

Name of Narrator: Robert Everson (RE)

Interviewer: Kassidy Gunn (KG) and Freddy Lee (FL) recorded this interview with the permission of Robert Everson for the research project “Boat Stories”

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

Transcriber: Kassidy Gunn

Others present: No other people were present.

Date of interview: November 13, 2021

Place: McIntosh County, Georgia Fish Dock Bar & Grill

Duration of interview: One hour, four minutes and fifty two seconds (1:04:52)

Repository for the recording: 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 Robert Everson, a local shrimper.

General Description of Contents: Robert Everson sits down with interviewers to discuss his history on fishing vessels in Georgia. He talks about how he first got into the industry with the help of his father.

He gives his insights on what competition looked like in the industry and what he has done to overcome any obstacles faced.

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FL: This is an interview with Mr. Robert Everson on November thirteenth two-thousand twenty-one. The interview is being conducted in McIntosh County. It is part of the research project and interviews collection titled Boat Stories. The interviewers are Cassidy Gunn and Freddy Lee. Could you tell us about your, first do you still consent to being interviewed with us?

RE: [nonverbal answer - shook his head yes]

FL: If there are any questions you do not feel comfortable with please let me know and we can skip them.

RE: Okay.

FL: Can you tell us about your current or most recent fishing vessel, a boat, the name of it, any names it might have had before if there were any?

RE: You want the Captain part or the part that I worked on? I worked on several boats in the Gulf of Mexico. But before I went to Mexico, I started as a striker. You know I helped around the boat right here in McIntosh County. I did that for several years. And we went..I started working with my father, working out of Fort Myers, Florida. We would work in Campeche in Mexico. We would leave out of Fort Myers. It was a three day trip from Fort Myers to the Gulf of Mexico where we would shrimp. During those days is usually when boats was going and coming like every ten, eight, ten days. We would shrimp but then we would ship our shrimp on a boat that was coming either to Tampa or Fort Myers either one, didn't make any difference. The man we worked for name was Paul Herring. He operated the Durrant-Herring Shrimp Company. He passed recently at one-hundred and one. He was one of the best boss man I've ever worked for. Very kind and very cool and he do anything for you. My father was had work for him, worked for the Durrant-Herring Company in McIntosh before he started down in Fort Myers. And Paul Herring thought a lot of my father, he knew my mother, he knew all of us. My brother and I worked on the boat with my father. Like I said we would go to Mexico and ship shrimp back to Woodsdale, I think the longest trip we've ever been on was like eighty-nine days, from Fort Myers to....from Campeche, Mexico to Fort Myers and back for like eighty-nine days.

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RE: I think that was the longest, my father stretched the trip probably. So we could be home for Christmas that was but, in those days they had, the boat that my father operated, he was captain. We had ten-thousand gallons of diesel fuel in the engine room. So it was a big boat. We took ten-thousand gallons in the engine room and we had thirteen-hundred gallons on the stern and that was to hold the

stern down because the boat, when we get on those big seas the stern would come up and the propeller would raise. So my father told Mr. Paul, that we need something to hold the stern down. He named one of the boats that my father operated was Belgian and there was a story in the papers this past week where he was either shot down, he was a pilot, he was shot down. He spent some time in Belgium, so he named one of the boats the Belgian. He had several boats and the first one my father operated was named Manatee and the next boat was the Syme. S-Y-M-E. Next one was Geiger. No, next one was Belgian and the next one was Geiger and the last one was Tolomator the second. During the days when the shrimping looked like it was going to fall apart, Mr. Paul, and they sold out the boats and gave my father a option to get a brand new boat. One of the newer boats, but my father got, he said, Well, I'll buy one of the older ones and he bought the Manatee. And the other captains that he had, two other captains, purchased both from them. Like I say, those days are some rough days in Mexico, because you saw sky and water. So it was, it was out, we would shrimp at night, anchor up and sleep in the daytime, sometime it was so rough, you could hardly sleep.

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RE: But it wasn't no dock to go to you know what I mean? We could come in close to Mexico, a place they call the flat. It was a flat area and water wasn't too rough there, that you could get a good night's rest. But you didn't come in every night, you couldn't come cause you might be two - three hours from there, out shrimping, you know. But we would come in there to unload the shrimp. Because, the boats are not, you know it was calm. So every time we would get ready to ship shrimp, we would run into what they call the flat. And we would ship shrimp. They had a bag, they call a wash bag. And we would shovel our shrimp in that and lift it out. It was a big ol bag. And they had a shoot. And we would just trip it in between the shrimp say for instance, that boat might come, he might leave there with about three-hundred boxes of shrimp, in like one-hundred pound boxes. So they would take a piece of a net that was torn up, piece of webbing they call it, and put it in between your shrimp and somebody else shrimp. They had a chart, in other words, if you had shrimp on the top, I would, that's the Belgian shrimp. And the shrimp, you know they had high bins, so the bins full up. But when it gets so full, they would put shrimp on top. And that's when it get to the dock. He would hand the slip to whoever doing the unloading.

