

Name of Narrator: Charlie Phillips (CP)

Interviewers: Amber Chulawat (AC) and Sierra Sutton (SS) recorded this interview with the permission of Charlie Phillips for the research project “Boat Stories.”

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

Transcriber: Sierra Sutton

Date of Interview: November 13, 2021

Place: McIntosh County, Georgia

Duration of the Interview: One hour, forty seven minutes and fifty-six seconds (1:47:56)

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: Interviewers chat with the Fish Dock owner, Charlie Phillips.

General Description of Contents: In this interview, Mr. Charlie Philips discusses his current and past fishing vessels and the fates of some of those boats. He tells some of his stories while on these boats and while working with his family. Mr. Philips also talks about his business ventures such as his restaurant, his clam farm, and the oyster farm he is in the process of getting up and running.

AC: This is an interview with Charlie Phillips on November 13, 2021. This interview is being conducted in McIntosh County, Georgia. This is part of the research project and interview collection titled “Boat Stories”. The interviewers are Amber Chulawat and Sierra Sutton. And just to make sure, this is all voluntary and you've gone through the consent and can get a verbal.

CP: Yes, I have signed my life away.

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SS: Can you tell us about your current or most recent fishing vessel?

CP: The boat that I can take fishing right now is called the Beagle. It's a 42 foot duffy hull. So it used to be the boat that they used to ferry people back into to the north end of Cumberland. And I think it got too big for the creek and then they'd let the boat just kind of maintenance go down on it. And I saw it at the boat yard. I don't know, probably six, seven years ago, and the guy kept saying you need to buy that boat because I was getting one of my other snapper boats worked on. I said, I do not need that boat. He said you need to buy that boat, I do not need that boat. I have too many boats now. And he kept on telling me I needed to buy it as I would go check on my other boat, and I finally made the cardinal sin. I asked how much. And he told me I thought, Wow, I can't buy a Carolina Skiff for that. But then the engines were run out the boat needed a ton of work. But I knew the hull, because I've had a 42 duffy before and they're really good hulls. So I ended up buying the boat. And then I spent probably several years kind of off and on working on it. And I finally realized I'm never going to finish this boat. So, I said, alright, and we'd sold some clams. I said, alright, I'm going to just invest some money in it and send it back to the boat yard that built it in Maine, and Maine builds some really good boats and they know how to deal with stuff and they've got a really profitable fishing industry with the lobster industry and duffy was a basically they used a lot of lobster boats back in the day single screw engines. This is a twin screw. And so I sent it up there to the boat yard. They had bought Duffy out and they wanted \$5,000 to put a dive door in the transom. I'm thinking no you saw it out. There's the square there's the door you finish the edges you put trim back on it you put hinges on it. No, that is not a \$5,000 job.

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CP: So at the time I'm and I'm still on it I'm on a large whale take reduction team, it's a federal panel. And so I knew some lobster guys up there, they are the lobster guy friend of mine said you will go try my boat yard I think they could probably do it and do it cheaper. So I called them and

I took the whole quote prices and everything. I said can you give me a better deal than this? They said, Yeah, we can't start on it for another month or something. But yeah, so we'll put it on a truck, drive it an hour, put it on a, and they weren't even on the water. They were in a big metal building. And they just slid the boats in there, had a heated floor because Maine has four seasons: summer, winter, winter, and winter. [laughs] And I know I was up there in January, one year when they were working on that boat. It never got over 17 degrees for three days. It went from zero to 17 for three days. That was the range. It was brutal. But anyway, but the boatyard started building the boat, and they did a really good job because they know boats up there. And those boats fight a lot of weather. So they build them solid, they build them well. And he'd say, Do you want this done or that done? Sure. Let's go ahead and fix that. Well, what about this? How do you want to do this? We can do this and this will be better? I said sure and let's do it that way. And my feminine side got the best of me and so I kept going until I ended up with what I call a lobster yacht. The boat was too nice for me to let anybody else run but me. And I got it to the boat yard that was gonna do the engines and they said those old engines, you got too much money in this boat now, you need to change out the engines. You're right. So let's spend a chunk of money and put brand new engines in it. So when I got through with it, I ended up with a what I call a lobster yacht. So it was a really nice boat. I can't let anybody run it by me. And, but it's got snapper, grouper permits on it. So whenever I get a chance, I take it fishing. And because she's got twin engines and she's pretty fast for, she's really fast for a snapper boat. She can cruise 15, 16 knots, where most snapper boats make six, seven knots, maybe eight at best. But, so anyways, I was out when they had red snapper open. Two weeks ago, they had a four day opening. Because the commercial guys didn't catch their miniscule quota. They shut it off too early. So we went, I took a friend of mine and we ran 30 miles offshore because you don't have to go far anymore to go catch red snapper. And I was anchoring the boat up and he was waiting on the anchor to set. And so while we're waiting on the anchor to set, he's baitin' up the hooks, throwin' 'em in the water, they've got like 15, 20 foot litters on 'em, and a one pound weight, at the triangle at the reel. And he's throwin' this stuff over, waiting on the anchor to boat straight so I could tell him drop the rigs. And he looked back and one of the litters was snatching and I said, what in the heck?

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CP: He went back there and pulled the leader. He already had a red snapper. On the surface. We couldn't even drop the weight to the bottom we already and then he had two hooks on get two red snapper and we never even dropped the rig before we even started fishing. So red snapper stops have wildly rebounded, to the point where it's become what we call a choke species. You will try to go fish for vermillion snapper because they're open. But you can't fish for vermillion snapper because all you can catch is red snapper. So you have to just pull your anchor and go move and try to find somewhere where there's not so many red snapper. And it's getting harder and harder to find places to fish where you can actually catch some target species that's open versus another species that's closed. But that's a whole 'nother story. No, I fish the Beagle when I get the chance. And then I've got two other snapper boats. Actually, I've got, that are fishing, and I've got a third one that we're putting a new engine and rebuilding that boat. Not to the extent of the Beagle, but we're putting some serious money in it. I.e. a new engine, new clutch, new generator, air conditioning, new electronics. So that'll be a really good little fishing boat.

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CP: I'm trying to give my guys stuff to fish with that I would fish with if I was going to be on the water all the time. But I don't have time to be on the water all the time because I've got a restaurant and a clam farm and everything else I do. But I go when I get a chance and if I can get people that can run the Rabbit for me, I'm going to fire me more often and go spend more time out there. Because there's not much, I can't think of anything better than a good day fishing. Of course, I can't think of anything worse than a bad day fishing in bad weather and things breaking. So, when it's good, it can be really good and when it's bad it can be really bad. But that's the boat I work now. When I can. What else do you want to know?

SS: Do you know what the prior names of the Beagle were?

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CP: The Beagle was, the name of it was the Highpoint. Which is what they call that island on the north end of Cumberland. I was gonna name the boat Giddy Up Go. That's what I was going to use it for, to giddy up and go lookin' for some fish. And then I happened to read Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle. And I got to thinkin' you know what, I'm going to name it the Beagle, after the HMS Beagle. And I had friends say, people won't know what you're doing. They don't know where the name came from. I said, you know what, I don't care. I know where the name came from. And if they're not smart enough to understand Darwin, HMS Beagle, then too bad.

See, when you get old and crusty, you can do things like that. Y'all got a long way to go yet, before y'all get old and crusty. I can tell you all about it.

SS: So, you said that you call it a lobster...

CP: I call it my lobster yacht.

SS: Have you seen any boats similar to it?

CP: No. No, you might have some charter boats that are have that kind of a quality finish to them. And actually, I've got a charter boat license for it. If I wanted to try to charter it. Problem is I don't like people that well, that I want to take with fishing with me. So, I don't know if I'll ever use it. Again, it's that old and crusty coming up.

