

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHUCK CRESS

FOR THE

VOICES ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

AMANDA STOLTZ

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Amanda Stoltz: Okay, it's June 7th, and we're in Sarasota with Captain Chuck and my name is Amanda. We're with Karla too.

Karla Gore: I'm Karla. What's your last name, Chuck?

Chuck Cress: C-R-E-S-S, Cress.

AS: So, I want to start by asking just a little bit about your background: how long you've been in Sarasota, what your business is like, where you fish, and what you fish for?

CC: Okay. So, what do you want me to do? Just begin and tell you —

AS: Yes, how long you've been in Sarasota?

CC: My wife and I moved here in 1980. So, I guess it's thirty-nine years now. I have fished Sarasota Bay ever since the day I got here. Starting off Wade fishing, up around the Ringling Mansion [Ca' d'Zan], other spots where you have water access. You know, then I worked retail for probably twenty years. The first twenty years here then seventeen, eighteen years ago I did get my captain's license and have been chartering for like, say the last seventeen or eighteen years.

AS: So do you mostly charter inshore? Offshore?

CC: I am inshore, Carla [inaudible]. I will go off the beaches but within a mile. Out into the gulf, what we call the near shore gulf or whatever. Tarpon, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel that type of stuff when they're running out there. But ninety-nine percent of my fishing is in the inter-coastal Sarasota Bay – Big Sarasota Bay, Little Sarasota Bay all the way up to Bradenton, all the way down to Englewood, where I'll fish.

KG: You trailer your boat?

CC: Trailer it, yes.

KG: Oh okay.

CC: What I tried to do is wherever the people are staying at — most of my trips are tourists and so, if they are staying up at Longboat Key I'll put in Longboat Key. If they are staying on Siesta, I'll put it Siesta just to kind of be close to where they're staying at.

AS: So, I want to talk about red tide, but from a historical perspective. So, starting with the first red tide that you remember in this area, and I want to go through everything about it, how it looks, what it did, how it affected your life and your business. And then move on the next red tide and then the next and then finally getting to the one that happened last year.

CC: First tide, red tide I remember is, again when I first moved down here I used to go to this fish market on Siesta Key and knew reading the paper about a red tide and the — well, I was surprised that they had fish for sell and the gal running it she said “well, you know red tide doesn't... it's not everywhere. It's spotty.” So, you know, you could go a mile down the

waterway and it's clear. You can fish and eat the fish and everything else. And, you know I didn't think a whole lot about it. Then I'm sure there was other red tides between then and the next one, but the one I do remember was like 2005 I think, right into that area. I went fishing one morning down in Nokomis [Beach] and it was still dark out and I wasn't getting any hits or anything like, "what the heck is going on?" Well when the sun came up I just saw dead fish floating everywhere, oh my god, so, I couldn't find any clean water to fish that day and I think it lasted maybe a month and I could still go out north and fish, because it was clean up there. And then you know, every once in a while someone would say they could smell red tide but, you know, maybe it was in the gulf, but it really never affected too much inshore after that. Two, I think it was two years ago —

AS: So, let's – I want to talk about two years ago too, but let's – I want ask you some more questions about that 2005 event,

CC: Okay.

CC: Especially, because, you said, you know, you could go further north and still fish.

CC: [Yes]

AS: So, let's talk about where you saw it, like which areas were affected by the red tide.

CC: Well, where I came upon it, was Blackburn Point. [Looking at a map] here's the Jetties [North Jetty Park & South Jetty Beach] into here I think. Is that the Jetties?

KG: Is that a Jetty? Yes.

CC: Where's Nokomis, can't see that. It had have been right in here.

AS: Is that Venice Inlet?

CC: Oh there's Venice so, I put in right here. There's a boat ramp right there on Albee Road. And that is where I started seeing my initial red tide in, I think it was 2005. And then of course then, I went all the way up into here looking, trying to find clean water and I couldn't. So, I believe though that this lasted into here a couple of weeks, but then —

AS: So, up to —?

