

Name of Narrator: Robert Todd

Interviewers: Kimberly Singley (KS) and Yhambria Simmons (YS) recorded this interview with the permission of Robert Todd for the research project “Boat Stories.”

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

Transcriber: Kimberly Singley

Date of Interview: November 13, 2021

Place: McIntosh County, Georgia

Duration of the Interview: Fifty four minutes and twenty-eight seconds (54:28)

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 and talk with Robert Todd, a local commercial fisherman and filmmaker.

General Description of Contents: Mr. Robert Todd focuses on the history of his family’s commercial fishermen legacy. He discusses the boats run and operated by members of the Todd/Sawyer family. He discusses his short film, *Trawling Traditions*, which covers some histories of commercial fishermen on the Georgia Coast. He also gives recommendations for the future of shrimping in Georgia.

KS: This is an interview with Mr. Robert Todd on November 13, 2021. The interview is being conducted in Darien, Georgia. It is part of the research project and interview collection titled boat stories. The interviewers are Kim Singley and Yhambria Simmons.

KS: Umm.. I know you did already sign the informed consent, but we just want verbal confirmation that we still have your permission.

RT: I consent.

KS: Thank you. And if there are any questions that you don't want to answer, feel free to just tell us and we can skip right over them. So our first question for you is how did you start fishing and why?

0:42

RT: I'm a fourth-generation commercial fisherman. Uh..I guess you would say I'm fourth-generation twice, as my father, both of my father's grandfathers were commercial shrimpers. Uh.. One was from North Carolina, one was from Georgia. Uh..The one in North Carolina actually migrated and uh..moved to Georgia. Uh..I got into it because it was a family occupation. Uh..my family has been in it for I believe this is our 98th year commercially. Um. I'm actually the commercial fisheries teacher at the local high school and tech schools in dual enrollment program.

1:26

RT: So I guess you could say that's something I've always been around. Uh..I've taught college, I teach high school and it's what I do during the summers at its very highest peak.

KS: What all does this class entail for your students?

RT: They're able to get hands-on experience in the various commercial fishing industries in Georgia, such as crabbing, oystering, shrimping, fishing, uh, anything. Um that..that there's any way of selling that product at a seafood market. We focus on it. We also try to focus in on others around the country, particularly at least on the Atlantic, because some fishermen do migrate back and forth. That also entails on organizations that actually tie into commercial fishing such as the uh, Department of Natural Resources, the Coast Guard, NOAA, an organization's and I mean, as well as the UGA Marine Extension office.

KS :That's awesome. Do you find that this is going to help maybe get new fishers out in the future?

RT: Due to the...due to the downslide in commercial fishing when it comes to ice price, fuel price, maintenance price going up, and our seafood price, the boat price. And what I mean by that is the price that the boats and the captains and the crews get for the actual product. And you compare it to imports and uh, farm-raised product is on a downslide. And with that did. I look at a positive with the program

as when they go into an organization period connected to the industry. Uh...there were four students in the class last year as we were getting it built up. There's actually 12 in it this year, which is amazing. I mean, three times as many but one of the seniors last year actually has looked into becoming a DNR agent because of the class.

KS: That is awesome. That means you're a great teacher.

RT: Ah, I won't say I'm great.

KS: So tell us about your most current or recent fishing vessel.

3:48

RT: The most current one I work on has been in the family since the boat was built in 1973. The name of it is The Sundown. Uh, my grandfather had that vessel built in 1973 because he wanted something bigger and more powerful. The boat is 65 Feet, has twin 855 in it. I believe it has 650 horsepower uh, for a boat its size, it is very fast. I think out of boats that call McIntosh County home, it's the fastest one in the county. Uh, it is still all Woodhull. Uh...there's very few of those that are all woodhull left. Um..uh..in 1995, the engine room caught on fire. Uh, I was four at the time. My mother was eight months pregnant with my brother and she didn't know what was going on. Uh, we're doing this interview at the Fish Dock here at Pelican Point in Belleville and up the creek just a little ways, there's a dock where the community boat ramp is. Used to be a fish house on a railway. And in 1995 me, my father and my grandfather took the boat off the railway and went back around to Cedar Point, which is about a 10-minute ride through Snake Creek on the other side of the point right there. And one of the fuel lines burst. And I was sitting in the captain's chair, when my father ran into the engine room, and come back to his dad and said we're on fire. And we're looking at the dock but we're nowhere near it. And I was told to sit still and don't move. They put the pilot in gear where the boat was still go straight. And they were frantically trying to put..put it out or get it stalled or what have you. Uh, I didn't know that at the time until doing research on various other projects where I was looking at newspaper articles that my grandfather was quoted in the article that had it not been for me, he would just run the boat up in the marsh and let it burn up. But he didn't want to get out in the middle of the marsh in a sense almost in the middle of nowhere with me. So when he got back to the wheel, one engine is completely out of commission because it's on fire and setting the rest of the engine room on fire. He takes and pushes the throttle down completely as far as it would run on the other one. And they ended up handin me off to the dock owner who happened to see the smoke billowing. He saw it from a distance because this is '95,

