:12:45**

**MB:** Well, if ya'll could help my shrimping buddies, any kind of recommendations or help with the shark population, that's basically 'bout the only thing really that is a setback on the shrimping is the sharks. If ya'll could, some kind of device, I don't know but I'm just saying, you know, if the university will come up with something to try to help the shrimpers out on sharks that would be great. I mean they could find some kinda device to scare them off or I mean, I don't know but that's basically the only thing. Sharks but other than that, I think shrimping is going great. It's a lot of fun. Got any more questions?

**1:13:50**

**SS:** I don't think so. I think we went through the list.

**1:13:59**

**MB:** Okay.

**1:14:00**

**SS:** Thank you so much for coming in today. Appreciate you.