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SS: You mentioned that you have two other boats. Could you go more into detail about them?

CP: I've got one called the Lady Diane. Bought it several years ago, mostly bought it because I wanted the fishing permit, cause snapper, grouper permits are limited entry and they're difficult to come by. And they're expensive. Which is kind of odd because most of the snapper grouper guys really don't make that much money. They've done the economics on 'em and they just really don't make that much money. But because it's a limited number of licenses maybe that's just where the values come from. And maybe if you amortize it out over 10 or 15 years, you can make the numbers work. Most of the snapper grouper captains are probably 50 years old or older. And there's not very many young people that want to get into business. And a lot of the young people that do want to get into business they're not disciplined enough to actually be captains and anybody that's smart enough to run a boat, catch fish, manage a crew to get them to do what they need to do and show up on time and so on so forth. And do the mechanics to keep the boat running and just have enough sense to navigate in and out, so, they don't run on the jetties and sink the boat and stuff like that. I've had people do stupid stuff like that. If you got anybody that's smart enough to do all those things, they can generally get a better job on the hill and stay home with their wife and family. But you got a few people that are just they want to be offshore, they want to be fishermen they don't want that structure of having to go to work every day on the hill and some of them make really good money. But the bulk of them do not. In these days and times, it's just difficult to find help period. I don't care whether you're running the restaurant or trying to find help for the clam farm. It's just hard to find help period. And, but it's even worse, trying to find somebody run up a snapper boat, or basically any kind of boat. I

imagine its the same way with swordfish captains, tuna captains, shrimp boat captains. I think it probably pretty much same thing across the board. It's just tough. It's a good life, but you're gone a lot and it's just not suited for everybody. It's not suited for very many people really.

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CP: Like I say it's a really good office on a good day. And catching fish, especially when you're fishing sustainably, which is what we do. We fish under the Magnuson Stevens Act. And then we, all our regulations are done mostly through the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I was on that council for nine years till I turned out a little over three years ago. And I turned out as chair. So, I understand fishery assessments, how they work, management, how it works, why it makes sense sometimes and why it doesn't make sense sometimes. But having good data and good numbers to crunch and a good understanding of where your numbers come from, is just critical. And when fishermen tell you, whether it be recreational, commercial, it doesn't really matter. I can go out there and catch all of this or that or whatever. And they're, they're everywhere. But you have to do statistical analysis. And you need to look at things like spawn and stock ratios, and you need to look at things like catch per unit effort, and you need to look at things like, average size and look at things on how old they are, when they start, they're sexually mature, and just on and on and on, there's just so many things to look at, to decide, what goes into the formula on how you figure out how to fish and then that didn't even get into how do you split the pile up, because a recreational fisherman, they say, We need x much, and we're catching this, and we spend this to catch fish, so we should get more fish. And then the commercial fishermen who were basically fishing, they're catching fish for the non fishing public and a lot of times, they're catching fish for the fishin' public, that people that want to go eat at a restaurant don't want to go catch fish or can't go catch some fish. So commercial fishermen are taken care of getting the public's resource to the part of the public that won't or can't go fishing, but they still own that resource. And then the recreational fishermen, they want to go catch their piece of that resource. And so it's sometimes it's a battle, it shouldn't be cause, we need to be working together as much as possible, but it is definitely an issue of how do you split up the pie and how you do it fairly, where everybody can live.

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CP: One of the ways that I tended to look at things if you had a regulation that nobody was really happy, but everybody could live, it was probably as good as you could get. Because if you

got one side really happy, then you probably had the other side really, really unhappy. So and they're changing up a lot of stuff now and with different laws and interpretations of how things should be done. So and that doesn't help commercial fishin' either because there's no, it takes away a lot of the stability and knowing, okay, I want to go catch beeliner fish all year, that's my bread and butter fish. And but if they turn around and cut the quotas back on beeliners, for some reason, then it takes the Civility out of the fishery. And it's like, what do we do now? And maybe we'll go catch amberjack. But when they start getting pushed from one species to another species, then you just start overfishing one species and everybody piles on another species and you over fish that you lower the stocks on that and you push them into another species and you lower the stocks on that and it turns into a snowball effect. You ideally want to kinda keep everybody fishing everything at sustainable levels without pushing fisheries, a lot of fishermen from one sector to another. It's a dance. What else do you want to know?

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SS: So back to the boat. What have your current boats been through in the years you've had it, in the years before you've had it?

CP: What, now? Rephrase that, tell me again.

SS: Can you tell me a little bit about what your boats might have gone through before you had them?

CP: The other snapper boats were all snapper boats. The Fish Hound, when I bought it, it was a snapper boat. It was rundown and I forgot the name of the boat what it was named when I bought it. I changed it and I had a boat at one time called the Sea Puppy, I had another boat at one time called the Sea Dog and then I've got the Fish Hound. When people ask me I just tell them I name everything after the dog because everything's come to the dogs around here. But the Sea Puppy burned a few years ago and the Sea Dog I sold, the captain that was running it worked out interest so I sold the boat to him. And the Fish Hound is currently offshore trying to catch wreckfish, so he's probably close to 100 miles offshore in 1800 foot of water on the other side of the Gulf Stream as we speak. And I haven't gotten a satellite text, so I don't know if he's got any fish on board yet. And then the one that's down in Jacksonville being rebuilt, hopefully I'll have it where it can go fishing in a couple of months. To me, it's important for the public to have access to their resource. We have so much of our food that's got antibiotics and growth hormones and additives. And to me it's just, we could do better. And to me, fish is healthy, is

clean, if your fish sustainably, it's kind of like my shellfish, clams and oysters, all the shellfish they would clean the water, there's no additives. It's just there's not very many things that you do that I think are win/wins. Most industries, if you're a farmer, that you're growing corn, can put a lot of nitrogen out to grow corn. And I don't care how good of a steward you are of the land, a lot of times, when you get heavy rains, that nitrogen is going to run down in the creeks and then it's going to get down the creek to the river, and then it's gonna come down the river here, and it helps cause algae blooms and stuff. And that doesn't even count the pesticides and herbicides and stuff that, they often use. So, and there's a lot of us, that are weeds, quote, unquote, that are, are getting resistant to the chemicals, the Roundup Ready stuff, and there's a lot of weeds that are resistant to a lot of that. And so the farmers are spraying this and that and that. And I'm not saying what they're doin's wrong. But it's not as environmentally friendly as I think they would like it to be. I don't think they won't spend all that extra money on that, those extra chemicals, but they have to, to get the yields. And to me fishing brings in a really clean, healthy product that people can eat. That's good for 'em. And also think it goes a long ways toward helping tie people to the environment and lets 'em understand how important it is to take care of our water quality, and things like that, including looking at co2 issues and things like that. I mean, we need to take care of the planet, we need to take care of our fisheries, we need to take care of our lands. So, the people behind us, like y'all, you'll have something to work with and not be trying to clean up a big mess that the generation before left.

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CP: And I think you're going to have a lot to clean up at the rate we're goin' unfortunately. But, so I think it's a good thing to do fisheries but you can only do so much, wild fisheries. So, we look at aquaculture. So how do you do aquaculture that's environmentally clean? And they're raising salmon in recirculating systems. Places like Canada have tried to get away from pens in the ocean, they want to put everything on the hill but you still even some of those systems you're still having to treat for this that or the other or you're having to go catch fish to put fishmeal in as part of their fish diet, maybe go with whatever else they may be usin', maybe some grain or something. So, but since we don't do any of that, to me, the wild stuff is healthier and cleaner. But you still need to do aquaculture and it's kind of like growing corn, you do the best you can, you keep it as low impact as you can. That's why I love growing clams and stuff. All they do is eat algae, all they do is clean the water. They're low fat really helped the, up in New York they

buy my stuff I tell him all the time what good aphrodisiacs they are and they just keep buyin' 'em. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. You asked. You heard her asked me. What else do you want to know?