we're not not big on communications and all. He happened to look across the river and see smoke billowing out the for peak and he already had the fire department comin' and he run to the dock and before they put the lines on the boat they were handing me off. The...that vessel is the very first vessel and the very first fire that McIntosh County Fire Department ever put out using foam. Uh..they didn't know how it was going to react so my father jumped on his vessel. Uh..the Captain Ross and tied upside in case they needed to get it away from the dock so it wouldn't impede any kind of flow at the dock. Uh...my grandfather was..he ended up getting a waterborne bacteria in his hand and he was forced to retire in I believe 2006, 2007. Uh.. a fella that was striking for my father, uh.. they dubbed him to run the Sundown while my dad was still running his own vessel in 2008 and 2009. My dad got off of his vessel and got on my grandfather's vessel to run it so that the production could go back to the numbers it was. And my dad was findin' people to run his and I guess you could say it slightly broke my heart when I come home Labor Day weekend, my freshman year in college and find out my dad, they... my parents had sold my dad's boat because that was the one of cut my teeth on and

8:29

RT: always dreamed he would move up and I would move up. Um.. The Sundown has been on fire twice. The second time was in the spring of 2001. The inside of the pilot house caught fire sitting at the dock due to a lightning storm. Lightning struck the pilot house; it actually struck the air conditioning unit, was set the freon on fire. We did not know the vessel had been on fire until hours later. When we happen to go to the dock, and my father looked and said the windows didn't look right. And what it occurred, is the pilot house was closed up, the bedrooms were closed up, and fire was in the galley area. There's a fire extinguisher hanging on the wall in the galley. And what happened was the fire got so hot, it melted the plastic pin in the extinguisher and set the extinguisher off. So with the extinguisher and everything being closed up, the fire was suffocated. However, it took I think a few months to get the boat back in and in repair because all the electronics were ruined. They were melted out of the ceiling onto the dash. Uh...the whole galley had to be gutted and rewired. Um, I remember that one real well because I wasn't, I was one of them that had the shot backs. As they were, we were scraping the walls, I was cleaning up with the vacuum, as it hit the floor, I was picking it up.

10:16

RT: Uh, we've participated in the blessing a good many years with the boat and we've won it, I think, somewhat some time like six times or something.

KS: What is that?

RT: Blessing of the Fleet is the local festival. Um..my father's maternal grandfather, and one of his children and several other in Darien..uh..they actually got it started in 1968, I believe. Uh..it was a one-day event now it's a three or four-day event here. And it's kind of our go-to event community-wise here in the county. So you can say through the Sawyer family, which is my father's maternal side and the Todd family. We've had a boat in the blessing every year since the beginning.

