

Name of Narrator: John Tyre (JT)

Interviewer(s): Megan Bull (MB) and Samantha Sheppard (SS) recorded this interview with the permission of John Tyre.

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

Transcriber: Megan Bull

Others present: No others were present.

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

Context for the Interview: Student interviewers sit down with John Tyre, a local fisherman and firefighter.

General Description of Contents: John Tyre discusses the history of his fishing vessels in Georgia, and what it is like working with family. He talks about how he has worked on a variety of different vessels and gives his thoughts on what the future would look like for commercial fishing in Georgia.

00:03

MB: Okay. So just like Dr. Tookes said, we're going to try to be a little quiet. So please talk share as much as you want.

JT: Okay.

MB: This is an interview with John Tyre on January 28, 2022. The interview is being conducted in Brunswick, Georgia. It's a part of the research project and interview collection titled Boat Stories. The interviewers are Megan Bull and Sam Sheppard. So, we're going to start if you're ready and you're welcome to take a break or stop us whenever you want or if you don't feel comfortable.

JT: Okay.

MB: So to start off, can you tell us a little bit about your current fishing vessel, its name, some of its history?

00:50

JT: Yep, I've got a 50 foot fiberglass boat, name of its *The Warrior*. Have three crew, I have my cousin that's the captain of it and I have another cousin that's a striker and then our third gentleman that works with us. My boat works three or four days a week. They work in and out of Brunswick, we don't make trips, leaves in the morning at four and gets back into dock around three or four. Because I have to, the fish house that I'm tying up at is presently closed so I have to put everything in a truck and take it to another fish house, which is about five, seven miles away. So I try to get the boat in around three o'clock. But, they start fishing on row shrimp and they'll go out and start making the low waters in the afternoons. Usually when it gets after lunchtime so we don't have to leave too early, try to get the boat back in before dark. And then where we do where my boat really does well is when they open the beaches and they let us get inside the three mile line in state waters. Because even though my boats' 50 foot long, it's 18 foot wide and it only draws three and a half feet of water is all it takes to float in. So I have an advantage up on the beach, where the water shallow when the big boats have to come, have to wait for high water to get up there and my boat can get there at low water and stay. Primarily that's where we do the best in the summertime and first of the fall is up on the beach in shallow water. So kind of gives us our own fishing grounds. I like the fiberglass boat because of the maintenance on it's low. You know wood boats get worms in them and they start to rot and steel hulls they rust, but the fiberglass boat is the most economical one you can get as far as upkeep on it. And that's why I bought the boat that I did.

02:36

MB: Has it had any other names before this?

02:39

JT: Yes, it was *The Red Tomato*. And I don't know why he named it that, but it was *The Red Tomato* and then it was *The Geechie Boy* and that was for it was built up in the Ogeechee river. A man named Mr. Lee built it. He built *Geechie Girl*, *Geechie Boy*, *Geechie Tide*, there were five or six of them in a row that he built. And all of the first name on it was Geechie.

03:11

MB: Do you know some of the other captains of that boat you mentioned Lee, are there others?

03:16

JT: I had heard that where the guy bought it from was Thurmond Kern who lives here in Brunswick. He sold it to me. I saw it on the railway about 10, 12 years ago and I liked the way it, looked the bottom of it and it was shallow draft. So I told him if he got interested in selling it that I would like to buy it and he actually called me a year later and said that he was getting older and thinking about retiring or not going fishing as much or maybe running somebody else's boat. So he gave me an opportunity to buy it. So I bought the boat from him. I heard Mr. Lee the guy that built these boats built the one I'm on for a grandson, that his son was in the business and his grandsons were going into business and he built all of 'em boats to work up around Tybee Island, Wassaw, Ossabaw, which has got the same kind of coastline as, you know, around Brunswick. It's shallow water out to, two, mile and a half, two miles offshore. So, it was real they had an advantage up there fishing too. But that's all I know about it, history wise of who owned it.