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RE: And he would know whose shrimp is coming off. They got pretty good. It was pretty good deal. And I did that for a while and I was young man, you know what I mean? I couldn't take that. Putting it

very lightly. You know what I mean? If you understand young people, that 89 days was pretty rough on a young man. And so I quit. I left my father. Came home, started working. And then after that I bought my own boat. I operated a boat for my brother. In fact, I operated two boats for him. He bought a boat and the first one was named Trade Winds. The second was named the Pat and I operated the Trade Winds. And he sold the Trade Winds bought the Pat. So I operated the Pat for, I don't know, several years. And I told, my wife kept telling me you need to get your own boat. Well, I thought about it but you know how that is, it takes money to get a boat. [Laughter] And a cousin of mine helped me. She helped me to get my first boat. Oh, it was named the Miss Evelyn V. Bought it out of Brunswick. It was an old boat. One or two fisherman's, well at least one, told me that I think the boat, I paid \$7,000 for it, it's an old boat, seventy, seventy-five hundred dollars. It's an old boat and the captain was wanting to get rid of it, so the price was right and he said it'll take \$7,000 worth of pump to keep that durn thing floating. That's what the fella told me that. So anyhow, I bought it, worked it. And several years did a lot of work on it, put ribs in it. Did a lot of maintenance to keep it afloat and I worked it hard. I mean I gave it everything I had and I bought me a brand, had a guy that, a boat builder to build me a new boat.

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RE: Cause with that boat, I had to fish on good calm days because of its age you know. Couldn't be out there no, when it was rough. So there was some days I couldn't work because of the type of boat I was on. It took more than I thought it could cause I got caught in some weather and had to come in and I was surprised that I made it. So I had a boat built out of, it was built in Jacksonville. Brought it home, took the engine out the old boat. Took everything I needed, everything that I could use off the old boat and put it on the new boat. The new boat was named Miracle. M-I-R-A-C-L-E, Miracle. And I shrimped that one until 2000. I got off. One of the reasons I got off is because my boat was being sabotaged. I don't know whether you're familiar with a clutch. Do you know what a clutch? You wouldn't know. It's a transmission on a boat. It's the transmission. Fisherman would call it the clutch. It does the same thing as your transmission in your car, you know what I mean? But we refer to it as a clutch. It went out and I took it to the mechanic. He called me and said Robert, I found sugar in this transmission. I felt like someone that stuck me with a frozen ice pick. Sugar in my transmission!

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RE: I got up and went over there. He give me a soda can with sugar fresh, I mean fresh. That was one thing that happened. Are you familiar with tickler chain? You know anything about, any of that kind of equipment?

FL: [nonverbal answer - shook head]

KG: [nonverbal answer - shook head]

RE: It's a chain that is attached to the door. You know what the doors are? You familiar with doors? Okay. The tickler chain is attached to the door and fishes ahead of your net. If you can figure, okay, if this the net, you would have the chain up front of the net [demonstrates with paper on table]. The chain would hit the shrimp, they get up, the net coming behind. You follow me?

FL: [nonverbal answer - shook head]

KG: [nonverbal answer - shook head]

RE: Okay. Every now and then you have to check it cause the chain stretched. I had mine set about 32 inches ahead of the net. We went fishing one day and one net was catching and the other wasn't. Couldn't figure it out. So I told my partner, I said we just ran the tickler chain, it couldn't be nothing wrong. Someone went down there and cut about three feet out the tickler chain and hook it back to the door. Well the net didn't fish. We had to add 'bout three feet or ten to my doors. Knowing somebody's doing it cause it just don't happen like that. The next thing happened, I went to the dock one morning my partner said, he called me Bob. B-O-B. Bob, I can't get this net right. I was coming over the creek from Meridian. I said wait'll I get out in the sun, when I can come up, leave the wheel for a while I'll come back and see what's going on. Went back there, I couldn't get the net right. My partner name was, we call him Dennis. But his name was named Nathaniel. I said Dennis ain't but one thing wrong. I said somebody unshackled my top line and put it on the bottom and put the bottom line on the top. So the net was like that [demonstrated with his hands]. Took my crescent wrench, unshackled it, hooked it up regular. Things like that just kept happening. One year I spent \$10,000 to rebuild my engine. Next year I had to rebuild it again. That don't happen on those caterpillars cause you can get, some time if you treat it right and change that oil, you can get about 10 years out of it.