CC: Yes, I know I checked that particular day all the way up to here, I know that.

AS: Okay.

CC: But, then I could find clean water up into here after that. I mean, or even during when this was here so, I had to start fishing here and up in through here.

AS: Could you draw that area, is that where there was clean water?

CC: This was, I started getting clean water all the way and then all the way up into here, I started getting clean water.

KG: Was that like the southern part of the Bay? Was—?

CC: Yes, Big Sarasota Bay and even northern part of,

AS: Okay.

CC: Little Sarasota Bay.

AS: Okay. But this part was still affected too?

CC: I can't recall.

AS: Okay.

CC: Yes, I can't recall. I just know that I had to keep travelling in order to find it.

AS: And what did it look like? Like how did you know like the difference between being down here and not catching any fish? How did you know when it was clean like – ?

CC: You could, you could –

AS: Besides the dead fish on the water?

CC: Besides what?

AS: The dead fish on top of the water?

CC: Well, you could see, you could look at the water and see that it's clean. The red tide, actually, the rusty colored, you know, it looks like river water from up north some place, real dark brown. Then when you start seeing, even when you got your trolling motor down in the water you can start even seeing it better in that clean water.

AS: Is there any way to tell with a red tide event that it's more on the surface or that it's all the way on the bottom or – ?

CC: If there is, I don't know what it would be. I wouldn't have any idea.

AS: And then as far as the fish that you saw that were killed, what species was it?

CC: Basically everything. The snook I noticed. A lot of pen fish, lady fish, the occasional red fish and sea trout. Sea trout seemed to be affected pretty easily in the red tide. In fact there's hardly any trout in our bay right now.

KG: State of Florida closed trout right, so?

CC: Yes. Trout, snook, and reds,

AS: Oh I didn't –

CC: All shut down. They are up to a certain point, it's not the whole state.

AS: Okay.

CC: But, when you get north, I think, maybe a 100 miles, I think, you can still catch reds and trout and keep them if you wanted to.

AS: Were there any species in 2005 that you think weren't affected by the red tide?

CC: I don't – well, I do — here's one thing I do remember is that there's a boat or a bait shop down in Nokomis. Well, they've got some resident snook that hang underneath their dock. Well, they disappeared when that red tide came but then as soon as that was clear these guys were right back again so, obviously these snooks somehow can, or some of them can, if they are quick enough, detect red tide and get out of dodge and save themselves.

AS: Yes. Are there any other clues or indicators or ways that you can know that red tide is going to come that summer?

CC: If it's going to come?

AS: Yes.

CC: Not that I know of, I mean I've read a lot about it. You know, some people say heavy rains, you know, if you have the heavy rains early, you're going to have a red tide, but scientifically, I was just telling her, I don't know of any clues that will tell you if it's going to come or not.

AS: Have you ever noticed red tide in any way affecting fish distributions or spawning aggregations or anything like that?

CC: Well I would have to say the spawning because like I say, the one in the 2005 red tide, we didn't have a trout in our bay for over a year before you could finally catch one. So, it had to have affected the spawning. Have to, you know.

AS: Yes. What else did that recovery look like after 2005? Like how long, you said it was a year before.

CC: Before we can get a trout.

AS: Before you can catch a trout. What about other species? What about the environment in general. How long did it take to recover?

CC: I don't know, I can't answer that. All I do is always wishful thinking. You just keep going out and pounding away and finally it starts, you know, coming around again. Whether it was six months or three months I can't tell you.

AS: And you were in charge – in 2005, you were running a charter. So, how did this red tide and after effects of it and not being able to catch trout free? How did that affect your charter business?

CC: It didn't affect me too bad back then because, in recollecting how it went, I still could find some spots back then, and still get out and catch some fish. It's just the one, like I said the trout, couldn't get those, but I think I still picked up red fish and snook and maybe some snapper in the bay and stuff like that so, it really didn't affect me in 2005.