04:26

MB: Its history- has it also, has it been through any major events?

04:35

JT: Yes, we got a ground on, about seven or eight years ago, they were comin in the slough and it was rough and the fuel filters got clogged up and it went aground and it actually sat on the sandbar for two days for the tide to come back up. But I took another boat from Brunswick here and went and got it and pulled it off. It messed up the keel cooler on it and it bent the rutter and the wheel so I had to get, come on the railway and get it fixed. But if it hadn't been fiberglass, it would have probably still been there. A woodhull boat woudn't've took the pounding it sit there for two nights with it blowin' southeast about 20 to 30 knots with the waves coming in at high water and I was afraid to go at dark to try to get it because I didn't, it wasn't safe you know, I didn't want to try, I didn't want to get anybody hurt. When I

tried to go the first day with a smaller boat to get it but it didn't have enough power to pull that off. So I actually got the gentlemen that I bought it from the one I mentioned, Thurmond Kern, he was running a bigger boat, he came in, took the cables off of his of his nets that he pulls the nets with, 'cuz I kept breaking ropes trying to get it off of there and ran his tow cables back to me, and got me off of it that way. I was, that was fortunate, you know, like I said, a lesser boat would have, it wouldn't still be here it probably beat it to pieces. But that's about all the excitement I've had with it that way, you know.

Alright.

06:06

MB: Can you tell us a bit about the people you've worked on it with?

06:10

JT: My cousin's primarily. When I run the boat, either my cousin's on there, I work the deck, it's pretty much been a family thing. Those guys grew up with me, my uncle had a boat. When my dad would get upset with me, when we were younger, I would have to go get on the boat with my uncle for a few days, so he wouldn't kill me, and my cousin's vice versa, when their dad would get upset. We were quite a rambunctious bunch back then, they would go. But we were basically taught by the same people. So when we go fishing, I don't have to learn how he does things. And he doesn't have to learn how I do things. Different boats do different things, different ways. Decking the rig, putting out, taking up, even where they drag out, how they drag. And we were pretty much all taught the same. So if me and my cousin ones on the boat and other boats are fishing around us, you can tell when somebody comes in that's not experienced or different, because they don't exactly drag the same way. But you can't tell any difference between, you know, if I'm on the boat, they'll call me and think that I'm at the steering wheel and there'll be my cousin or vice versa. So we pretty much do things the same way. And it's not even, it's nonverbal thing taking up and putting out, we don't have to talk to each other. Because we've done it so much the same way. He knows what I'm going to do and I know what they're going to do. So it's pretty much I mean, we talk about different things while we're out there and cut up but it's not anything about taking up or putting out in fishing. That may sound weird, but it's just if I say we're gonna take up we all know what we're gonna do. You know, and there's different components to doing that, putting the nets in the water and taking them out, but it's just nobody has to say anything, everybody goes back and they pretty much know what their part is, or if one of them goes to the winch the other one goes back and breaks the nets down just automatically vice versa. Everybody on the boat, I'm lucky, my cousins are

trained, they can all run the boat, take up put out, they sew a splice cable, they do everything I can do so we're pretty much self contained.

08:13

MB: So has fishing been a family business for you?