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RE: You don't have to overhaul a caterpillar every year, okay? Things like that was beatin' me. I mean wearing me out. You couldn't hardly keep, in other words, I spent more money trying to keep going. Next thing happened, the boat sunk at the dock. We had fished, we was catching conchs. Went to the dock that mornin, boats. A little while later, fella came to me and said they got the wrong boat last night. That night they supposed to get another boat. I'm not gonna call the boat name. And then later on that boat was in there and then it sunk. So I said I can't take no more. It's too costly to stay in business. I really just got out. I couldn't take another one and knowing it was somebody doing it, you know what I

mean. That's the bad part about it. I stayed too long. That's what happened. I should've got out when it first started, before the boat sunk. I could've sold the boat and got out of it. But you keep praying, that's my livelihood and it was good, shrimping in those days, it was good because you could bring home some money because the price of fuel and equipment wasn't terribly bad, high, rather but I just couldn't take no more. I got out of it.

FL: What was that boat constructed out of? Woodhull, fiberglass, or another material? Was it similar to other boats that were operating in Georgia at the time?

RE: Most of them are wooden. Wood boats and I remember when they started fiberglassing. That's fiberglassing over the wood, which was good. They started putting fiberglass over the wood. But most of the boats here now are still wooden boats, some of them are fiberglassed over. Now there are fiberglass boats, most of them here's wooden boats.

FL: Would made that boat very unique or special?

RE: Beg your pardon?

FL: What made that boat very unique or special? If you had to give a characteristic.

RE: I didn't understand you?

FL: What is unique or special to that boat?

RE: The Miracle?

FL: Yes.

RE: The name. The name was special because, several people thought it was something special with the name because I produced and they said boy, there something on that name of that boat. Several people had mentioned it.

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FL: Can you tell me about the people who worked on Miracle?

RE: I had several that worked with me on the Miracle. Abram Holmes was one of them. Nathaniel Holmes was one. Think I had a gentleman on there for a short time, his name was Larry Francis. Had several men that work on there with me and then in between, if you couldn't find your main man, whoever you could get to go that morning you know what I mean. And I was, I had several of those. Some of them name I don't even remember. But, I remember their last name Jimmy Savile was one of them. He worked with me. I can't think, there's one or two more that would pick up. Walter Hutchison, he's deceased now. He worked with me. One thing 'bout Walter, you could go to him four o'clock in the morning or call him and he get up and go with you. And maybe one or two others. I don't remember.

FL: Did your father ever work on a boat with you?

RE: My father went out with me one day, cause I didn't have nobody to go with me. He said, Bob, I'll go with you. And I was afraid because, he was up in age and he was heavy. And I was afraid he might fall on the frame. He went with me, but we made a date. I had another fella went with me, Mark Hanson. He went with me one day. He wasn't a shrimper but he said, I'll go with you. And you tell me what to do. And we did. We made a day. I'm pretty good with givin' instructions. And I'm very precise, I'll tell you, if you do exactly what I say, you don't have no problem. I had a boy, yes, I had a cousin of mine on the boat. His name was Benjamin Rogers. And I told him, when he got on the boat I said, now Benjamin, that's a winch. One day, you're gonna get a rope wound up in it. I mean, I went through all the things that could cause a person to get hurt. You gon' get the rope, it's gonna happen. It happens to the best 'em. I don't care who you are. Every now and then, cause the winch is, we call it a winch, the hoists. Let's put it like that if you don't understand the winch, but our fishermen term, we call it the winch. So, it steady turnin', not steady turning, but you have a lever to pull it in and out of gear.