AS: You then end up, like losing any trips or business from that?

CC: Not from that red tide.

AS: Yes

KG: It sounds like you are able to move further north,

CC: Yes.

KG: and could find something.

CC: Right I could find something exactly right, yes.

AS: What about the health impacts of red tide?

CC: What about it? Do you think this affects your health, is that what you're asking?

AS: Well I've heard from some people like it gives them a cough,

CC: Oh definitely it does,

AS: and when like, their eyes full of water and –

CC: you'll know if the red tide — if the breeze is coming in off the Gulf, and if the red tide is in the Gulf out there, yes it will. Your eyes will water, you [simulates cough]; a tickle or a cough in your throat, absolutely. Inshore, when the actual red tide is inshore, I really don't smell it that much. It seems like it's off the beaches with the wind blowing is when it was stirred up, or something like that. But I've went through red tide patches before and the only way I know it's there is by seeing the dark water, stained water and not smelling it, or anything like that. But yes, I think anybody can be able to — even someone who said “oh, it's not going to affect me.” I've heard people tell me that. Soon as they get involved with that red tide, they start coughing I don't care who you are.

AS: Does that cause an issue for the charter tough? Like if you're taking clients out and you know that they're going to be coughing on the water and you said lot of them are tourists, and—

CC: Yes, well I have had people, we start [simulates cough] you know picking “oh, you feel that cough?” “Yes I do.” You get up another mile away or something like that and you can get rid of it. I don't think I've ever been on the water where it's just constantly [like] you just couldn't,

AS: Yes.

CC: you know, work at it.

AS: What do you think causes red tide?

CC: Well, I'm not a scientist. My understating is that it's been around forever — it's natural occurring. I read some scientific report a while back about the gulf stream, or whatever, brings certain element into the area and if the plant life doesn't fight it off you know, if there's not enough of one substance on the floor of the gulf it's opening all red tide. Or whatever the [inaudible] I don't even know the actual term for it anymore but, it takes over and — but as far as why it's worse, my guess is that it has a lot of factors that go into it such as pollution, nutrients. I think, in my opinion, that's why it could be worse. Again people argue and say that that's not it so, I don't know if anybody knows.

AS: When you say it's worse, do you mean the 2005 red tide in comparison with those in the past or — ?

CC: When I'm saying, what it makes that worse —

AS: Oh, in general.

CC: Yes, I'm saying in general, right. I'm saying like, for example the one we just experienced.

AS: Yes.

CC: Why it was worse, I just had a feeling that there's so many other elements in the water that this red tide feeds off of.

AS: So you said the next major event after the 2005, was that — ?

CC: Yes, there was one a couple years ago, again floating, I did a lot more fishing up in North Sarasota Bay, this was I know it was in,

AS: Yes.

CC: November of —

AS: So let's try that one too, the area that was affected by —

CC: Yes, I know it was affected, and still here I did a lot more fishing up in this area and what we saw there was a lot of floating pen fish, eels; these long eels were floating and stuff like that. But again, that was still fishable. I mean, like I go over here one day and catch fish, then two days later, I couldn't but, I mean, I can dance around and still find fish during that particular one.

KG: Do you remember like the year that was?

CC: Well, I'm just going to say it was — what is it now, 2019?

AS: Yes.

CC: I'm going to say it was 2016 or [2017].

KG: Okay.

CC: It's what I'll say, yes. And it went away.

AS: How long did it last?

CC: I don't know, that was around for several months, I believe.

AS: So, that's just kind of the area that you were fishing?

CC: That's where I fish mostly. Was up into there and that's why remember it because I had several charters up that way and I actually had friends in town. We stayed on Longboat Key and we were going out for about four or five days in a row, and so depending on the wind, one day it was here, one day it might have been there.

AS: Yes.

CC: But we could dance around it and we could still find some fish.

AS: So, during these few months, you just happened to be in this area?

CC: Yes and that's why I remember it.

AS: Yes.