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SS: Can you tell me a little bit about the people you've worked with on your boats or in your businesses, too?

CP: Well, I've worked with a lot of people. If one says I'm successful, which I may or may not be depends on how you look at it. I define successful as having a handful of friends that know me and they love me anyway. That's my gauge. So, on that in that point, I would be. But I've worked with a lot of captains, there's a lot of good people on the water. There's a lot of people that are, they're on drugs of some sort, alcohol, this, that. And I've seen so many people just that could have something and better fisherman than I was when I was fishing. And but they just couldn't stay away from the drugs and it cost 'em everything. And quite a few of them are dead now. So, it's a sad tale, but I don't know how you fix it. I just don't know how you fix it. Even working, doing what I do now, sometimes I think I'm 30% social worker and 70% boss, and some days, I think social worker's way higher than that. Just trying to help people survive, get through, understand why we do what we do, how we do it, what I expect out of 'em. How can I help you? Having people come to work for you and just doing a job and going home. It's more than that they need to have a life too. And they ideally you have it where it's a congenial workplace, ideally you should be able to have fun doing what you do. You need to work hard, you need to pay attention, but you should be able to have be at a place where you feel like you're doing something constructive. You're part of a team, you're an important part of a team. And when you leave at the end of the day, you feel good. And every now and then there's things gonna happen that just didn't go well and you've got to understand that just so and so was having a bad day and I'm just gonna have to let that border roll off my back and we'll go back tomorrow and start over again and see if we can make it better. But, this is a harder work environment with people than and I've been doing this for a long time. When I was shrimp fishin, generally I had two guys on the back deck. And if I had two good guys, we could pretty much do anything. We worked as a team and there was times, especially early on, when I might tend to be moody or quiet or something. And I just didn't feel like talking. I didn't have to talk 'em. We had hand signals, everybody pretty much knew the drill. I could give hand signals or a whistle and point at

what I wanted done. This meant pull the tri-net, this meant take up the rigs, this meant we're going, I could go for two days and never talked to the crew. They weren't mad with me. I wasn't mad with them. I just didn't have anything to say. And we got along fine.

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CP: There's just not many things you can do where you could manage to work like that and work smoothly. But if everybody knows your job and you understand the routines, you can do stuff like that. But yeah, shrimpin' was fun, when it was good. And when it was bad, you weren't catchin' anything and the weather was bad and things were breakin, and you're thinking if I tear up another net, I don't know where I'm going to pay for and get the money to buy another one. I might just be out of business. God if you want ta keep me shrimpin', help me get through this. Somebody asked me the other day, said are you spiritual? I said anybody that's been on the water any length of time is spiritual, somehow someway. They might not be Baptist, but they are spiritual. You can't spend that kind of time on the water and not be. It's impossible. People that work on the water are different. So, what else?

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SS: Can you tell me a little bit about how shrimping compares to the grouper and snapper?

CP: It's just a different fishery. It's a different kind of fishery, different boat. Shrimp boats are much bigger, your trawling nets, you got to deal with TEDs, and heavier gear doors. All the turtle by-catch devices and stuff. It's just a different fishery in a lot of ways, but a lot of times it's the same philosophies on workin' and how you work and what you do. I shrimp fished way more than I did anything else on the water. I spent some time catching golden tilefish long line, and I spent some time in wreck fishing years ago now this boat is a snapper boat so it's a different fishery than long linin' by far. But it's still the same kind of people, same kind of philosophies. There's people that just want to get out on the water, need to get out on the water sometimes. They don't do well in traffic and red lights and being in town it's just, as I wrote in one of my diaries many, many years ago, it's just too confusing. The sea may be complicated but it is not confusing. Two different things. What else? I'm also a philosopher of sorts.

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SS: Will you tell me the funniest thing that has ever happened on one of your boats?

CP: I need to think. Never really had anybody asked me that. More often sad tales or how did you keep from sinking and losin' the boat in a storm. When we shrimp fished years ago, we

didn't have the electronics we have now and when you talk on the VHF it's kind of a common channel. So, it's hard to, and if you find some shrimp and you want to share it with your buddy that you fish with a lot, you try to do that, but you kind of don't want to say, Hey, I just had 500 pounds of shrimp last night. And this is where I'm at, because then you're going to get covered over 10 boats, or more or something. So I had a friend of mine, Captain Mack, it had taught me an awful lot of what I know about shrimpin and he taught me how to sew webbin' and things like that. And I had found a few shrimp on a little tiny piece of bottom. I mean, it was a small piece of bottom. So, it couldn't take much pressure. And I was trying to call Mack and say, tell him to come help me cause I wanted him to catch some shrimp, too. And he kept asking me, said alright, well where you at? I kept trying to give him hints on where I was without just saying, this is the x, where everybody, where God and everybody knew where I was. And it finally got to the point where I had almost just said, this is the X on the map before Captain Mack finally figured out where I was. And he got to me late that afternoon along with about another half a dozen other shrimp boats. And the bottom was only like a half mile long and you had to swing around inside of the buoys, the marker buoys we put out, and I was thinking this is not good, just this bottom barely has room for two boats much less six or eight. And but everybody put out there come dark. And we made a couple of loops. And there was just so many boats that it was just a circus you couldn't fish there. And pretty much everybody after a few hours just said we give up this is not worth it and Mack, he was so mad with me. Because he had he was catching some shrimp where he was, he wasn't catching near what I was catchin' the night before. And he was so mad with me about me calling him in to come help me that to a little tiny piece of bottom where it was just everybody was piled up on top of each other. He was ready to just choke me. And so he swore he was never coming to me ever again.

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CP: But he was my buddy and he looked after me really well as best he could. Of course, it was hard to look after an 18,19 year old shrimp boat captain, that was just wide open. And I was wide open to the point that I needed to go, it was time we were off Fort Myers beach and it was time to go shrimpin'. And my crew did something and they decided they didn't want to go shrimpin'. I said, fine, I'll just go by myself. People don't run 68 foot shrimp boats by themselves in the Gulf of Mexico. It's just not done. You might go with one crew. Ideally you want two. You do not leave the dock with no help. No crew. I could say I was young and a bit stubborn. You know what, I

don't need y'all, I think I can figure it out. I can do this by myself. I can pull the rigs out by myself. I can pull them by myself. I'll take my time I'll bring the bags in by myself, I'll do it by myself. I know how to do this I can make this happen. So, we went offshore. Captain Mack was out there too. He had two guys on his boat. And he didn't say a whole lot and I knew I was pushing it. And the first thing that happened just sitting the brigs out on the end of the outriggers, which should have been relatively simple. Even for one man. Was the cables jumped behind the shivs and the pulley at the end of the outrigger. And the outrigger was 40 foot long, and these half inch steel cables jump behind the shivs. Crap. Now that is a chore when you have a crew. It's really a chore when there's nobody on the boat but you and you have to go from boat go out to the end of the outrigger, do whatever you got to do with the cables or the shackles or trying to tie stuff up and pull the cables back out from behind the shivs. And I spent probably a couple of hours doing that. And even though I was young and strong and stubborn. After two hours of fighting that, I realized that I really did need a crew.