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RE: And I told him. I said, now, if you ever get a rope wound up in this spool, don't fight it. Stop the winch from turning. That's all you have to do. Then you fight it. You follow what I'm saying? In other words, you stop the thing that's causing the problem. That's simple as I could put it. Something cause you the problem, especially if it's machines, stop the machine. So it was causing him a problem. So he steady was fightin' it. I was on the stern of the boat. I couldn't get there quick enough. I hollered, turn the winch off, stop the winch. He panic, he steady fighting. The winch kept turning. Above the winch I have, what we call a snatch block. It's a block with a rope was in it. It broke the whale. I think I hit him. When I told him I said, I told you when you got on the boat, to stop what's causing the problem. All you had to do was push the lever in and the winch would stop. We could get the rope out, I said you could have gotten killed right then. But he said I panic. So I would tell anybody that got on the boat with me. I would tell them things that could happen. And if it could happen, we would happen one day. I would tell them things that could hurt. Don't do this. Don't do that. But when you panic. If he had did what I told him, I wouldn't have to go and find a welder to fix my, and to go and do this. And it didn't hurt him. Thank God it didn't, cause I think it could've killed him. I've had some narrow calls on on my boat too, doing stupid things. Even though you know better, but you do stupid things. I don't know. Y'all probably don't haven't done them kind of things yet but you gonna do some stupid things. You gonna feel like kicking your own behind. I don't know if you've ever felt like that and wonder why did you do it.

0:25:30

RE: Ever been like that, anybody besides me?

FL: Definitely, definitely.

RE: Okay. I bent the outrigger. Wasn't my fault. It was a crew fault. I had a full trinet. You know what a trinet is? Okay. I had a good try. I was turning and usually if you draggin' north and hit a good try, you want to turn around and come back the way you came. You can't put the trinet out with the boat turning, that's a no no. I had a experience man on the boat that should have known that. I'm turning, had the boat turning hard and he put the trinet back. When I straighten up, the outrigger, bent the outrigger. The trinet got caught in the net behind me and bent the outrigger. So me being stupid, I'm gonna try to straighten it out. I got the ankle line hooked on to the outrigger. I'mma try to straighten it back out so I could keep shrimping. Shrimping, the shrimp was there. I put that, I think I had a three quarter inch nylon rope and I hooked it on the side to a whale and I put it on the winch and by the grace of God that's all it was. The whale broke, the rope went over my head and took my cap off and I never seen the cap no more. I just doing stupid things. After I bent the outrigger, the only thing I should have done is go to the dock and had it fixed. But because the shrimp was there, I'mma try to straighten it out, out there and keep shrimping. Broke the whale, had to get, go to the dock and have a welder do my outrigger. Then I had to weld that piece I broked off. And thank God it didn't hit me. If it was an inch lower, it could've kill me. I mean actually kill me. That nylon rope was stretch far as it could and it went over my head like a slingshot. Just like that. [Made motion over his head to demonstrate slingshot]. Took my cap off. So you see me here now by the grace of God because an inch lower it probably would have took of my head off.

FL: Thank goodness you had that cap on.

RE: Yeah. Thank God. Well, it took the cap off. I didn't feel a thing from the rope. It just took my cap. Never seen the cap no more. But I didn't need that cap and I tell you what I went to the dock then. That's what I should've done. I did then, what I should have done first. It was a stupid thing. I did one or two stupid things. But by the grace of God I'm still there.

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FL: How many strikers did you have on the boat?

RE: At that particular time? Just one and he wasn't my regular striker. He was one that went with me that day. He wasn't a regular striker. But like I said, times when you can't find, when your a regular striker, something to do or he has some place to go and can't go and you want to go. You pick up whoever you can. Like I said I had experience. Man that day would not happen. When he put that trinet

out, me turnin and I told him, you know doggone well you don't put no trinet out when the boats swingin'. I mean I went off, just stupid things that you do, that you know better. That you know not to do forever but it happens. If I was back there and he was the captain, I would know what to do. When the boat is straight, then you put your trinet back out. That's what you do. You can't do it with the boat turnin'. Ninety-nine percent of the time you mess up. You might get lucky one time. But is most likely it's gonna be a mess.

FL: Is it because there's so much pressure when you're turning the boat and then as time to go out

RE: No, it's not no pressure. Okay, you you been out on the Bulldog, haven't you? Did they put the nets out?

FL: The trinets. Yes.

RE: It's just the trinets.

FL: Yes, sir.

RE: Okay. On the boat, you have at least four strands of cable behind you on that net, at least four. If you put on a certain net, with a tone on it, you have six strands. Okay, if you drag this, imagine if you draggin' straight and you turnin' and the trinet is on one side. If you put that trinet out, chances are it's gonna get in one of them, across one of them nets. You know what I'm trying to say? There's no pressure on it but if you drag them straight you could put it out. It doesn't don't interfere with nothing because the trinet is fishing out ahead of the net. Okay, but if you have the boat on a turn and you had six strands of cable, some across the stern of the boat and you straighten up, you got a mess and that's what happened. And like I said, he was experienced but wasn't thinking, you know. I don't know what it was, but anyhow I was a mess. And it cost me. It didn't cost him nothin'.