08:16

JT: Yes, I started with my dad. My dad was in the, when he got out of high school he fished for several years here, had a boat right next door here were called *Paul Mereras* and then he went in the Navy, and he was in submarine service and his officer put it in for UDT. So he went in underwater demolition team, which is a frogman, which now our seals, actually and he was in it for about eight years. When he got out of it. He had, he hurt his foot, broke a bone in his foot when they were off somewhere and it medically made it to where he couldn't, If they were out somewhere and he hurt it then he would've been a liability. So they gave him an honorable discharge and he came back and bought a boat, and I was about 8, 9, 10 years old and I started going fishing in the summers with him. That's how I spent my summers if he was in Key West or South Carolina, Beaufort, South Carolina or here, wherever it was at my mom would take us, me and my brother put us on the boat and that's what we did for our summer vacation. So it just kind of got into our blood. After I graduate from high school, I ran several boats and then I got the opportunity to get on at the fire department and fishing in the 80s and early 90s. It was kind of rough, you know fuel was high, price of shrimp were down. We weren't doing very good. So I needed something else to do so I decided to try a career at Fire Department. But I bought a boat and actually having the fire department job allowed me to buy the boat because I didn't have to have the income all the time from the boat. I could fish when there was something out there and the other times I could leave it tied up because I wasn't using it to live off of, you know, it wasn't my primary source of my financial well being. And I had insurance and vacation, sick time, everything that came with the fire Department, I had some benefits too. So it allowed me to have a boat and to keep it in pretty good shape when a lot of the guys were tying them up and going to pump mills, finding different jobs to do just totally getting out of the industry. It allowed me to kind of weather it, till things got a little bit better and, you know, just been in my blood, just something. I'm at 30 years now and will probably retire if not this April, but next April, and I will go, I'll fish is what I'll do on my time off, you know, I won't have to do it every day, you know, but I will go out and use my boat. Joy.

10:51

MB: Have you worked on any other boats? Could you tell me a bit about that?

10:55

JT: Oh my goodness. I've worked on everything from 68 foot glass boats that were built in St. Augustine, St. Augustine trawlers. I worked on desco's, worked on steel hulls, they were several of them built around here. I went to the Gulf in '81 on a 103 foot steel hull named *Stephanie Lynn*. It was a most of your boats around then, your big boats were 68, 70 foot so this boat was really something actually they were going to make the Texas opening. They picked me up at the pier on St. Simons with my clothes and everything. He put the bow of the boat up there and I got on and we went to Texas and made the Texas opening over there. And I really enjoyed working on it. It's the first boat that didn't have a steering wheel. It had a dial on the front of it up there. A rudder indicator that you turned it to wherever you wanted it to, so there was no steering wheel or anything like that. It had a washer and dryer on it, that was something new. It had an ice machine. It didn't make it, it wasn't a freezer boat but it made ice replenished, had a salvation plan on it and it would replenish the ice that we use in the ice hull, to a certain extent. It was a, so you could make 28, 30 day trips. That's why you, that's why it was built that big, its something you could stay out that long on it was pretty nice. As I got older, I kind of got away from the staying out. I didn't like staying out three or four weeks at a time and totally different fishing over there. Been to Key West on several steel hulls, work down there and as far north as Outer Banks, North Carolina, didn't really care for it, it's too cold up there. I like it kind of warm, you know. So I've primarily fished from here south and over in the Gulf.

12:53

MB: Could you tell us a bit about some notable experiences you've had while working on boats? Funny, scary, anything?

13:05

JT: I guess it was, it has a funny context to it, but the girl that lived at the end of the block named Julie then the street her father was commercial fisherman. And we were out on Jekyll Beach, draggin. And my dad got a call on the radio that Julie's family was trying to get in touch with me and to let my dad know that her dad had passed away. And they were you know, she was asking for me. Me and her were close. We went down to boats and everything together. I was probably 13, 12, 13, 14 years old. And my mom was going to meet me at the south end of Jekyll and pick me up and my dad was going to run the boat up there for me to jump overboard swim to the beach. So he runs the boat up there and the tide running kinda hard where, right around the end of the point where the tide you know where the tide going out and he got me up close. He told me "alright, go ahead and jump" and I was gonna swim over