11:42

RT: Uh, my father has worked on two vessels his whole life. Uh..he worked on the Sundown that well, I could probably say 3, first one he worked on was the Twilight. But I mean he was a real young child. Uh..he was 10 years old when they built, had the Sundown built, but the boat before that my grandfather had was the Twilight. Anyway, he worked uh...worked on it during summers like I did. I think for me, my first summer I was five years old going out with him. Uh..when I was 10...uh I was basically full-time, uh, because he couldn't keep a two-man crew. He could only keep but one, he only had one faithful crewman and the boat needed two and I ended up going in place. So at a very young age, I knew what it was like to work a man's job in the heat, in the elements offshore and what have you. Um, my father worked on the Sundown till he...he graduated high school and as he would say, the day after he graduated high school. He was on the boat the very next morning at three o'clock. Uh..he worked with his father after high school for I believe, six years. Uh, from there..uhm..the two of them got together and my grandfather helped him by letting him use his name to help him with credit. But my father ended up buying a 60 foot, um, wooden shrimp boat named the Captain Ross, umm trying to think of the area somewhere toward Holden Beach. Anyway it was built by Gary Galloway in '78, but my father bought it in '87 and brought it back here. Um...green rigging with white tips mostly known for having teal, it wasn't really a green, it was a teal. When I was young there was a four-leaf clover on the bow but there come a point that dad got tired of painting it and also it come off. Um uh, it was twin screw as well two Detroit 671s. Uh and like I said he moved up to the Sundown when my grandfather retired. Grandfather wise he worked on The Sundown, the Twilight, and the Sundown. Now the current Sundown is not the first. Uh.. when he had the boat built in '73, he actually named it after the first vessel he ran and he ran it for his daddy, uh, probably be easier to go chronologically into time instead of back in time the way I'm going.

KS: It's okay.

14:33

RT: Anyhow, it was the..the original Sundown was actually built by uh..I believe it was built by I can't..ah I cain't remember the first name but the Ward fella right here on the other side of the restaurant. And he built a couple boats anyway, they..it was a single screw vessel. It was a single rig meaning it only pulled one net when in 19 mmm, 1960 my great-grandfather purchased the Twilight they had to go to North Carolina with his old Sundown to drag it to Valona. Uh, Charles Durant helped him rig it out with riggin and right there in the Valona dock and Shell Creek. Uh..when that boat came man, my grandfather was solely the captain of the Sundown, and my great grandfather got on the Twilight. The thing with my great grandfather was by the time he was 42, he was disabled due to his heart condition. I think in his lifetime, he had seven heart attacks, passed away when he was 59. Um..uh..when it was to the point where old man Fred or as they called him Big Fred because my father's name Fred named after him, named after his grandfather. When Big Fred couldn't fish anymore, my grandfather moved to the Twilight. And he ran it until the Sundown was built in '73. So he probably ran it from about '61 - '62 on because my great grandfather didn't have the word. I don't think he was on it at two years before he couldn't do it. The Twilight was a uh, single screw with a 671 in it originally and it's got 855 in it now. And it pulled two rigs. And my grandfather and great-grandfather were well, my great-grandfather was competitive. And he didn't like it that his oldest son could beat em, with just a one net and he was pulling two. Some of his family think my dad and his dad were the same way. But beings, Captain Ross was smaller than the Sundown there. I mean..mean, my dad was always gonna catch just the shadeless. But the days that he did catch more, it did make my grandfather want to know what the crap was going on. Um..my dad's paternal grandfather, I guess the one that we say that our company Dodge Shrimp and incorporated, he created it. He was born in 1912 on Creatine Island and Creatine island is that island right there. Uh, he dropped out of school by the time he was in eighth grade because he didn't want to go to school. And those days, I guess you really didn't have to. It's not like today. Uh, he ran a few boats and then he ended up uh...I want to say the first one that he owned was the Hero. The second one he had was the MacArthur. I've got a picture it on the wall, a very small vessel, maybe 35 feet tops, I don't even think it's that much. Uh, the third vessel we had very shortly was the Charles Nole, which was named after his fourth son. There was a total of...he had a total of five sons and a daughter,uh, of the children four, three of all of the boys commercial fished at some point in their life during school. Uh..one ended up going into the National Guard which was the baby the, one uh, of them went into the DNR and actually was the captain of the Ana. Not the Ana excuse, I'm wrong, on the Sapelo Queen, which was the ferry going back and forth to Sapelo from the mainland. Uh..he..he had a shrimp boat at one time and

I think the very first trip we went on it caught fire and that's its history. Um, anyway, get back to where I'm going in order. My great grandfather had uh, purchased, uh, the Sundown. The original one, it had a round stern, where most of all boats now mostly have a flat stern and it had the rounded stern and uh..that's probably the one he was most prevalently known for running and habit. Uh..my grandfather was his oldest child. His name was Bobby. I'm named after him. Uh, he, like I said he got into commercial fishing. The..he had a brother that was 13 months younger than him name George. We called him Buddy. Uh, Buddy got into fish I want to say when my grandfather moved to the Twilight, Buddy went to the Sundown until they sold the Sundown. My great grandfather helped him buy the Danny and he ran the Danny from, shoot he ran the Danny probably from the late 60s all the way to '96 when it caught fire uh off of Blackbeard.