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FL: How many nets did you have on on the boat and how long were they?

RE: I was pulling probably 50 or 55 feet nets. Probably two nets I was pulling, I suppose. I don't know. I might have been pulling four. I don't know. I can't remember at that particular time. It either two or four. On the brown shrimp you pull four, we had four small nets. I think I had four 28 foot nets. We pulled on brown shrimp only. But I don't remember if I was pulling two or four on that particular day. I pulled two nets more than I did four, only on the brown shrimp did I pull four nets, only. Otherwise, I pulled two nets with tongues on them, it called, we refer to them as mongols net or either tongue nets. And the tongue nets you had to have a third cable for the tongue nets. Another experience I had, I hung up, I caught a sunken boat, I think it was. With one net, one evening. It was towards, just about time to go

home anyhow. I was shrimping. I caught that thing. I did everything I could to get away from it. Couldn't do it. We fought it. Try to back up and go the way that we came on, hoping it would come off. Pullin' on the winch til the boat was leaning like that on that side. I fought it til I got tired. I can't remember who was on, help was on the boat that day. I told him, I got to go home tonight and I'm going home. When I had, you know what a cold chisel

[Background noise: loud cough]

FL: I'm sorry?

RE: A cold chisel. A chisel. It cut steel. Maybe another term for it, but he called it a cold chisel. I went and got my chisel and got rolling me a piece of metal. Cut my cable. And went on home. I said I can't go with this, I turn the net loose, doors, the whole works on that side and went on home. Got another net and some more doors, came back the next day and went to work. I wouldn't be the only one that had to do something like that. Cause if you get hung up on something and you can't get off, you don't have no choice. We've left, in Mexico, my dad got on a hang, I guess, it was an old sunken boat or whatever. We don't know what it was, but we couldn't get off. Cut it and let go. You don't have no choice. So you have to make some decisions up there. Sometimes it's costly but you don't have another choice. You either stay there or go home. You know what I did? I went home. Cut that cable. I said I have to go home tonight. I couldn't go home with it hung up. And the boat was my ride home, so cut the cable and come on home.

0:36:19

KG: Did you want more? [asking if he wanted more coffee]

RE: [shakes his head no]

FL: What changes have you seen in the water or the weather or sea life over the years you've been fishing?

RE: What's that now?

FL: The changes you've seen in the water or the weather?

RE: We've seen a lot of changes. I think it was when the hurricane, I think it was Matthew, I'm not certain. But I know, Irma, when Irma came through it changed a lot of things out there in the ocean. I mean, places that where I used to shrimp, I couldn't because of the hurricanes and stuff. I couldn't go, my boat probably wouldn't even float. And things will move around, like going out of channel, I think if I had to take a boat out there now I'd have to follow somebody because everything out there has changed. I mean some big changes. When Irma came through, it flooded my house. I live right on the

edge of the marsh. Normal high tide like we've had last week, water would come up to the edge of the yard. On this particular morning, September 11. Never will forget. September the tenth, I watched the tide came up on the marsh close to the house. And I think around 10 o'clock that morning, wasn't no water on that marsh. Ten o'clock on the 11th water was on the marsh. Kind of got me, I felt a little uneasy. Have a southeast wind blowing, I don't know 40 miles an hour. I don't know what it was. Tide kept on rising, rising, rising and got up to my den. My den is next to the marsh. Water start coming in. We've took blankets. Everything we could, off the bed. Tell my daughter, she was there. I said Robin, let's try to keep it in this particular room. We couldn't do it. The road there in front of my house, you could drive a speedboat down that road that morning. That water covered my neighbor lawn mower, next door. That's just how high it came. They said it hadn't been like that in 100 years. I had a wood splitter on that side next to the marsh, it covered that wood splitter set up that high [made height measure with hand], I moved, I had my car on the other side of the house next to the garage. It came up to the floor in one of the cars and my car and in my truck. And after that everything, all everything, that came out of the ocean seemed like was in my yard. It took a man, three hours with a back or front, a friend of mine, Frank Williams. It took him three hours with a front end loader to get the dead marsh grass out of my yard. A friend of mine, Lloyd Michael Hutchinson, he had already cleared me a way so I could walk through the front door in the front yard. I had three large stacks, I guess 10 feet high, 10 feet long and about five feet high on firewood. It floated all that out in the road. I got a truck load out of the road so the people could go by and they're just scatter in the ditch and everywhere. And after that Irma, out on that ocean, things change, I mean big time. It's a lot of stuff that happened because of the hurricanes and stuff. But that one did me more harm cause I wasn't shrimping then, I was off the boat then.