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CP: And Mack was listening to me he was watching. And I think he went back there. And kinda said alright boys, one of y'all need to go help Charlie, because this ain't working out so well. And I can get by with one crew. So, he basically talked one of his crew into comin and helpin me, never really told me that he did that. But I know that he did. And so he put one of his crew on my boat, and I finished out my trip with one man, but that went a long way toward making the cowboy, a lot more humble. So, I didn't do that but once. I did bring the boat home by myself once, but that was a much easier chore. Just coming back to the middle of Florida and up the east coast by myself, because I had a run apart, but they could kind of be my eyes and I could nap and they could watch for me and somebody got close, they just called me on radio and wake me up. But when we were offshore running, we ran 24/7. We never stopped. So, like from here to the Cape, I think it's probably closer to 30 hours or something. Ends up here or in the Gulf Stream or not going north or south. But nobody stays up 30 hours, or you shouldn't, you got to have some naps. But we did it, we pushed hard. And we did a lot of stuff. But you learn a lot of stuff. And then you learn some stuff that makes you get humble. And it makes it philosopher out of you. So, what else?

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SS: You mentioned you were 18 and 19. About how old were you when you started?

CP: I was, I tell people sometimes I was slave labor on the shrimp boat when I was in school. High school. I was going fishing in the summer. It was not an option. I got paid, but I couldn't stay home with the rest of the kids and ride bicycles and goof off, I worked. And I probably started running shrimp boats on the weekend for my dad when I was a senior in high school. 17,18, running boats on the weekends. And when I started college, I still ran the boats when I wasn't in college, like in the summers, when we had summers off I ran the boats, or the weekends. And when I was a junior we had, I took night classes two days a week. So I could go run the boat on the other five days a week. And then I do all my homework on the two days I had night classes. And so I started running boats when I was 17,18, something like that. Pretty much ran until I quit college. And the reason I quit the college was I had a professor tell me I had a final on June 1, and I was running the shrimp boat. And I was the captain. And June 1 is when the beaches open. And I told him I said I can't be here June 1, I've got to be in, I run a shrimp boat. And sometimes we might catch \$5,000 worth of shrimp that day. So I can't be here. I can be here before, I can be here a day or two after, but June first is not an option. He said no, no, no, work, work is not an option to miss your final. You don't understand this is not just work. I don't pump gas at the minute market.

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CP: I'm the captain of a shrimp boat, I'm not even the crew. I'm the captain. And he kept on telling me that work was not an excuse. And after about a five or 10 minute conversation I finally told the professor I said I have the answer to the question. But I don't need to be here June 1 Because I just quit. Bye. And after that I became a full time shrimp boat captain. College professors are much more lenient these days than they were back then. But and then I made sure I was outside in the yard when I told my dad because one I could run a lot faster than him. And he informed me from about six feet away because that was as close as I was going to get that I was going to have to work the rest of my life because I just screwed up and I wasn't going to end up being a CPA or something. I was going to have to work the rest of my life. So that's what we do. We do stuff.

00:45:12

SS: So your father was a shrimp boat captain as well?

CP: He ran a shrimp boat. He went out on, he used to own a feed mill back when I was little, elementary school, and I guess and his partner got killed when I was I guess, maybe sixth grade,

or during the summer of the seventh grade or something, and nobody knew who did it and his partner was killed, murdered, and he couldn't swing the finances to buy the other half of the feed mill, he owned half. So he ended up having a sell out. He came down here and went shrimping with a guy, and they went left early in the morning. 4:30 in the morning went out to Sapelo Sound, worked till noon, caught about \$500 worth of shrimp, came home and thought wow, that was easy. He worked half a day for \$500 If he worked all day, he'd have 1000. I need to do this. So, we went had a guy build a shrimp boat, 58 foot wooden shrimp boat, put a V8 GM, named it the Rebel. And after he get the boat almost built, somebody finally said, you know they only work half a day because they knew they weren't going to catch anything the rest of the day. So that's why they went in at noon. But, he was already had the boat half built by then so he was kind of already done. But he bought the boat and run the deck till he learned how to run the boat himself. And he was just driven he was one of the few, what we used to call farmers, that actually made it. A lot of guys that were farmers stay up in the country Glenville and stuff, they would want to get off the farm and come and they want to have a shrimp boat. We want to shrimp. And they'd come down here and even though they're good guys and hard workers they just couldn't make it work. They couldn't produce. So, most of the farmers didn't make it.

00:47:21

CP: Captain just work and work and work and never quit and he made it, he produced well. And maybe that's where some of the drive I've got came from. You can always do better. That wasn't good enough. Which is, in a way it's a good thing and in a way it's a bad thing. But yeah, that's how I got into shrimpin'.

SS: Do you know what happened to the Rebel?

CP: He eventually sold it. He had a bigger boat built, a 73 foot boat built called The Last Chance and I was doing something else at the time and somehow that boat and the guy that I think he was selling half interest of it to somebody and then the guy did something with the boat. It just ended up gone, so, and then after that he started, he built, bought this property and built Shrimp docks so he started packing shrimp and then eventually he built the restaurant and then added on to the restaurant. The restaurant stayed under construction for probably 10 years. But he helped buy a couple of other boats with some guys and work out interest in them and some of it worked and some of it didn't work. So, he used to unload a bunch of shrimp and at times he unloaded a lot of shrimp and snapper boats when there wasn't the limits that they are now. Then in 1990, I

got off the boat that I had called the Black Beard and I started running the dock. I felt like I needed to be home with my wife and family at the time. But, it's hard to have a good family life when you're on the boat and gone half the time. It's a neat trick. But, what else you wanna know?

00:49:45

SS: Will you tell me your favorite memory from shrimping or being out on the boats?

CP: Been a lot of good things happen on the boats. When I was first learning to fish, and I think I was running the Last Chance for my dad, actually, it's the first year I was actually fishing, I think. And it was a beach opening. I don't think it's the one that I quit over. But it was a beach opening. And there's a place on the, just as you go out Sapelo channel it's a little tiny piece of bottom called point of the beach and there's tide runs really hard right there and you have to be, it's tricky to fish. You can bog your nets up in the sand kind of like quicksand if you're not even when you are doing what you're supposed to do sometimes it'll happen and but I also knew that you could catch a lot of shrimp there at times if you hit it just right. And generally you would only fish it at like Slack low water or slack high water because during the middle of the tides you didn't catch a lot and it was much more dangerous to fish you were much more likely to tear up your rig and or your nets or get your nets in your props when you got tangled up. So, I'd go fish with everybody else say off with the McQueens{?} or something and then when I got a chance, I thought the time was right I'd run to the point of beach and I'd make a drag loop or two and I really wasn't doing any better than anybody else. But late in the evening we were finishing up, and I thought, sun's going down the tide's right, I'm gonna go hit this point of the beach one more time. So, I ran over there, sat out the nets, tried to close up and bog up, so I pick my rigs up real quick. Didn't hurt anything. But I think I had like 10 or 12 shrimp in the tri-net and I didn't even to try to hit bottom I just put it out, and I saw the rig tangling up, the rigs were closin' up, so I pulled it right back and thought, wow. So, I got straightened out and figured out got my lineup straight. Because a lot of times you would line up a buoy with a tree on the hill. That was your line-ups.

00:52:32

CP: And then you drag down to this so you had a different lineup or certain depth of water then you could turn around and so I went and put back out and there was a lot of shrimp there. And I'm watching about 20 boats run, as close as that speedboat over there, away from me a couple a

hundred yards away from me. I'm watching 20 shrimp boats come in. And I'm just sitting there and all I would do is I didn't say a word to anybody. I'm just listening to them on the radio. As some of the old timers say, you would just click the mic and smile. You didn't say anything. And I made three or four loops. Picked up my rigs. I think I had 22 baskets to pay it on shrimp for probably an hour and a half tow. I probably had more shrimp in an hour and a half than most of those guys had all day. It was a really good trapping. And it was just because, what we call it, it was clean corn. There's almost no trash in it, just shrimp. Big shrimp. And you know a lot of those boats anchored up in the sound. And it took us till probably 11 o'clock at night to pick all those shrimp up and so the guys that are around, they're anchored up they were done, they were eating supper, the deck lights were off. They're watching us over there with our deck lights on, and they said, uh huh, we know what happened now. But yeah, that was probably one of my better afternoons when the young guy just kept pushing and pushing and pushing until I finally found it and hit that run of shrimp. That was a good feel.