RT: Uh..when that boat caught fire, he ended up, uh, relief captaining for my grandfather who was in his 50s and all. He let him carry the boat out on several occasions during the fall time but a year and when my grandfather was the captain, he was a striker. Both of them passed away in less than a year each other both from lung cancer. Uh, the next one would be the next sibling, would be the one that went to DNR. I believe the boat he had was the Marcia Gale. That's the one that caught fire. The next brother, he did it commercially. Uh, good part of his life and I'm trying to think and I could be wrong. I want to say he is captain four, excuse me five. Uh..he owned two, uh, I believe his dad helped him get the Daybreak. I'm pretty sure he ran the Daybreak early on and then he uh..moved to the..to the Sunset. Uh, they bought it from William Brannon. It was originally named the Sea Robin and they named it the Sunset so you had the Sundown and the Sunset. Uh, they sold it. I don't know if it's still around, it went toward the Gulf of Mexico. That he ended up on a desco. Uh, named the Contessa and he ran it until it sank in 1994. Real foggy morning and he ended up hitting a tree in the middle of the river. Uh..from there, uh, he relief captain for my grandfather a couple of times during the fall time a year. He went on to purchase a boat out of Mississippi named a Friendship and he had it until it caught fire probably 2007. From there he went to work at the Georgia Shrimp Company in Darien in the retail side until they, uh, that organization closed their doors. And he's been retired ever since. Uh, trying to think I'm pretty sure that as many boats as I can think of on that side.

22:43

RT: As for my dad's paternal side, the gentleman's name was Forest Sawyer, he was born in Manns Harbor, North Carolina. And he didn't like the cold. So he moved to Georgia. He was a shrimp fisherman up there. He had the Nita G, the Nita G changed names to the Miss Haley at one point when a

local fella bought it, but it had already changed hands several times since my great grandfather had it. The Nita G was one of the first vessels in the blessing of the fleet. Uh, got to sit and count because some of those siblings got sep..in a sense some of em got split up, some stayed North Carolina, some stayed in Georgia because the majority I think my grandmother and her brother were the only two left in school and was probably hit ahead of youngins. Uh, let's see Rodney, RB, John, that's the main ones I can think of off the top of my head. Uh, the oldest one that kept commercial fishing, well yeah, would probably be Reginald. We called him RB because his middle name started with a B. Uh, he...I don't know exactly what all boats he ran. I do know he owned the Sea Raven and then had a Desco built name Sea Raven 2 its up in North Carolina now named the Get'er Done.

24:27

RT: Uh. RB had uh..he and his wife together because they had children from a previous marriage to get, uh, both of them and then a couple of children together. Out of the ones that we..which we say they all his in a sense that would be you have Forest, Reggie, and Claude that commercial fished mainly. Claudes passed away and he's run...he ran good many boats. Uh, one off the top of my head would be the Maryam which was a small boat that pulled I think uh...four 25s at some point. I think that's what one shrimper said in one of the interviews I had for Project. Uh Forest.. Forest the shrimp off and on, off and on. He's probably most prevalent known for captaining his father's vessel the Sea Raven 2 when RB retired. Uh he's run a couple others like the Adventure as well. Uh..the one that stayed at it his whole life is Reggie. Reggies own one boat, but captains several. I know he worked on the Millison S which was the boat old man Forest had built in 1972. It was twin screw, uh, built out of North Carolina. I know he worked on it with the fella who bought it from my great grandfather. Uh, I know he worked uh..he ran the Prairie Schooner which I think was a steel hull. He ran the Four Ladies. And he ran it until he purchased that vessel. And that's the one he owns now and is named the Grave Digger. The irony of that vessel is John, which was RB's brother. I want to say he was, he weren't the baby brother but the second one anyway, John had a boat built. I can't remember the ones before it. But he had a boat built in '72. Same year as his daddy. And he named it the Cabaret. And it was twin screw. And the Cabaret was the Four Fadies which is now the Grave Digger. So in my lineage, when you look at the Sawyer side and the Todd side, there are two vessels that are still in the family. And one will be 50 next year and the other one will be 50 the following year and they're still going strong. Uh, then you had, uh, out of them brothers you..you had uh, Rodney. Rodney was the very baby, he died of a heart attack on opening morning of the beaches openin' one year. Uh, I know he had boats, uh..the Ms. Lewis you can still see it