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RE: It happened in 2017 January, I mean September 9th, same date when the Twin Towers was hit. That Sunday night my wife got sick, we took her to the hospital, on the way back, stuff was just flying in the road. My daughter had to drive and tried to go and limbs. We came back on 95 Because you couldn't drive on 17. Seventeen was covered. I told my daughter, I said Robin something good will come out of this. Didn't know the next morning the house was gonna be flooded. My wife was in a wheelchair. I saved a lot by being at the house at that particular time. I was at the house when the water came in. But if she was there, I'd have to get her out on a wheelchair, take her somewhere, then come back and try to see what I could. I took the refrigerator two freezers and leaned them over in a position where the water wouldn't be up on the motor. One of the freezers still working, one died. The refrigerator worked and

eventually it died. So we won some and lost some. A lot of stuff that we lost, but I said one good thing happened. I was gonna clean it, but it never worked. Because, in order for the contractors to repair the house, we had to take everything out the house. Everything out so they could work. When I built the house it was \$58,000. To repair was, the first offer was 85 [thousand] just be repaired. The next offer was 65 [thousand] to repair. Now we had to take the sheetrock out from the floor, four feet throughout the house. Four feet off the floor throughout the house. So we bought mold killer, bleach, because everywhere that was wet, we had to try to kill the mold and mildew and stuff down throughout the home. When that contractor told me 65,000, his name was Sam. I said Sam, I have \$50,000 worth of flood insurance. I say you gon' have to work with this 50,000. I say you can't buy \$10 worth of stuff if you don't have but \$5 and he told me he'd worked with me and he did.

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RE: We got the house repaired. The flood came on September the ninth, we didn't move back in the house until February the 3rd. That's how long it took them to repair it. We stayed with my daughter. My wife being in the hospital, so we had to build a ramp to her house, to get my wife in there when she came out of the hospital. And I had two classmates came and helped me. Dwight Hall and Freddy Varner. They came and helped me get the sheetrock out. We took out sinks and everything had to come out of the house so they could work. But those two classmate was very good to me and they came and they helped me to get it ready for the carpenters to start working. We had to get everything out of the house. All the kitchen sinks, cabinets, everything. Out of the bathroom, everything had to come out., before they could start. So Irma did a lot of damage out in the ocean, it did a lot of damage. I wasn't the only one that had trouble now because I talked with one person they told me they had, I forgot, I think Matthew had done, had floated their house and then Irma came and flooded right behind, so they had a double portion. I said I don't believe I could take it. I mean I'm still working, three years later, still haven't finished. We've packed up dishes, we've packed up, oh my God, we still have some things we need to work on. And we work on it gradually. I'll get there one day. If I don't get there, somebody else will get there you. I'll do the best I can. Anything else?

FL: How do you think commercial fishing is doing overall in Georgia nowadays?

RE: This is my estimation, my idea of what's going on now. They're still doing good far as where shrimping is concerned. It's not as plentiful as it should be this time of year. Back when I shrimped, say from September on to January, that was a good time. We did good. They still catching shrimp but what's

hurting the shrimpers now is the price of diesel and equipment. Back when I quit shrimping diesel was 35 cents a gallon, now it's probably closer to \$3 a gallon. It's close to three dollars right now.

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FL: Almost 10 times what it used to be.

RE: And I was complaining about the 35 cents. Cause when I bought my first boat, the Miss Evelyn V, fuel was 19 cents a gallon. I could put 500 gallons on for less than \$100. Can you imagine that? Now you put 500 gallons on now, you be close to a 1500 gallon \$1,500. It just the cost of ice was like, I think it was about \$1 a box, a dollar and a half something like that. I don't know what it is now. In fact they're not putting block ice on now, crushing it and going on the boat already crushed. I don't know what it is now, but that diesel fuel and then the first boat I had you wouldn't even burn but 80 gallons a day all day. Didn't have a whole lot of power. But I could work all day on 80 gallons of fuel. And then the next engine I put in the boat, from 100-110 gallons. But like I said if that fuel price start easing up, cause we went from 19 on the first boat. And when I got off, it was like 35 cents a gallon. And I thought that was high. Now I don't know what I would do. But right now, I wouldn't want to know. You know what I mean?

0:49:28

FL: Those were all the questions I have for you. Do you have any? [Asking KG]

KG: Yes, I actually do have a few. You mentioned the Miracle and a few other ones, like Trade Winds and Evelyn V and the Belgian. Were there any particular reasons for these names? Do they have like any special meanings?