00:54:29

CP: And every now and then, things like that would happen. You find a lot of shrimp you could catch them really fast. December Cold Water shrimp you could do the same thing, much smaller shrimp. But once you hit 'em, you could put a lot of shrimp and in December you would clock. You just, you drag day and night because those shrimp are moving so it did not like white shrimp in the fall. You don't want to drag on 'em at night because if you do, they'll be gone the next day. You wanna let that bottom rest at night and you can go back and finish it every day. But cold water shrimp's different. You can catch a lot of shrimp quick. If you found 'em. The shrimp in December when it gets cold we'll get a hard freeze, the water temperature can get down and then you'll get a hards freeze that runs all the shrimp out of the sounds they'll get out pretty much in line with the sea buoys and they just start movin' south and they will move south roughly 10 miles a day. So they will basically go sea buoy to sea buoy, provided it doesn't get warm. If it gets warm, they'll stop and they might even move back north. But if you find that big school of shrimp and you can stay in it, you can and you don't quit draggin', I mean, you could catch 100 baskets of shrimp in a couple of days. It was, it was good gravy. It was good goin', but, God, it was hard. I had a friend of mine and we were doing it we were working back into trying to keep track of who, where the shrimp were moving so we could stay in, and he had actually ran out of coffee. And he was so sleepy and he'da give \$100 bill for a pot of coffee, because he was trying

to stay awake because we were catching shrimp and he was just so sleepy, and we knew there was a front coming and when that front hit everything was gonna bury up and you weren't gonna be able to catch anything. And I think we worked for like 36 hours straight. And so we'd just talk on the radio just talk about anything. Everything. Make up stuff, just anything to stay awake. When that wind hit, the shrimp quit, we finally headed on in. And I stopped, it was really, really low water, and I couldn't cross, at the other end of that bluff down there it's called Settlin's Bluff, you couldn't get across right there on a really, really low tide with a west wind. So, I just eased up to the bank and stopped and it was five o'clock in the morning or somethin', still dark, and I went to sleep sitting in the chair. I woke up just drifting down the river once the tide had come in. I'm glad I didn't drift into any of these docks. These recreational posts. We kind cranked up and came on home. But yeah, that was a good trip. It was hard. A lot of the trips were hard. But we put some shrimp across the dock. What else?

00:58:09

SS: Do you have any interesting stories from when you were a kid shrimping with your dad?

CP: My sister Susie likes to tell when I got knocked overboard off of the, it was either on the, it was probably on the Rebel, the first boat. The captain, you could drag in the sound back then, and he was getting ready to put the rigs out at 5:30 in the morning, it was still dark, might have been barely cracking day a little bit. Probably was cracking day a little bit, and he went and pulled the nets off and pulled the doors off and then the nets follow them. 99% of the time it works fine. But this time it happened to catch a cable that swung a dabbit around and thumped me in the back and it didn't hurt but it threw me off balance and just flipped me over the rail. So, I was basically swimming in Sapelo Sound and nobody on the boat but my dad and my two sisters. I think both of my sisters were on the boat. They were younger than me and I was probably fifteen. So, they weren't much help, and my dad, instead of calling some of the other boats around saying hey Charlie's in the water can you grab him? He wasn't gonna do that. He went and got the life ring and he must have thrown it at least 50 yards, that thing was whistling, and it was a hard plastic life ring and I heard it and I could see it, and I ducked under the water till I heard it hit the water because if it woulda hit me, it would have killed me and I didn't know anybody could throw anything that far. But I think he was kind of excited. But he didn't tell anybody else in the water and he would go this way he had my sisters say, "alright, he's over there, now he's over there", and he turned the boat around and drive back past me the other way,

and I'd kind of dog paddle past the boat because I could swim like a fish, it didn't matter to me it was warm and then he'd go back that way then I turn around dog paddle the other way behind him. It took him about 30 minutes to get the nets back up where he could stop the boat without getting the webbin' in the wheel. And then he got me a rope and then I got back on the boat, then he told people that I had been in the water. But, he wasn't telling anybody anything till he got me back on that boat. And then we didn't come back to the dock, I think we just went back shrimpin'. I probably had some dry clothes inside, I guess. We went on to work. No harm, no foul.

01:01:10

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

CP: There's a lot more regulations for 'em now. A lot. Coast Guard regulations. It's a lot harder to get permits for fisheries. Back when I was fishing, if I wanted to go snapper fishing I went and got up snapper grouper permit, it was 25 bucks, 50 bucks, whatever the case may be. Nickle and dime. You wanted to go shrimpin', you wanted to go rock shrimpin', you wanted to go roll red shrimpin', you pretty much could do whatever you wanted to do. Just go to wherever you wanted to go, get your permits, pay your money and go to it. Much, much harder. Either the permits are very expensive or non-existent or limited entry which means you just about can't get them. So, the electronics are a lot different. The Coast Guard regulations are much more stringent now. I would say it's probably safer now than it was back then. Mostly because we've got better electronics. But, the people and the world, still it's not that much different. We can just pinpoint things better than we used to. But, still the work and the people. Picking up two boxes of shrimp it's still picking up two boxes of shrimp. But, the boats are we've got triple stuff in boxes now and the engines are more dependable now. A lot of stuff is more dependable than it used to be. There's a lot of stuff that you would consistently fixin' early on, or there would be electronics or stuffing boxes or winches or engines just, the stuff we have now is much more dependable. But it's still a lot of work.

01:03:51

CP: That dependable came, a lot of stuff back in the day you could fix on the boat, because the engines were simpler. They may leak oil all the time or you may have to change out alternator more often because they didn't hold up like the ones now or whatever but now when a lot of stuff

goes out the engines have computers and if your computer goes out you're done, there's no fixin' that. Somebody is gonna come get you or you may go home on your other engine if you have a twin screw which not too many people do. So, generally somebody's comin' to get you then in that case. No, electronics go you're toast. What else?

01:04:47

SS: Do you think there might be any way to like sort of have a backup in case something like that happens while you're out on the boat?

CP: Depends on what it is. We carry as much backup stuff as we possibly can. Like the Beagle, it's got two chartplotters. It's got two fathom meters. I've got to VHF radios. I've got a satellite phone, we didn't have satellite phones, back in the day. I don't think we had satellites back in the day. But, so, we duplicate as much stuff as we can. But if something like a computer goes, odds of you havin' a spare \$1,000 computer for your main engine on board, not the way to bet. You will keep spare alternators and stuff like that. Maybe a spare starter. I mean, that's what we've been doing for a very, very long time. But there's some stuff you just can't keep spares for, but we duplicate stuff as much as we can. And then we try to keep stuff that we can patch, a hydraulic line or this, that, or the other. All in all, I think this stuff is still much more dependable than it used to be. But it is higher tech, for sure. And part of that's government regulated emission controls. They don't let the engines put out the emissions that they used to. Which is not a bad thing.

01:06:39

CP: I like my little Cummins. I've had very little trouble with them. And they're quiet. Those little 671 GMs, man they were noisy engines. They were tough. And you could almost always patch it and get home with it somehow. But they were fuel hogs and they're noisy. I like my Cummins more better. And I like my John Deere's, too. Good engines. They don't burn near as much fuel as those old engines either. What else?

01:07:26

SS: What changes have you seen in the water, the weather, or sea life over your years of fishing?