to the beach and go get in the car and my mom was gonna take me up back over to Brunswick. And I jumped in and that tide was running so hard. I was swimming as hard as I could. And my dad kept was hollering something at me. He just kept hollering. I'm thinking in my mind. Why is he screaming at me? Can't he see that I'm having a hard time trying to get over here to the beach. Finally, I just gave up started floating back to the boat, and I realized he was hollering stand up. The water wasn't barely over knee deep. [Laughter] And I had several experiences like that. In Key West when I was 17, we were on a boat named *The Miss BJ* that was the steel hull that was built over on St Simons Island. The outriggers, one of them came up when we were towing at night. It was pretty rough and you know the Bulldogs got the outriggers that go down on it. One of them went over the top of the other one. All four rigs got hung up and me and me and a guy, the guy that was working on the boat went out on the outrigger to try to get all the four rigs untangled and I fell off the door. And when I came back up, the guy that was fishing with us had me, he had his arm wrapped in the door chain and had me by the back of the pants. So, what my belt goes through the back so that was pretty scary. He was quite a strong fella, he picked me up with one arm and put me back up on the thing and we decided to go in and my dad said let's just wait till it gets daylight where we can see everything but that was a scary experience. We went to Gulf one time I was probably 17 or 18 and we would anchor up in the evenings and go on the boat and cook dinner, eat dinner and us guys would sit around and drink beer with each other and the guy that I was working with, Gerald Duncan, told me about 10 o'clock let's go ahead and get on the boat because tie it off offshore you had to drop back a little ways because the boats would hit each other and I told him no that I was going to, I would come over to the boat in a little while and he said well I'm gonna drop the boat back you know you need to, you need to get on over here to boat before it gets too late. Well I was up in the pilot house and I guess evidently he got tired of waiting on me to come so when I went about one o'clock in the morning, the boat was dropped back there probably about 50 yards, 50 feet back and I said well I'll just get on the rope and walk the rope out in the water when I got to the boat over there it was fiberglass and I couldn't get up on the boat. I spent till daylight that morning till they got up bobbing up and down, holding on to an anchor rope that salt water will do things to you, at the quite water log and quite tired. You know I had several experiences like that that you know could have went bad but it was just from being young. You know, I dove under a boat here one time we had a halter I didn't know it but there was a cable wrapped up in the in the propeller but the boat that I was working on had two propellers and when I dove under you know it's dark under there and you go by feel. I didn't realize the water was as cold as it was and hypothermia got me and I remember being pressed up against the bottom

of the hull. I didn't have a tank or anything I just dove under to see what was in it. And I remember being pressed up under the bottom of the hull and I like you know when you get, when your equilibrium gets that, you don't know where ups, down, downs and I remember that's all I remember thinking, uh oh this ain't good. And the next thing I know I was when I kind of got to where I was conscious again they had me two of the guys on the boat had me in a shower on the boat with the hot water I mean as hard as they could get it and I was sitting in the corner I don't know how I got they said I just popped up out of the water yet when I went down a rope tied a rope around me and they got me up so I didn't know. I didn't do things that were real bright back then. Trying to be a little better at it and you know I'm a fire chief now because I've kind of learned what not to do. I've had several experiences it was could've of turned out wrong.

18:12

MB: Could you tell me about any changes that you've seen in water or marine life or the fishing industry over your years?

18:21

JT: Yeah, we started dealing with black gill probably 10 years ago, 8 or 10 years ago when it first started showing up. Pretty much gets in their lungs and stunts their growth they don't, you know they say it has got a lot to do with temperature but I think it's got something to do with all the golf courses, putt mills and chemicals and different stuff going into the water and the other fact that so much of the bottoms closed now that it gets stagnant. I know it's probably wasn't good but when we when you used to drag it, it would keep the sediment kinda from getting that bad in the bottom. It would kind of dissipate it but you know fishings like farming, you can over farm land, but if you don't till it, you know you can you can also have trouble so there's a happy medium between overfishing and under fishing. I don't think it should be a free for all you can go do what you want to any time. You can't, I don't think you trust people with that. They would probably abuse it. But some of the regulations. The other thing lately in the last couple years is sharks. They have it was about 8 or 10 years ago too they start the long lining offshore boats would go out here about 10 miles offshore and long line lay 6, 8, 10 of miles cable with a shark hook on it. Every so often when they caught the shark the meat went to Fulton somewhere up there in New York and the fins went to Asia. For aphrodisiacs, they crushed them up and did different things with them and you know, they were putting up, they were putting a hurtin' on the population. They were overfishing it, but they stopped all the fishing. And now, we can't make a drag without them eating our nets up. I mean, it's been costing me average 100, \$200 a day, fish one day 100