RE: Well, I knew the reason, I know about about the Belgian. Like I mentioned, Paul Herring. Worked for him for years. He was a pilot. I think he was shot down in Belgium, but he named that after the Belgian. The Geiger. I can't remember. I didn't know why the Geiger was named Geiger. Syme. S-Y-M-E. Pronounced it Si-me. Syme or whatever. I don't know the name of the other one. And the Tolomator the second, they had the boat years before that was named Tolomator. So this one was named Tolomator the second and that was the last one that my father operated, was Captain, but he Captained Manatee, Syme, Belgian, Geiger, and the Tolomator the second. Five of them that he Captained. He was the top captain in the fleet, let's put it like that. And so he got all the new boats. Every boat that came off, my father operated it. When the Geiger came off, we were supposed to be leaving to go back to Campeche which was gonna be three days out. So I told my father, I said we need to go to Dry Tortugas. Y'all ever heard of Dry Tortugas? I said we don't need to go that far with a new boat. We need to prove it before

we get out, sure enough we went into Dry Tortugas. they had put a smaller hoist, a winch on the boat. I'mma use some term and I'll explain it. When we put the rigs out and dog off. You know what dog off mean? You don't know that.

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RE: In other words, on the different types of winch, you go out so far and they have clogs in the thing that they would put something to stop it so it won't go no further. On this one they had wheels on it and we tighten the wheels as tight as we could get them. The key will keep easing off, that was supposed to be what we called doggin' off. Kept on easin out, we kept going, so I told Daddy, that we need to go to the dock and get this thing fixed. You know the net, we couldn't stop it. I guess it was too much, the rigs were too heavy for the winch. So we stayed down, I don't know, a couple of nights for it and so we went on back into Fort Myers and told Mr. Paul, what was going on and they had to get a welder to come and fix it. We'll put the little clogs in the winch where we could have something, that we called doggin it off and after we got all the bugs out of it, because with new boats you're gonna have bugs, you know you know what I mean. After you get everything working like it ought to be working, that's what I'm saying when I say get the bugs out of it, then we left and went into Campeche, Mexico. And everything went fine because we got all the bugs out close by you know, Fort Myers, uh Tortugas don't take long. You leave in the morning and be Fort Myers in the evening you know what I mean. But if you go to Mexico and had a problem, three days out from Fort Myers and have a problem you're not gonna want to drive all the way, come all the way back there, Yucatan to get something like that fixed. So we had to get everything to go to Mexico. The Pat and the Evelyn V, I don't know. Those other boats, Trade Winds. I don't know why they were named that, they were older boats. So only one I know about really is the Miracle because I knew, I called it a Miracle to have gotten it. Because a lot of people, when you get a new boat, you gonna have to work hard to pay for it. I worked that little Miss Evelyn V. I didn't ever I never tell nobody. But when I brought it to the dock, the boat was paid for. You follow what I'm saying? The boat, whole the boat itself, the wood part was paid for. I didn't have to work hard to try to pay for the boat. I took the old engine put it in it. I took the outriggers, I stripped the old boat and put it on there.

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RE: Now, all I had, I bought a winch, a hoist from Standard Hardware and some other little equipment. That's all I had to pay for. My boat was paid for. First thing they say to do, you gotta pay for a new boat. My boat paid for. I didn't ever tell nobody. Why y'all worried 'bout me? My boat is paid for. When I brought it to the dock, it was paid for. But I planned ahead. I worked that little old boat I had when I

could. Saved, looking ahead to try to do better. And know I wouldn't be on that boat long because if it didn't sink. I made it back home for every night.

KG: Earlier you said that y'all had 300 boxes of shrimp?

RE: Well, I said a boat would be crossing at what we call the Yucatan, between Fort Myers and Campeche with about 300 might even have 400 boxes. But see, I explained to you, we would unload our shrimp at like 30 boxes. I'm just using a figure like that, then the other boat might have had 25 or 30 and all this is piled on one boat, what we call freight. He was like transferring our freight to Fort Myers. Yeah, they've come across two, three, four-hundred boxes of shrimp that he brought. It was a fleet of boats from Tampa, Fort Myers, and Key. They were fishing that area at the time. It was so many that, at least every 8 or 10 days, if you want to ship your shrimp, a boat was coming. It was just that many boats at that particular time, fishing in that area. And they would, you could put your shrimp on it and like I said one boat could have 300, 400 boxes. When you just comin' home, you bring your freight. Then another 10 days, another one is coming. You follow what I'm saying? And that's how we had to get our shrimp back to the state. So by time the shrimp got to the table, could be 30 days since it's been caught. I came into the dock one day and the shrimp was, my shrimp was darn near still jumping on the deck. And this lady came down and asked me what was wrong with my shrimp. I said what you mean, what's wrong with them? She said I've never seen shrimp look like that before. I said you haven't? I said the reason you haven't seen them, because by the time you got your shrimp they were half, they were pink because it's been caught, could've been in the freezer for X amount of time.