CP: A lot. I had Senator Whitehouse come down eight or 10 years ago. He's a senator from Rhode Island, very environmental minded. Really good guy. And he came down and he was looking for climate change. And he asked me, and some people said he needs to come talk to you, I said, "okay, I want to take him out to the clam farm", which you can't see except at low

water. Because the rest of the time it is covered with the water and you obviously can't see anything and his staff said, so what can we move this schedule around where we see the clam farm at such and such time? I said you know what, I'm good. But even I can't change when the tides are low. I can do a lot but I can't do that. And so he came down anyway. And he asked me, he said can you tell me something that you could say is attributed to climate change? Senator, I'm old, but I'm not that old. But I would say now, yes, I can. The tides are getting higher than they used to be. Seems like weather patterns have changed. And I'm not sure, some of the, when I say weather patterns are changed, when I was a kid we had thunderstorms every afternoon in the summer between say two and four o'clock. Four out of five days get thunderstorms. Because we would go waterskiing after the rain and the water would be slick calm like it is now or even calmer. And we'd just wait till after those thunderstorms and then we go waterskiing. But you don't. And you could, it's like clockwork, you could bet on it. You don't have that. I think part of the reason we don't have that because we've drained a lot of our wetlands. And so, we've changed our local climate. And we don't have that water up and down circulation that we used to have.

01:09:49

CP: Whether it's because we drained the wetlands to grow pine trees, or whatever the reason or develop property for housing or decided it was to help for flood control or whatever reason it was, but it has changed. And like I say the tides are higher. When I was shrimping early on, we had saltwater catfish. And there were places you could just load the deck sometime with catfish and catfish protect their young and put the young in their mouth. And that's how they protect them. And so you'd have a bunch of like, one inch baby catfish along with a bunch of big cat fish, and you try to pick shrimp out of that, that's like picking shrimp out of a pile of pin cushions. It was miserable. But something happened to those catfish. I don't know if it's a virus or what. I'm not gonna say it's climate change. But something happened. And it's very seldom do you see those catfish anymore. You see one every now and then. But used to be if I wanted to fish off the dock, four out of five fish was catfish. Now if I fish off the dock, the bulk of it's stingrays. So, sting rays have taken over a niche, I think catfish took over and then but there's a lot of change, there's some changes like that. And the fisheries have changed. Some of what we used to see, you may see more or less of one fish than another. And as part of the trick with being a regulator, nothing is going to be at optimum yield all the time. I mean, things are going to go up, they're gonna come down, you may have a lot of B liners, you may not have some pink

porgies. And then later you have some more pink porgies and then maybe black sea bass go down. So, you're going to have fluctuations in recruitment. And the scientists know that. But we manage for optimum yield. But we're not going to have optimum yield all the time. And they've been talking about ecosystem based fisheries for 15-20 years now. And they still don't have a handle on it.

01:12:25

CP: So, some of its probably manmade, some of its probably just fishery recruitment. It has to do with that. And some of it is probably climate change, because of water temperatures, and even the Gulf Stream. I just read another article today. It's been slowing down for the last 100 years, it's gotten worse. Probably in the last, it's probably been slowing down longer than that. I forgot how long but it's gotten worse since say 1950 or something. I forgot what it was. But yeah, if we, if that Gulf Stream slows down, then guess what? England's gonna get much, much colder, Europe is going to get much, much colder and all of our fisheries are changing. And it's documented. We've got fish moving further and further north all the time. They think they figured out they're moving north at roughly 10 miles a year on average. And they're catching fish in New England that they never caught before, like sea bass and things. They're catching fish in Virginia that used to be a southern fish. So, they're catching shrimp in Virginia. They had to send somebody they hired somebody to come in and help regulate their shrimp industry because they'd never had shrimp before. So, then their DNR had to bring somebody in a few years ago help regulate their shrimp industry. So yeah, there's stuff changing what it has to do with the water quality and the red tide on the West Coast. Florida actually puts out a red tide weekly email. Who would have thought they were doing that 10 years ago, 20 years ago? And that's not even getting into the whales moving around because they're looking for different food because the waters moving, warming up and so their food is moving and they're trying to find their food and it's hard to regulate how to protect whales when the whales won't stay where they're supposed to, come on whales, tighten up! Sit and we will protect you, but quit movin' around! But they won't do it, just hard headed. You asked. Alright, what else?

01:14:58

SS: You mentioned the stingrays taking over the cat fish's niche, what kind of effect might that have on the commercial fishing industry?

CP: I don't know that it's really affected commercial fishing that I could say, x causes y causes z. But there's a good chance it has, just nobody's really figured out what it was or how it was or documented it. There's reports out now that they think that the reduced amount of whales, now there's reduced amount of whale poop, which means there's a reduced amount of fertilizer for other species, and it's changing the species balance. And this is a new theory that they just come out with, I don't know what they're saying, It's fact fact yet, that they're just thinking, you know what, this could connect the dots here on why some things are happening. So even though, we don't eat whales anymore, or use blubber. Everything has its niche, and everything is interconnected, one way or the other. And, you could probably have an argument that, we lost this species or that species, we hate it. But we don't want to stop this economy, or that economy or this culture or whatever. But it cost us in one way or another. And probably more often than not, I'd say it cost us more than we really wanted to pay. But we just didn't realize the total picture at the time. We're not really as smart as we think we are. What else?

01:17:10

SS: When you think about the future of commercial fishing in Georgia, is it going to be based like on boats similar to the ones you've been on in the past?

CP: There's not a lot of new boats being built. Cause they're so expensive, and say, it's you need a good business plan to try to pay for something over 15 years, and you just don't know what's going to happen. So there's probably people with enough money to buy a half million or a million dollar shrimp boat or something, whatever they happen to buy. They might decide it'd be better to put my money in something that a little more stable that I believe in. We're going to have a fishin' industry, because we're going to have people that want the product. And if you got people that want something, I don't care if it's shrimp, or whiskey, somebody is going to make it. And somebody's gonna produce it. So, there will be an industry of some sort, shape, make, or kind. And I think same thing applies for fish, we get a lot more money for fish than we used to. And I've had restaurant people say, I don't know that my customers would pay this for this fish filet, is just never charges, but they keep it they raised the price to their price point that they feel like they need and they keep selling it because I think people are more in tune with healthy eating and environmental issues. And to me, the healthier you eat, the less you have to go spend money at the doctor and the better you feel. And so, I'd rather eat the good stuff. I've tried, I don't eat a whole lot of meat that what I call industrial meat that has a buncha chemicals and additives

and things like that. I tell my friends that I owe the bank so much money they made me put in the fine print that I wouldn't eat fast food till I pay them and they won't let me play on the railroad track either. They're tough.

01:19:45

SS: What are some recommendations you have for the future of the commercial fishing industry?

CP: Be flexible. We sell stuff today that we wouldn't have sold 20 years ago. We can sell barracuda, now. I think if you're flexible, and you pay attention, and you see what people want that you can produce sustainably environmentally friendly ways, I think you'll be okay. If you're willing to work. But if you think you can do the same thing for 20, 30 years and never change, I don't think that's the way to bet. I've got a lease for an oyster farm. So, we'll be puttin' permits, finishing up the permits for that and the next hopefully, six months. And so, we're gonna do aquaculture oysters along with our aquaculture clams. And we're always trying new species for aquaculture. So, just because I know how to grow mercenaria, I'm pretty good at it for a rookie. Be flexible. I would say that's the number one thing, pay attention. Course, that applies to a lot of stuff.

01:21:22

SS: Can you tell me a little bit more about your clam farm?