CC: Yes.

AS: And, how did it affect your fishing? It was kind of the same thing where you're still able to find fish?

CC: That's — yes, I mean I could still get out, yes. Or you'd talk to another captain: "oh hey, it's okay over here," "you can fish over there today," or "don't go up that way because the red tide, you know, the wind blew from the east that day and you can't fish that area." We still danced around it.

CC: And did it have the impacts on the business on chartering or?

AS: No, no.

AS: And then, was it the same type of species killed and —?

CC: Yes, we saw snook floating and trout. I don't recall red fish. I do recall, however, a bait shop owner talking about a big wide of dead red fish that time, though, that he saw floating. It was Hart's Landing and he had seen them. Hart's Landing is right here on this bridge. I remember him telling me they were all congregated underneath the [John] Ringling Bridge there.



AS: Right here?

CC: [Yes]

AS: So, this whole —?

CC: Yes, and I think that's Ringling Bridge; I'm sure it is.

AS: That's —

CC: Got to be.

KG: Yes, that's Hart's Landing. It's correct from the info, I mean.

CC: Yes, right. So, I know he told me that this whole area here, was just hundreds of dead red fish that would glide into there. Dead reds.

AS: And then for that one, what was the recovery time like? Like how long —?

CC: I'm going to say months. Within — I'm pulling numbers out of my head here but, I'm going to say four months.

AS: Yes.

CC: Yes, something like that.

AS: I know it was back so —

CC: Yes.

AS: It wasn't that same thing with the 2005, or it was like a year before the trout came out?

CC: Yes. No, no you could still could still find some trout at that time.

AS: What do you think is the difference, you know, when we talk about a red tide where in one month it has impacts that last over a year and then this one, the 2017 one that you said lasted a couple of months, the impacts don't last that long. Is it a difference in intensity somehow?

CC: Intensity, absolutely yes. Yes, these were spotty. When you'd have the red tide, it might come into one of the passes and go up a little ways and maybe then on the outgoing tide it will go back and withdraw. Whereas, 2017 you couldn't go into any pass anywhere into here and not see it.

AS: So, the,

KG: 2017 or 2018?

CC: I meant the,

AS: Last year's.

CC: Early 2018, right.

KG: Okay.

AS: Right. So, was the 2005 one also spotty like that?

CC: Spotty, yes.

AS: Okay, but it was more intense on the 2017 one? Like if we had to think of them on a scale –

CC: Yes. I would say on the scale, I would say they were even.

AS: Yes?

CC: Yes, and just,

AS: Even though this one had more time to get recovered.

CC: Well yes, it's just I guess it just the fact that I use to fish so much right in through here that I just recall.

AS: Yes.

CC: More of it. Wish I had one of those photographs so I could remember so I could be more accurate on this stuff.

AS: Yes I know, I mean, it's hard to remember things especially like, you know, we're talking –

CC: Like a while ago –

AS: 10 years, ago.

CC: Yes

AS: But yes, know I mean this is great. So then after 2016, 2017, the next one's last year like the 2018 red tide. Where was that spatially, like where –?

CC: Where was the last, last year's red tide?

AS: Yes, yes where did you see it or experience it?

CC: Well actually, I was fishing – when did it come in? You guys tell me.

KG: I feel,

CC: Was it August?

KG: I feel like it was last week of July.

CC: The last week of July. Okay.

KG: It really hit bad for us anyway.

CC: Okay, yes. I mean it had been south. In fact everyone down in Venice, “oh the red tide’s down here,” and I remember talking to one of the other captains on my charter who’s up into here. He goes “I can’t believe that we haven’t gotten it up here.” Week after week, it kept staying down that way, and it was of course because of the wind. And then one day I was on a charter and the beautiful blue water that we had that you see out there right now, you could – on the incoming tide, you could just see it coming in like this. It was just a huge dark spot into that beautiful blue water and it covered everywhere, everywhere. I – the first – after it had hit, about a week, two weeks later I put in to Cortez up here and it was dead fish everywhere, even into here. I did finally sneak up into Tampa Bay, and found clean water up here. But I didn’t fish a whole lot after that up here. I was shut down for three months so I didn’t get on the water, but I could just tell you – I can tell you it was for sure from here all the way down to Englewood.