at the Darien waterfront in a sense what's left still sitting above well, I mean it aint sunk but ain't much other than a hole and a pile of house there now. That was actually the first boat to win Best decorated in the Blessing of the Fleet and Rodney owned it. Rodney had the High Noon. And I want to say it's deteriorating in North Carolina. Uh, Rodney went to work for NOAA for a short time period when they were doing a lot of TED, uh, research. TEDs were pulled before they really patented them. Because shrimpers wanted to take they.. they didn't use em to keep turtles out they used em to keep jelly balls out where they could where you wouldn't pull up such a load especially during the fall time of the year. And Sinky Boone is credited for I believe the Georgia Jumper but the Super TED, my uncle Rodney was one of them at NOAA that created that TED.

RT: And the design of it actually has bent bars in it instead of being flat. It's got a bent bottom uh.. my.. when he come back from NOAA, he got with my grandfather. And my grandfather helped him with the funds to purchase the Walter and Patty and he had it until he had a heart attack, passed away on the boat. And I don't know if it's still around anymore. I know when the boat was sold and went to North Carolina the name got changed to the Crown Royal. Uh, lets see boat wise when it comes to name changes of those that are still around. My dad had the Captain Ross till 2009, he sold it to a couple and it stayed in the county for a few years. They sold it to a local fella. It stayed in the county he named it after his mother named it the Margaret Webb. He sold it. Mmm, I want to say he sold it at the beginning of last year. And it's back in North Carolina close to where it was built and it's named the Two Shells. Uh, the Twilight is still around. Uh..that name stayed on that boat from when my great grandfather pulled it back home until and it changed hands quite a few times. Uh, the last person to purchase it, uh, don't remember his last name, first name Thurmond out of Brunswick, and is named the Lady Raven.

KS: I think we interviewed Mr. Thurmond? Yeah. Hopefully, we heard about that boat though.

30:29

RT: The Lady Raven was originally the Twilight.

KS: Wow, ummm..you answered a lot of questions all in one sitting. So, which boat have you been on recently?

RT: Recently, it's been the Sundown. As far as workin' it, I mean, I had been on the Twilight moving it around the dock a little bit, helping the fellow who owned it or one of the people that did. Uh, like I said, I cut my teeth working on the Captain Ross. Uh..in a sense when my father changed vessels I changed with him. Uh, I guess you could say I'm future Captain even though he don't wanna hear it.

KS: Future captain of future captain of Captain Ross or?

RT: The Sundown. The Sundown. Uh...

KS: Who is the current captain now?

RT: My father, Fred. Lineage-wise in the Todd family. Way I go generation is big Fred, Bobby, Fred, and then me, Robert.

KS: Do you know who all works on that boat? If not, it's okay.

31:46

RT: Do all do I know? Yes. Yes. What.. what are we defining as do I know? Do I know who's working or do I know em like personally?

KS: So, just do you know who's working?

RT: Yeah, know who's working. The thing is as crews aren't as dependable as they used to be. Uh, my...when my father changed vessels, he carried a guy that..that was working with him on the Captain Ross and they carried him to the Sundown. And there was a fella that worked with my grandfather. He worked with him off and on between the early years of the Twilight and The Sundown. Uh, they retired in 2000, trying to think of probably about 2010, both them gentlemen retired and then my dad had to find a new crew. Uh..the one that stayed with my granddad, in fact they worked for the family for that...one did for over 40 years. Uh..he worked with my grandfather, he worked for my dad, my dad actually struck beside him and so did I. And the man's hands, big as I've ever seen and you could never keep up with him even when the fellow was 75, you still can't keep up with him head. Uh...from there, uh a fella by the name of Morris Butler who had owned a couple boats and all...er run a couple he went to work for my father and the very first year that he worked for my father me and him in a sense struck by ourselves. I came home from college that summer. And me and him out of, out of a 50 day period straight we worked 47 and never dropped the anchor meaning and we come home and was up every morning at three o'clock going back out. Uh, at the end of that summer when I stepped off, y'all met the fella his names Truck. Truck uh, had his boat tied up to the dock and he got on the boat with my father to strike and he struck with him a few years. And during the summers and such I'd come in and be a third man and help him out and sub when needed to be. Uh, ever since Truck left and Morris got to the point he couldn't really do it anymore due to his kidneys and being diabetic and all. Crews has been one thing, just been hard to keep constant. One reason why I do it during the summer is because when the boss man wants to go to work you go to work and he, my father's had to change the way he fishes