CP: Yep. We started probably in '96, '97. UGA started us helped us get going. They gave us 750,000 growout seed, which are basically thumbnail size seed. They told us where to plant them and what gear to plant 'em in. They gave us the bags. We planted them on a sandbar, which is absolutely the last place you ever want to grow clams, and we planted them in hard plastic bags that were some of the most labor intensive things you could ever grow clams in. So, the first thing we learned how to do was kill clams. And we got really good at that. But we managed to keep a few alive. And we worked it hard enough. And we kept some alive that we actually sold, and we bought some more. And then we moved, to mud. And we just we'd go here and look at this farm and say that works pretty good for them. Maybe we can modify that for here. And we go to Florida and look at their stuff and modify some of their stuff. And then we invent some stuff. And so, we just kind of kept evolving into what we doin' now. And I'm still trying new gear, trying to keep predator interactions down. And things like that. But yeah, clam farming has supported my boat addiction to a large degree.

01:23:02

SS: Do you think a lot of your methods for clam farming will help with the oyster farm that you are working on?

CP: There's some of it, of course, oyster farming is going to be all baskets, nothing's going to be in the mud, it's going to be a lot different. And because we couldn't experiment really with any of the gear ahead of time, we have to fill out permits saying we are going to do it x y, z. And we can't change from that without it being a major hassle. And had we been able to experiment even on very small scale, we could have felt a lot more about how we want to lay it out, but we just had to lay it out and hope we did it right and hope its gonna work. But there's a lot of clam farms around so you can look at what this one was doing that was doing and just hope it's gonna work here. And if it doesn't, hopefully we'll have enough wiggle room and how often we flip cages for instance, that's not going to be part of permanent, we could flip them every day or we could flip them every two weeks. They don't care. They just want to know how many cages and what lines they're on. But, growin' clams will help some and I've got all the coolers got all the [inaudible] stuff, a lot of that'll be the same. The grading stuff will be different, some of the customers will be the same. I don't have a whole lot of customers. Got mostly what I call friends that I do business with. They look out for me and I try to look out for them. And it just seems to work better that way. For me. Some people are just, it's all about what they can get. And they don't understand it's a chain and it goes all the way down to the consumer and if you break the link anywhere in the chain, the whole thing falls apart. Understand everybody needs to make something in the chain or it breaks, not everybody understands that.

01:25:09

CP: But then again, I don't necessarily play like everybody else. I still play well with others, mostly. Every now and then I get stubborn. But, I'm pretty easy when I'm not being a troublemaker.

AC: Well, all the questions I have written down are kind of from the beginning. So, when you were mentioning your other boats, you mentioned Sea Puppy and that it burned down. I was wondering if you could tell us about that?

CP: I had a captain that left with it. And before he could even get to the ocean, the exhaust had caught fire. And the boat caught fire and burned. They all got off but the boat was totaled. It was a 39 foot boat, and it had one of those noisy 671s in it. But, what else?

01:26:08

AC: That was one of the main questions I had, but what about your other boats? Was there anything like that that happened to one of the previous ones that you've owned?

CP: I had another Duffy it was called the Canyon Runner. I went and bought it. Actually, I traded a shrimp boat for it. I had a shrimp boat here that not long after my boat, the Black Beard caught fire and burnt. The insurance like tripled for the shrimp boat I had left. I said there's no way I'm paying you \$21,000 a year on a shrimp boat that's probably worth \$75,000. No, that's not the right answer. But because I had a loss, they were going to eat my lunch on rates, and there wasn't anything I could do about it, but sell the boat. So, I found somebody that wanted the boat to put it in a sea scallop fishery up in New Jersey. They had a 42 foot Duffy so I traded a 73 foot shrimp boat for a 42 foot Duffy and I think I threw in some money and their boat needed, it needed some TLC. We brought it home. I still have the weather map in my office when I left. The weather was 20 to 30 knots with snow flurries. That was the weather forecast and that was after we picked the best weather we could get. It was it was wicked, it was rough. And you could stay on the beach where the Northwest wind and wasn't too bad. But there was no beach when you cross Delaware Bay. We got our butts handed to us crossing Delaware Bay. It was nasty. And the boat, the pilothouse leaked so bad, we had to sleep in our slicker coats and suits to keep from getting wet. By the time I got home the boat had been in such bad weather, it had ripped the captain's chair out of the floor, the bolts out of the floor. So, we had to tie it down. So, you could halfway sit in the captain's chair and drive. Had a big Volvo engine in it. Nobody down here had Volvos and after running like 24 hours I finally told my buddy I said we really need to check the oil. The only way to really check the oil was to shut the engine down. And I didn't want to shut it down. But I didn't want to keep running it with not knowing what the oil level was. So, we shut it down when we were 20 miles off Hatteras, the Falls Cape {?}, I think and we went back to crank the engine up and all it would do was click. I thought, great. The oil, by the way, was fine. And we couldn't get anybody to talk to us on the radio, couldn't raise Coast Guard, couldn't talk anybody knew there was another front going to hit within 12 hours.

01:29:13

CP: And we were down there trying to figure out how to get that engine cranked up and we finally took the starter halfway loose. And I bumped the button and it hit the starter pin that was jammed, shook loose enough to crank the engine we tightened up. I said we are not shutting this engine off again till we get home. And we didn't and by the time we got back in shore. It was

blowing so bad. The seas were so bad. I had to stop every five minutes just so I could see through the windows to make sure nothing was in front of us. It was that bad. But the hull was tough, the pilothouse like I say, leak like a rain can. It was a story. What else?

01:30:13

SS: I was wondering about, you mentioned a couple of other boats the Canyon Runner and Lady Diane?

CP: Lady Diane, I still have, it's still fishing. I bought that from a friend of mine that was retiring. And it's a little 34 footer. It's a good little boat. And the Canyon Runner was the Duffy that brought back the one that had the Volvo in it. And I had a snapper boat captain, run it on breaker one night on a northeast wind with a low water flood, he ran on the back of a breaker and he couldn't get it off and sank it in the breaker. It was a tough boat but nothing, but couldn't take it out. So, and that's one of the reasons I like Duffy hulls, they're just really good boats. But, you couldn't sell a twin engine boat to somebody in Maine. There's too many lobster pots they just chew up too much rope. So, they wouldn't buy it. When I saw how much money I was fixing to spend on that boat, I tried to get somebody, my lobster guy to say, "is anybody interested in this boat just like it is, it's a twin screw?" No way they wouldn't touch it. I ended up fixin' it, and I'm glad because God knows I need the therapy, I need to be offshore some.

01:31:54

SS: Can you remember any of the previous names of any of your past ships or vessels?

CP: Well, the first boat that I owned was called Misty Dawn. And it was a twin engine, had 671s in it, and it was a good boat. And then after that I bought the Black Beard, which was a 68 foot fiberglass boat. I told people I just needed a bigger kitchen. I was the cook. And actually, I wanted a bigger boat. It was more suited to offshore fishing. Gave me more options. And Blackbeard was a really good boat. So, and then it caught fire at the dock. After I quit shrimpin I had some guys running it. I'm not sure, nobody ever figured out where the fire started or how it started. But anyway, it caught fire and I ended up buying the hull and doing some horse trading after the fact. So, what you end up when you're when you're a fisherman you end up being a horse trader and a fishmonger. But as those are pretty much the only boats that I ran. I ran the Last Chance for my dad, then the Misty Dawn. My uncle financed it for me and I actually ended up buying it from him and then I bought the Black Beard. And after that I got off boats for a long time to run the dock, and now I have the Beagle.

01:33:33

SS: Was your uncle also a fisherman?

CP: No, he was a cancer surgeon. So, he could afford to get into fishin'.

AC: I guess now you can just tell us any stories about your boats that you're willing to share. Anything you want to tell us?