AS: So, let’s do the same thing that we did with these other ones and for the — for what you experienced, like where you saw red tide, go ahead and draw.

CC: Well, I saw it come in right here, I think it is a boat ramp in Centennial Park, right in through here. I saw it coming in New Pass, and just start to engulf the whole area.

AS: The whole day?

CC: The whole day.

KG: Like did you notice that going south first or north, or do you remember?

CC: Well the tide, it just would spread anywhere.

KG: Yes.

CC: Any time you have the tide coming in, that water is coming in but it’s going everywhere. So, all I did was see it coming in here and just making A dark pool, all right in here. And that was the end of the fishing. We were done.

AS: So would it make sense to circle this whole –

CC: You can circle the whole thing.

AS: Yes?

CC: Yes, no problem.

AS: Okay.

CC: And I know it was down here, even though I didn’t fish down there.

AS: Yes

CC: I just know it was there from talking to everyone else. Because after it came in so heavy, I didn't get out.

AS: Yes. So, it's this whole area and then,

CC: That I saw. I did really saw that.

AS: And then where were you able to fish?

CC: Able to do what?

AS: Where were you able to fish? You said you were able to get up in here and you saw fish [inaudible].

CC: Yes about a week, yes, about a week.

AS: So that's, let's put that down.

CC: A week, ten days after that I had a trade-out of a charter up here so I put in at Coquina Beach, which again, hard to say where Coquina is, that comes so, oh below the bridge here. So I put in here, so all kind of dead fish all in through here.

AS: So let's mark that too. Yes.

CC: I know that there was all dead fish right in here and I traversed into Palma Sola [Bay], and was able to fish a little bit here, and then I also went up into — that's Perico (Island) I think. And then I fished all in through here and found fish and caught fish.

AS: So let's mark those; you can draw or circle those areas as well.

KG: Is that Manatee River?

CC: Yes, well I, before I didn't give – I went up to the Manatee River.

KG: Okay.

CC: And then I went into Perico and Palma Sola. And then about a week after that, I hadn't had a trip at all. I called Annie's Bait & Tackle and she said "well, it is all in Palma Sola now too" so I didn't even begin to go up there.

AS: So what months - ?

CC: That would have been probably August.

AS: So August, these were the hot spots you could fish?

CC: Yes, first week of August it was still okay.

KG: Was it okay like – there wasn't red tide? Were the fish biting?

CC: And really. Yes.

KG: Okay.

CC: I caught fish, yes, yes.

AS: And then after August, that you couldn't fish in those areas?

CC: Yes I just, I made one call up there to Annie Bait & Tackle and she said "forget it it's all in Palma Sola."

AS: So what was the time period like you actually had to shut down for?

CC: Three months. I'd say August, September and October. Not one trip.

KG: Not one trip booked? Or, would people call to try to book and you would say "well there's nothing to catch"? Or –?

CC: No, I didn't get a call. That is one of our slow times anyway, but as I told you, most of my business comes out of CB's, at Siesta Key.

KG: Yes.

CC: So, we've got about five or six other captains that go out of there and as far as I know, no one else got any calls either. I know I didn't get any calls to go out. But I don't recall telling anybody there's no fish. People knew it, you know national news and,

AS: Oh yes.

CC: And, you know, hotels were down, you know, restaurant business, everything was off. So, people knew about it.

AS: For this large fish kill here in 2019, what kind of species was it?

CC: Well I just, I do remember seeing all that dead stuff there when I put in at Coquina. I saw dead fish put in at Coquina, they were all around the beach. I'd say everything. I saw, I know I saw Snook, I saw Thin fish, bait, I saw mullet, dead mullet. I don't know if I saw any other species besides those, I don't recall.