because we grew up going in and out daily. You had the power, you had the speed and the way we looked at it was four hours asleep at home beat six hours on the water because when you're underwater on anchor you get to worry about the anchor not holding properly, your chain or your rope break that's hooked to the anchor and such stuff like that. And then especially during the summer months, the high point of the season, you deal with what we call afternoon thunder squalls, and you rather be at home with the boat tied to the uh, dock instead of dealing with that mess on the water because you never know. Uh, anything can happen when you are on the water period.

KS: What are thunder squalls?

RT: Just a thunderstorm, a bad thunderstorm. I think me and Morris went through one with my father. We took up, he looked at us and said y'all might get wet. And I remember it because we pulled the tarp and we nev.. we normally never pulled the tarp when we were going home because we would have the nets over us so there weren't no need to pull that extra stuff. cause you.. we were pulling the tarp to put shade on the shrimp and on us. And with the nets above us, we didn't really need it. And he said well, we'll pull the tarp but I'd be willing to bet that it'll blow over. Blew over our head the whole time all the way home. Uh, don't know how it didn't rip the tarp because at one point it, the tarp got lopsided from all the water hitting one side. And it was a swimming pool at one point. Soaking wet, got all the way to the dock, could not see the dock when we got in the creek where we should easily see it 200 yards away in the wide-open, could not see it because it was storming so bad. So we had to idle in the river for a little while cause we still needed to pick the outriggers up and all. Uh, so just a run of the mill you deal with the heat. And when it gets real muggy and real hot you probably gonna have a thunder squall come through.

KS: So where does, where's the Sundown currently docked?

36:50

RT: The docks name is Wait and See Dock, it's in Cedar Point, uh which is in the Valona area. The creek is in the Cedar Creek.

KS: And who else could tell us more about this vessel?

RT: Who else?

KS: Or just you?

RT: Probably my..well my father could but you aint gonna get him, you ain't gonna get him recorded.

37:35

KS: That's okay. Any other boats that you've been on besides the Sundown that you want to talk about?

RT: No, cuz I mean, I made a trip on the Grave Digger with Reggie one day, but I wasn't fishing. I was filming. I did uh..my thesis film in grad school was a documentary on the shrimping industry here in the county. And I ended up interviewing, I think a total of 25 fishermen and five other individuals that weren't in the..that were well, the 25 they were retired, some retired and some not. I published it. I guess we will say I finished it in 2016. And in the last five years, I believe five or six individuals that I interviewed have passed. So it was something that pretty glad I got it and got their.. their parts of the history of the industry. Uh, especially them working from the beginning where one individual was talking about the lack of electronics and what they actually used. Uh, one individual talked about uh..the commercial fishermen's use during World War Two when the German U boats were off the coast. Uh, one of the shrimp boats the name it was the Thunderbolt when it was built in about '42 or something. The Navy in a sense what documented vessels were there, they wanted them to patrol the waterways and according to the fella that owned it for probably 30 years or more, that gentleman and he's...he just passed away in the last year. Anyway, he said that there was a uh, a big gun mounted on the pilot house. He said he...he seen he heard about it, said the fella that he bought the boat from had a picture but never got him a picture of it. Uh, one boat I did miss the Millison S. Uh, that boats no longer around. It was dismantled uh, several years back fella bought it and dismantled it took the parts and all for his vessel and all. Uh, when you went across the Darien River Bridge through the heart of town when you look to the west, uh when I was growing up, you'd always see the Millison S and the Nita G. The Millison S was named after my great grandmother, her name was Millison, and as S was for Sawyer. So I think that's about as many of em in my family that I can think of off the top of my head. Are there others? Yes. But we're talking about in the 1950s. Maybe 60s.

KS:That's a lot of boats.

40:27

RT: I know I got it covered from at least about '68 on.

KS: You did great with the boats. What was another, so what is so you said you published this? This film? Right?

RT: Yeah.