CP: I think I've told you most of my stories. But, we shrimped everything from the sea scallops with the Black Beard off of Chincoteague, Virginia. That was incredibly hard work. That was clock. When you left the dock, you were gone for probably four or five days and you never shut the engine down. You just drove day and night and you picked your rigs up about every hour and a half on average. And that's if you didn't bog up or tangle up or something. And I think I had four guys working the deck and I was trying to always keep one person in the crew in the bed at all times so somebody could get some rest. But even at that, nobody ever slept for like four hours at a time for days. But, we caught a lot of scallops and we finally made some money once we learned how to do it. The nets we went up there with didn't work, they were too heavy. They were boggin' up if you got them where they would catch scallops and if you lighten them up enough where you didn't bog up then you didn't catch any scallops. I finally had to get the net shop in Fernandina, Philly, Burbank {?} to build me some four rigs instead of two rigs. And you could set those to fish lighter. Those things were sharp, man they produced some scallops. And we would fish bottom. I had a friend of mine that wanted me to go with him. And he said, I want you to go scallopin' with me because if you go, you're going to work. And if you work then I'll have to work and I can't lay around and sit in the bar and drank I'll have to go fishing because you will make me look bad. So, I want you to come so I'll have to go to work. And between the two of us, we caught a lot of scallops. And we just shell stocked and fill them up in the hull. We'd have 6-700 bushels of scallops in five days and then we'd spend half a day just shoveling the scallops off the boat once we got in, but just enough ice on them where they stayed good.

01:36:19

CP: But after, I think it was sometime in July, might've been the 4th of July. It was so cold and foggy up there I had to wear my insulated underwear. I said no. Cowboy is going back to Georgia. This is too cold and miserable up here. And like I say we caught some scallops. But I didn't go back. If I'da kept that permit it probably would be worth a million dollars today. So, whatever, but then I wouldn't be a clam farmer. I wouldn't have the Beagle. It doesn't matter. I

wouldn't know some of the people I know. It doesn't matter. One can only eat so much grits and gravy.

01:37:14

SS: Can you describe for me what it was like on a regular day when you were scalloping?

CP: We'd generally ice the boat up. Try to get enough ice to where we could just space out the trip, not run out of ice. And we fill the boat up most of the trips. But, you'd put out, scallops had to be a certain size. So, you had to measure every one of them. They give you like a 10% tolerance or something. So, you could have one out of 10 or something that might be undersized. But if you had two out of 10, that was undersized, they just take the whole load. So, we were really careful trying to make sure you had the right grade. Because all of our people were green. We knew how to shrimp fish, but we didn't know much about scallops. We didn't know anything about scallops. But once you got to the ground, just start fishing. And once we got our four rigs working, we'd be out there dragging around and we see another couple of boats pass us. Okay, those are some of the North Carolina boats. We didn't say anything. We just click the radio and smile. And we'd find out what channel they were using, those are those other guys', they don't know what they're doing. We've already called all those scholars over there, there's nothing left there. They didn't know what we were pulling, we will probably catchin' a couple of hundred dollars worth of scallops per hour that they would have died if they could've caught that much scallops. But they didn't have the rigs to catch them. So we didn't say shit to nobody, we just minded our own business and loaded the boat.

01:39:00

CP: But you definitely kept somebody in the boat bunk. You rotated shifts. Hoped you didn't bog up, which threw the whole everything out of kilter. And after a while you just kind of get in a, I almost want to say a stupor, where you're just zombie, you're just going. But it was tough. I've had some of my crew just, I been cussed out so bad out there. By some of the crew and then they've just, probably one too many people on a boat. Probably coming off of his drugs that he was takin' on the hill and I knew he was just talking. He didn't really mean it and he apologized the next day. But it was really, really, it was hard work. Some of the hardest stuff I've ever done. I was ready to go pump gas in Arizona after that. Cheap. I woulda worked cheap, too. I've never worked that hard. So, we'd work four or five days and come home. It was rough coming in and the channel was really, really tricky. And I had a speaker fall from the up high down and one of

the crew threw his arm up so it wouldn't hit him and it caught his wrist. Broke his wrist, you could see this bone sitting on top of that bone, obviously broke. Broken. We got in the Coast Guard decided to board us make sure we weren't carrying drugs. There's no room for drugs, it's full of scallops, people. Can you see the man needs to go to the hospital he's got obviously got a broken wrist. "He can't go anywhere till we get through inspecting the boat." I was so livid. I was, man, I was pissed. I thought, people, have some common sense. But they didn't let him go. They spent an hour crawlin' the boat, looking for stuff that wasn't on the boat. Had never been on the boat. Anyway, I guess they were doing their job. I was up there for about three months scalloping.

01:41:34

SS: How would the scalloping rigs compare to like the shrimping rigs?

CP: Same doors, except scalloping, you had the nets were made out of like number 84 braided nylon, which was basically parachute cord. And it was, I forgot how many, what the stretch mesh was, three, four inch stretch mesh were a shrimp nets made out of really a twine with a stretch mesh of maybe inch and seven-eighths, two inch or something. So, but and then you had cutting cables on the scallops up ahead of the nets which the scallops could actually jump up. And so, if you had everything set just right, you'd want to run your nets long, cutting cables would be just ahead of the nets, the nets would be six inches off the bottom or whatever, and the cutting cables made the scallops jump, and when they jumped the nets came under them. So, you pretty much caught clean scallops if everything was right. Shrimpers use tickler chains instead, instead of cutting cables, kind of the same theory, but they use a chain instead. But other than the webbing, and the scallops were much, much heavier. So, we had different chafing gear on the bottom of the net, but the doors and basic web design, net design is pretty much the same. Just different webbin'. Here, you can take that same net and use it to catch like welks, when the few times when we would drag for welks, we didn't do it a whole lot. And then I think they turned it into an experimental fishery because they didn't want 'em fished out. And I don't know of anybody that's caught welks in quite a while now. What else?

01:43:73

AC: I feel like you've answered all of my questions, how about you?

SS: I'm good. Thank you so much for talking with us today.

CP: I told you I'm practicing doing what I'm told, and it's not my strong point.

SS: We had a wonderful time talking with you.

CP: Well, I'm hoping y'all've learned some things.

AC: We did.

SS: We learned a lot of things.

CP: I had a group of girls from University of Florida last Sunday come and they want to talk about aquaculture. So, I brought them round, gave 'em the 10 cent tour. And then I told them about, how we do clams, how we do business, how most of my customers quote unquote, are friends. And a lot of times I call him up and say can you stand a price increase of a penny how's the market looking? And they tell me if they can do it instead of me just off the wall sayin' alright inflation's gone up 6%. So, I need to go up at least 5% because I hadn't gone up in three years XYZ. I talk to my people and make sure that they can live with what I want to do. And [inaudible] somebody will call me up and say, you can get more money than this. And, so, business relationship is so important. And finding a niche that you can do, where there's a need for something, whether they need clams or oysters or fish, whatever the case may be, find a niche. And if you do a good job at it, you will make money, or you should make money. Instead of what can I do to go make money, I do it the other way around. I'm trying to find something to do and do a good job at it. Now if I do a good job at it, I should make money at it. And, and that's not the way a lot of people work. They say, I'm gonna be a dentist because I can make X amount of money a year. They don't really care about being a dentist, or whatever. They just wanna make X amount of money a year.

01:46:01

CP: I care about growing clams, I care about catching fish. I care about y'all being able to have access to your public resource and using it wisely, tryin' not to waste it. And if I get an oyster lease, sure it's on public water, but helps give people jobs which helps and then I again can produce something that's healthy for y'all to eat and have, taste good. So, it's just taking care of and filling a niche that needs to be filled and just do a good job doing it and then it turns into, not so much work, into something that you do. And sometimes unfortunately, like me, it turns into who you are. So there's goes the clam man, when I go by. But anyhow, so it's again, you ended up being more of a philosopher when you spend a lot of time on the water. And there's still some people that do it just to make the money. But working on the water is not really something you

can do if you don't like it, have some kind of a passion for it. It's just something you can't do.
That takes care of 99% of my stories that I want to put on tape.

AC: Well, I appreciate it.

SS: Yes.