AS: What about like marine mammals or turtles that -

CC: I didn't see any, oh I know what I did see. I saw dead tarpon too.

AS: Yes

CC: I saw dead tarpon, first time I've ever seen dead tarpon.

AS: Are tarpon usually not affected as much?

CC: I don't know about that. Generally I have — to be honest with you, I think that they must have been. I think they floated in with the tide, because they were big tarpons. So, I'm going to say they, I'm going to say they were out into the gulf and floated in with the tide — that's what I would say. Again, I'm not — I'm speaking out of term, because I don't know for sure myself, just what I heard, but I heard and you'll hear it — I heard that it was out about ten miles.

AS: Yes.

CC: Red tide or maybe even twelve miles.

AS: Did you hear with any of the previous ones in 2016 or 2005 how far it went out?

CC: No, I never heard any of those stories.

AS: So how did the shutdown for three months, you know, what are your alternatives? What are some ways that you can, you know, kind of work through a red tide when it's that bad and you get shut down?

CC: Well, fortunately I'm in a position where I don't have to do charter, so — but there were some other people they were also doing Uber driving, painting — I heard some guys doing some painting. I mean definitely, I mean I was making X number of dollars June, — May, June, July and all of a sudden it stopped. Well, so maybe all these little extras that I might want to buy were gone. But again, I didn't have to charter to survive.

AS: And what do you think made this 2019, or 2018 red tide, why do you think it was worse from the other red tides that you've experienced?

CC: Well again, I'm an amateur scientist and I just think it had to do with a lot of the pollutants that we had.

AS: Yes.

CC: But these other guys that are in the know and a lot smarter than me say that's not the case. I don't know.

AS: What do they say happened?

CC: They're just saying is that it's a natural thing and, like I told you, the one article I read about some, I don't know, was it University of South Florida or whatever. He was talking about this continental shelf out there and there's a certain — that algae bloom, red tide algae bloom, when it came in and settled in on the continental shelf, if the plant life there wasn't healthy enough to combat that, then it drifted on in and it just made it worse. So —

AS: So is there any kind of like forecasting or monitoring that you were able to use or that you think should be, that could help in some way?

CC: Not me, other than the fact most of the, you know, they've got stations out here that are picking up that, you know, parts per million of the red tide. I don't have any clue on it.

KG: Are there any – is there anything that you can look at and you think that maybe there will be a bigger red tide this year? Like, if you think that —

CC: No, because I've never been able to predict it. I don't know if anyone is going to be able to predict it. Right now, that water is just beautiful out there. Actually it's almost too clear and too clean.

KG: Very nice.

CC: It actually looks false in a way, in certain areas the water does. Down into here, Little Sarasota Bay. That water is really funny-looking, it doesn't look like it has in the past.

KG: What do you mean like it's—?

CC: I don't know, just, it's a different color. It's a different color and I don't if maybe that has something to do with that crap that I was telling you is on the —

AS: Yes.

CC: On the grass. And you know we got beautiful healthy grass in certain areas, it's covered with this gunk. It's just, I don't even know what you'd call it. But I do know that after the red tide there were a lot of grassy areas especially up around the Ringling Mansion, that just turned into sand and I don't know if there is a correlation between red tide and that, or if it's something else that caused it. But in my opinion our bay is not healthy right now at all.

AS: How long have you felt that way? Like how long have you been worried about the health of the bay and—?

CC: Well actually probably just since this, the last year when I saw what the red tide did and the aftermath of it. I remember one time last year when I went up into this area to fish — no, it's actually right into here — and I saw a huge mass of this floating stuff on the water. I couldn't even get into this area it was unbelievable. I can't tell you how big it was, I was just going to say it was three football-size fields —

AS: Wow.

CC: Of this stuff and I'd never seen that before.

AS: When did that happen?

CC: It was after the red tide or — yes, probably after the red tide.

KG: What kind of stuff like algae or sea grass?