KS: What's the name of the film? And where can we find it?

RT: You can't find it.

KS: Aw, dang it.

RT: You can't find it, I've held it hostage. Um..the ones, some of the ones that were in the film, and all I've give them copy, especially the ones that we kind of saw for kind of forsook, uh, forsook them passing pretty shortly. I have shown it to the public. On an occasion I use it as a fundraiser for a Blessing of the Fleet one year when I was the shrimper liaison. And we used it to raise money for the boat parade for prizes and such. Uh uh....showed it in Valdosta. Because I went to Valdosta State, I had to show it there. So I have shown it. Uh, it was published in 2000, well, it was completed in 2016. I use the word publish because it's done. I just...I don't want it to be one of those items to where when a needs, I guess I saw where I could use it as a benefit to the fisherman. I used it that way. Uh, a lot of people said I need to actually publish it, copy it and sell it. And whatever just like with showing it to the community at the...for the blessing. I just, I didn't make it for profit. I made it to document the history. And I guess that's why I've kind of held on to it a little bit. The name of it is called uh, jeez now names passin' me. Uh, a *Trawling Tradition* is the name of it a *Trawling Tradition*, the story of the McIntosh County shrimping industry uh, it's two and a half hours long. But one issue that commercial fishermen have always had and I don't think is just in our community, but in any other. Is you get interviewed by certain people, such as newspapers and such. And they don't tell the whole story. They interview you, you tell the story. And then they cut up the pieces that are the most interesting, and I wasn't doing that to them fellas. So I let 'em tell it and I didn't cut em off. I ask them questions such as, I didn't ask 'em boat history. I asked them more of their history. Uh..they talked about why they got in the industry, why they stayed in it, uh..family in the industry, the majority of them were at least second-generation even filming at them. My father's third and I'm fourth. Uh, that was probably the one thing my father did interview for. But that's cause I asked him for it. Uh, I tried to interview some of them in their element. In fact, uh, when...when I was interviewing asking the question similar to this format to my father, we were actually taking the boat to the Blessing of the Fleet one year and it was just me and him on the boat. And I set the camera up while he was at the wheel driving the boat. So you can actually see through the window the boats moving. Uh, others I did it while they were sitting on..on the dock or sitting in the boat or on the rail or something, tried to always have them in different places. Uh, ask them about some things that they had seen, things they have caught, interesting things. Talk to.. uh got 'em to do in a sense do a pitch for their product why is Georgia shrimp better than any other. And one thing that they kind of focused on was our mud, our, our marshes. And that stinky marsh mud is actually a great filtration system which makes the waters here in a sense cleaner due to that reason. Uh, as one would say, and they did and he did say when you're out there on the waters it's the prettiest office in the world.

You get to see the sunrise every morning. There's a lot of times you end up seeing the sunset and you get to see just the glory of being on the water.

45:19

KS: So, ummm..when you think about the future of commercial fishing in Georgia, how do you think it's gonna go?

RT: I would like to see it go well, I mean when it guh...my father wouldn't let me get into it full time, because he wanted me to have a retirement. His words it is, he's got to work till the day he's dead. Uh...with it um, you're dealing with fuel prices, you're dealing with ice prices, uh, maintenance, big time. I mean, look at wood price and you got a wooden vessel. And you got to replace planks at times and rails at times. Uh, you look at the mechanics side, and dealing with marine diesel engines is not cheap. Just like dealing with a semi. Uh, you have various other items you've got to replace on boats. And we can even look at the grocery costs where you got to have food on the vessel for the crews and the captains and all. Everything went up in price except for the price that the shrimp fishermen are getting for the product. They're still dealing with prices that they had in the 80s. But when you look at fuel prices, that dadgum ain't sure what it was in the 80s. Uh..my father tries to look at it in a decent light for himself. Uh, because I know when I was in college, and all I know fuel...fuel price went up and I want to say the diesel fuel price was \$4 at one point for a gallon. And my dad liked it. My dad liked it for one reason. It kept some of those fishermen home and they weren't in his way where he could still catch what he needed to catch and they weren't in the way. Uh, you look at the different regulations as come on and it's kind of subsided a little bit here in Georgia kind of plateaued a little bit. There's different things that are occurring in North Carolina, where they're different legislation trying to go into kind of change what the fishermen are doing in North Carolina, change the grounds, and times a year and stuff like that. With it every time. Mostly for fishermen every time we turn around, it's always something else. Uh, one thing with being a commercial fisherman, every commercial fisherman whether it's fishing. Well, I'll put it this way, particularly just fishermen and shrimp, er fishermen and shrimpers won't say oystermen for the simple fact is I think they can see their product. But as a shrimper, you don't see your product. A farmer can go out in his field and he watches it from the day he sowed the seed to the day he reaped the harvest and he saw his product and he knew what he was gonna have that year. But as a shrimper, we don't. We don't get to see it. You go out there and you pray you had a good year, you pray that the winter wasn't too cold and you have a spring crop. You pray that the weather wasn't