to \$200 a day to get my net sewed up the next day where the sharks have eat it. So that's one of the major things we're dealing with. Now, I heard that they were trying to address some of it, you know, see what they could do about it. But black gill was one thing. Jelly balls got pretty bad years ago, but that that was remedied when Sinky Boone, built the TED, turtle exclusion device. I was one of the first ones to pull one of those. I worked at Flexi part time as a role player for the bad guy out there. But the National Marine Fisheries was out there, and Dick Smith was the head of the guide, he said, Don't you have a commercial fishing boat? I said, Yeah, I've got a small boat. He said, We need to train some of the natural fishery guys and the Coast Guard guys. So I was one of the first ones to get a TED. And I actually pulled it down here in St. Simons sound, I, the, the purpose of it was to teach those guys how to work and how to get on the boat and check it to make sure it was at the right angle, the flat was right and everything. So I messed it up everywhere I could, and that they found it, you know, that was the point was to train on it. But I also got the, I got the educational part of it, of where everybody else was starting new with it, I had already pulled it and I understood what it could do. Because it's you know, it wasn't, they were looking at it as all bad fishermen look at things change, any kind of change automatically, as you know, everybody gets it upset. And you know, change doesn't bind or free you, it's what you do with it. Those TEDs actually helped make our shrimp more marketable. When the jelly balls were there, you could drag horseshoe crabs that you used to load our nets up, it gets them out. So you know, there's some advantages and if you put it in there the right way, it actually helps you, you don't lose that much. When we first started pulling them the TEDs, that was probably a 60 to 80% loss. But then it got down to the science of it, of how to set it, how many floats to put on it, what the flap need to look like. And it's probably less than 10% now. Even if they said you know you don't have to pull them you're not required to pull them anymore my boat still would. I would for what they do. I think the turtle population has rebounded pretty good. We see a lot. So if you just go by the headcount of the ones we see out there, for a while you know, there was definitely a problem it got to where you didn't see that many, but they addressed, It's twofold, it was fishing, but it was also your industry and your commercial lighting on the beaches. You know, hotels, motels, different things, that they were tearing down the sand dunes, the lighting was bad because they would go the wrong direction. I mean, that sounds simple, but it would happen you know, I kind of tried to find out what was going on with that but I was very fortunate to be on the ground floor when they started with that and to be able to do some training with it. It gave me an advantage fishing and the guys were good to work with too. You know they just have a job to do and they were pretty good to get along with.

23:38

MB: What do you think about the future of the commercial fishing industry?