0:58:24

RE: I said these shrimp are almost still living. They fresh shrimp. One lady, she didn't know that shrimp had a head. I didn't know shrimp had heads on them. I don't know where she was from and I didn't even ask her, but she thought something was wrong with fresh shrimp. And I just the shrimp was like I said was probably some of them still kickin'. And she ask me what was wrong with them. Nothing wrong with them. The only thing wrong with these, these are fresh shrimp. And have you ever seen fresh shrimp? I'm sure you did. They drop that trinet, because I've been out there too on that Bulldog too and you put that trinet out for five or ten minutes and pull it up, you gonna have some shrimp, according where you put it. If they put it where I think they did, I know y'all had shrimp. Might had a bag. I don't know. Could've had enough to boil or more than that.

KG: You said that you had sugar in your transmission in the Miracle.

RE: Had what?

KG: Sugar. That you had to redo the engine after a year. Did you ever figure out who was doing all that or how any of that?

RE: Thank God I didn't, because you wouldn't have seen me. I probably be serving time. I said if I ever catch one on my boat, I didn't have nothing and I was gonna bite him to death. So thank God I didn't. I didn't know. There are some other things that I don't want to mention, but it wasn't nice to say. I'll tell you, I'm not gonna call the name of who did it. But like I said, I worked hard. I got a new boat, built a new house. And I was at a class reunion one night. And a friend of mine said, let's go into the bar and get us a drink. I said, I don't want anything to drink. I said, I'll drink a coke. He said, well, I'm not gonna buy you a coke, if you don't. I said, well, just don't buy me nothing. You know, because I don't drink. I wasn't drinking. So he encouraged me to walk over into the bar with him. And he was a white fellow. I'll tell you that. He was over there. And he was about wasted, he done drink a lot. He knew me by name. I respected him until the day he died. I have no regrets.

1:01:05

RE: I blame myself for being in the bar, you follow what I'm saying? Because if I didn't go in the bar, it wouldn't've happened. He came up to me, hug me and kiss me on my jaw. And it was several white fellows sitting around and they were drinkin'. He said this nigga doing good. Let's get rid of him. That's what he said. Right to my face. I didn't get mad. Because I blame myself for being in the bar. To the day he died, he's dead now. And one of the fellows in there, wasn't gonna call no name. He says, why are you talking to Robert Lee like that? That's what the fella said. And he was a white man too. He said Why are you talking to Robert Lee like that? Because everybody knew me, everybody in the area. And he knew me well. And until the day I died, I blamed myself, I never blame him and I have respect for him. I call him, Captain. I ain't gonna call his last name. I refer to him as Captain so and so. I said I didn't want to go in there to start with but I went. Now after this happened, that's when the boat sunk and some of these other things happened. Cuz he said among his friends, this nigga doing good. Let's get rid of him. Like I said I respected him until the day. I blame myself. If I wasn't there at the time, it would not have happened. You know what I mean? So I didn't. And he was drinking. I mean, he was wasted. Let's put it like that. He wasn't pissy drunk. But he was, you know what I mean? He knew what he was saying. And I haven't seen, that tongue is like a bucket and the heart is like a whale. You see, whatever goes down, that tongue goes down in their heart, is gonna bring out what's in their heart if you follow what I'm saying. So you can imagine your heart being a whale and your tongue a bucket and what that tongues brings up that's what's in the heart. And that's what I said about him. It was in his heart, to refer

to me as a nigga doing good, you follow what I'm saying? Now, a lot of times when people say things like that, they blame it on the liquor you see. The liquor could've had something to do with it. He wouldn't talk to me like that if he wasn't drinking. But I felt like it was already in the heart. And that tongue just brought it up. I don't know. But I blame, like I say, back to basic, I blame myself for being in the bar. Anything else?

KG: How long had the miracle been in commission before it sank?

RE: 19 or so years.

KG: And that is all I have for you. Did you have any questions concerning the research or anything for us? Well, I thank you for your time. And I think we have to have you fill out this paper.

1:04:52