too, I mean you want rain but you don't want too rainy and you don't want too hot and all where the temperature of the water and the temperature of atmosphere and even any other stipulation makes it where you don't have a good brownie crop in the summer or good white shrimp crop in the fall. Uh, the industry has changed even when my father was younger. The main crop of shrimp that my family focused on was brown shrimp during the summer. Brown shrimp you mostly catch them up closer to the beach area. And the Sundown the vessel my Father has is probably for the size of it is the shallowest. And there's several just as shallow, but it draws five feet of water meaning if we put it on we made it run aground I can jump over and I still have my head above water and it was built for that reason, brown shrimp. Well your white shrimp crop you catch more so outside of a mile and three miles and uh, for the most part, I mean there are times you go in up toward the beach to catch them at times but you mostly stay outside a little bit. Well when my father was younger and my grandfather was younger, your main crop was your brownie crop. And now it's not. You make your money off of your spring shrimp, your white shrimp that we call row shrimp because they're your biggest shrimp.

50:14

RT: Uh, in the last shoot, in the last three years, me and my father haven't fished any on brownies. One they're not big enough, two I mean you busted your behind on roe shrimp so much you need a break. Uh, the last...this year was the first year in the last three years that we actually fished into the month of July. The two years previous we stopped fishing during the summer and June 28th and June 22nd when the roe shrimp basically just quit. Which, though June 22nd was probably doggone good because I was working beside a fella that had worked for my granddaddy at one time, he was 78 at the time. And I'd never broke a bone in my body till that year I ended up the boat rolled and I ended up slipping and falling into the fish hole and I bounced off the edge of it. And um, I know I cracked it. I don't know how bad it was because I never went to the doctor about it. But I worked for two weeks with at least a cracked rib pulling on the ropes and all. And I'll put it this way. I was 20...28-29 at the time. And I was able to stay ahead of the 78-year-old. Well, me and him were neck and neck when I had a broke, uh, cracked rib we were neck and neck then.

52:02

KS: So do you have any recommended..recommendations for the future of commercial fishing or any changes that you want to see be made?

RT: Changes that need to be made is we need the price of the product..product to increase just like all the other prices of various other products. I mean, shoot you look at the price of beef and pork and chicken they go up but we need our price to go up. It's hard for it to go up when people are purchasing a cheaper product coming from overseas or even farm raised. Uh..recommendation: buy local wild caught. I mean you don't...Mother Nature's in a sense chemical free. Uh, any person that's eat wild Georgia shrimp. I ain't never heard them turn it down. They always talked about how sweet it is.

53:01

KS: It's the best shrimp. Um, so why do you think it is that the...the pricing of local products has not increased?

RT: Uh, at times, we could say the fish houses. I mean when you start looking at the process of some that goes from the boat to the dock, which we would call a fish house to the retailer or wholesaler, and then it goes from there to whoever such as a big company as a Cisco and stuff like that. So I mean, I guess we look at this out of how many hands that changes. Yes. Uh, but a lot of people don't realize you kind of got to take care of where the product is coming from. Because if we don't care...to take care of it, we won't, we're not gonna have that product. Uh, it's kinda like dealing with anything else environmental when you look at the food chain when you look at the environmental chain if you don't have the little microbe you don't really have much above.

KS: So is there any, just any more general information you want to give us? I know you've...you've got somewhere you got to be.

RT: Uh. not really kind of hit it and I imagine some others have hit around it.

KS: I know you've answered a lot. I think this is the most boat information we've gotten from anyone so. Well thank you so much for coming in. We..We appreciate it.

RT: All right.

KS:Thank you.

RT: Thank y'all.