CC: I couldn't even get into it. It's just like,

AS: Or dead fish?

CC: Like some people call it whale snot or something like that, yes –

AS: Oh.

CC: It's just goopy stuff. Just floating on the surface.

AS: When you're talking about the water being a different color right now, is that in the bay or is it offshore or both?

CC: It's in the bay because I'm not really offshore that much. In certain areas, I know, this is two months ago, well no it was maybe even longer than that, like December. I mean, I took some people out on a charter up around Long Bar, I don't know if you know where that's at, up there. That water looks like a swimming pool. It was so clear, it looked clinical, it looks terrible. You know, you could look around and there was nothing, no life, no nothing. And the grass, it's normally was up this high – they were just little shoots of grass and sand all around it. It wasn't thick grass, just, you know, looks like somebody had a hair transplant, that kind of a thing. And that was probably the first charter, one of the first charters that I had after that red tide and we didn't see a fish, didn't see a mullet jump, didn't — it was just, I've never been that far out and not catch of fish that was that time of year. Everywhere I went you couldn't find any life. And I still took the money, though.

KG: [laughter] They probably still had fun.

CC: They did, it was a pretty day.

KG: So what about now?

CC: I've avoided this area. I haven't been up there because there's people that still tell you there's no life up there so I am not going back.

AS: In the bay?

CC: Yes. Up in through here. Now, I've had — one of my captain friends, he did get some red fish. We're starting to get some stuff coming back in. I'm not saying that there aren't fish to catch, you just got to work your tail off. I got one story: two weeks ago my son and I fished a tournament where there was a side bet for trout, a side bet for snook, and then a side bet for red fish. We didn't get a red, we didn't catch a snook. I caught one sixteen-and-a-half-inch trout and of course, since it's illegal to keep them, all you do is take a photo. So I sent the photo in to the guy running the thing and at the end of the day I said "well thanks a lot," because it was just charity event or something like that. And he says "hey" — about half an hour later he calls me back up and he says "are you going to come in?" Says "you're the only one that caught a trout."

AS: Oh wow.

CC: So I won the biggest trout.



AS: Wow.

CC: With the sixteen-half-inch trout.

KG: Did people catch snook and reds?

CC: They caught a few. There were very few red caught, and a few snook that were caught. But it was way off from the years past. I mean, I fished it four or five years so. But, yes one of my buddies did catch about six red fish over here. So, unless you got an avid fisherman or someone willing to work for it, I'm avoiding going up there because it's too much work.

AS: So where have been fishing instead?

CC: Well I've been down here in Little Sarasota Bay and then I'd been out into the gulf recently for Spanish mackerel, and I've gotten to be a good lady fish fisherman. Which is, well you don't ever want to catch but, geez, that's about all you can get right now. So I have noticed a lot of lady fish are thick right now. I've noticed we were catching more of these, what's it called? Lizard fish? Different kind of fish then what we would normally find and they're in abundance, so I don't know if they're taking over or they didn't get affected with that, I don't know.

KG: You ever see lionfish? I guess, they're not going to take a hook.

CC: In the gulf. They're out in the gulf.

KG: Yes.

CC: But I don't get them.

KG: Yes.

CC: It's just the divers get them.

KG: Right.

AS: So the whole kind of this main Sarasota Bay area, it just hasn't recovered?

CC: Has not recovered.

AS: Yes.

CC: No. Now we're seeing tons of bait. If you're seeing bait like this and I don't know what they are because you can't really tell. You know, it's going to be three, four years before there's this and this you know, like that. No, it's not recovered. The only fish to, in my opinion that are big in the bay are ones that have come from some other area. Either from south or from Tampa Bay or out in the gulf and finally came in. But I think everything died in Sarasota Bay. If it stayed in Sarasota Bay I think they'd die.

AS: So, you talked about the kind of the rolling mats and the whale snot and some of those, and not seeing sea grass where you've seen sea grass before.

CC: Correct.

AS: Are there any other environmental changes, or algae in general, or anything else that you've seen over time in this area?

AS: No, I think those are the big things right now for me is that stuff growing on the grass and more sand where there used to be grass. And the floating stuff that's out there right now, usually you see that but, not this time of year. It's been around for a month or two now. You used to see in the middle of the summer or end of the summer and then it would come up, you know. Someone told me years ago why it comes up down like, but you know anyway, we are seeing it earlier and more of it right now.

AS: And are there any – do you have any suggestions for management changes that can help people in any way or—?

CC: Any suggestions for what now?

AS: Management changes.

CC: Management changes?

AS: Yes.

CC: I was mentioning earlier they had a forum here the other night on Sarasota Bay Water Quality. I wish I would've went to it and then then I would be a little more educated on it. It was about six, seven-hundred people. They met at, I don't know, Riverview High or something like that and they had some respected scientists, scholars, that type of thing, discussing it. I don't have suggestions on it other than my understanding of reading the paper that Sarasota for a number of years now has been releasing treated water into the bay and apparently it's not the healthiest thing to put into the bay. Why that is? I don't know.

KG: Do you feel like your business has recovered? Like are people calling?

CC: My business has recovered.

KG: Okay.

CC: Yes. The only problem is that I have to give them the disclaimer when they get on the boat, say "Hey, you know, it's a challenge out there," you know, "we're going to see some dolphins but I don't, I can't guarantee we're going to get any fish," you know.

KG: Do they know about red tide, or are they calling and saying...?

CC: They hear about it. You know we did see something last year on the TV about that, you know. But as far as them preventing them going out, they still are optimistic. Hopefully they are going to catch something but I know deep down it's going to be work to find something for them.

KG: If there was another red tide this year, how would that affect your business?

CC: Same way. It would probably just shut it down. I'd have to do all the honey-do's that are on my list. As far as suggestions, yes I mean, I think you go along some of these homes along Longboat Key and Little Sarasota Bay, you're looking up lawns that look like a golf course, I mean beautiful lawns. How did they get that when my lawn doesn't look that good? They're fertilizing it, and that stuff have to, have to do something to the bay – that fertilizer. So, if I was recommending anything, and I don't know how you police it, or anything else, but the use of fertilizers need to be, you know, checked out or stopped or something.

AS: Yes. You know that something we've been hearing a lot of too, definitely. From other guys.

CC: Yes, I mean you go over and see the golf courses in Europe and stuff like that. They don't use fertilizers, it's just the way it is. It's a natural look and stuff like that. And if it's brown, it's brown. You know, that's the way it is and then, probably what we need to look at here as far as these lawns are concerned.

AS: Is there anything else that you wanted to add about red tide or any other information that you could share with us, or...?

CC: No, I can't, yes.

AS: I think we covered a lot?

CC: Good.

AS: Yes.

CC: Who's going to see these, both of you going to see these later?

AS: Yes.

CC: Yes, I think you said Ed Hurst is going to talk to you about it. He's a good guy, his memory might be better than mine

AS: Yes, I talked to a fisherman named Van Hubbard down in Key [inaudible]. Yes. And he told me to call up, talk to (Aledia?).

CC: Yes.

AS: Yes.

CC: Yes, she's the owner of the CB's. Who you're going to meet at the [inaudible] at 1[p.m.]? Do you know?

AS: We are meeting — who is—? Captain Will.

CC: Wells?

AS: Will.

CC: Oh, Will, yes, his last name P? Fremont or—?

AS: I don't know.

CC: Oh, you don't know?

AS: Yes, I am not sure.

CC: You guys read about that captain that [inaudible].

AS: Yes, I did.

KG: Yes, I was telling her about it yesterday.

AS: Because I was looking up like, captains to talk to. That article kept coming up.

KG: Do you know that guy?

CC: I don't know, I ran into one of the other captains that did see him that day on his way out.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Susana Oliveros 4/12/2022