23:46

JT: I think if we don't do something to get some younger people interested in the business that it's gonna go. My generation is probably going to be the last. At one time, Brunswick here had 100, 150 boats, now there's 6 boats that work here. 2 of those gentlemen are talking about this being their last year, you know trying to sell the boat or either just totally take the riggin' off of it and piece it out, scrap it out and get rid of it. Not really, these fuel prices, supply chain, demand I mean everybody's fighting it but you know you can't get parts to work on your boat if you don't have a certain kind of engine now they don't even make the parts anymore and that's part of the industry the the engine industry is trying to move people towards a certain to use something so they're not making any more what common. The GMs that were that we're running now they're not even they're not even making parts for 'em anymore. You can go to warehouses, it's got you know, overstock, but that's running out. That's a big challenge, like I said, and basically getting people to work you know somebody's interested in it, you just don't, you know, if you got somebody run doing deliveries, if they know how to drive, they get in a truck, and they just go, you know, they pretty much have to learn the route. But fishing has so much different things go along with it, that you just don't, you just don't get on a boat, and in a week can work. I have seen, I saw something in the paper, I think it was a month or week, a couple weeks ago that I think maybe the University of Georgia or somebody Sea Grant might be trying to put something in like that, and McIntosh County or somewhere and I think that would be helpful. You know, like, you know, they have in high school, they do welding for the guys and they do shop and they do carpentry stuff, if they were to offer that, you know, along with some financial stuff, some business management. That's the other thing. Most of your fishermen are good guys, a lot of them didn't graduate from high school. They started fishing before high school and they, you know, the money made 'em quit, but they're not real good managing their money. So and with it being seasonal you got to. You can't spend what you make all the time. If you don't, you'll go in hole and your stuff will get a dis-repaired, you know, you won't be able to compete.

26:18

MB: Why do you think people today don't want to work on boats as much?

26:23

JT: Physical labor. You know, they're used to sitting down at a computer or doing something like that. I noticed when my fire guys we used to get out and train want to go out and get in the burn building and

set something on fire, and the guys I got now, which are good guys, and they do what they're supposed to, but they'd rather be in there playing video games... what we did in our spare time was train, burn things you know, and go put it out, they'd rather be inside 6 or 7 of them playing video games, just different work ethic than what, doesn't make 'em bad people you know, they just don't, they're just not used to getting out and doing physical labor like that, you know, it's pretty, firefightin' is pretty tough. We're having a hard time finding people that want to do that to not because they're not smart enough is they don't want to pull the hose. They don't want to get wet when it's out there. You know, so we're getting it, not just fishing and fishing is a bad, you know, fishings a good example of not wanting to come but it's cause it's a physical labor in the mental makeup of em. They can go get a job somewhere else at a desk for guarantee. Fishing is kind of the you know, you got an apply yourself you can make, you can pretty much write your own check fishing when it's good, but you got to go out there and get it. You know, you get you go to work at eight or nine o'clock in the morning beats getting up at 3:30 because you start fishing at daylight and if you're not there early that tide cycles. And what you have is every night, you fish during the daytime, but every night it replenishes you got a high water and a low water and it replenishes and you need to be out there early to catch it. Lot of these, a lot of them don't want to get up right now don't want to work like that, it's too hard a work.

28:04

MB: How much have these changes in the industry that you talked about earlier affected you?

JT: How much what?

MB: The changes in the industry that you talked about earlier? How much of those affected you?

28:15

JT: I've been, I've been pretty fortunate. Except for the black gill, which just totally annihilated a shrimp population, we'd be doing good to a certain point to the shrimp got up to about a 31, 35 count. And then it seemed like after that there'll be plenty of them in the sound but they just disappear and we wouldn't catch them you know, normally we wait for them to come out in the ocean, but they just disappeared. I think after they got to a certain point. They can't breathe and get that black gill and I think they die in the sound and your crabs and your other fish you know your other stuff up there eat them, and the sharks, I've, we've never had it where you work one day and you couldn't fish the next day because there's no need to go drag your nets around with 60, 70 holes the size of a basketball in it. You don't catch anything. So the other thing is to sharks. Far as workforce, I'm pretty fortunate on that because my cousins have other things to do. But all three of them all, three the guys that work for me weld. One of

them's a mechanic. Sometimes they set up side jobs or they get got they may be out fishing all week long. But there's somebody waiting on them to get a break so they can go to work somewhere else. I see my cousin that runs the boat for me, the guy that fishes it when I'm not running it, he's gone now to Florida and is shut down. In the wintertime he does shut down, he's at a nuclear plant down there in Florida. Doing some a, he's a mill right, doing some work down there. So pretty much we fish when it's when it's feasible to and otherwise we just leave the boat tied up. We don't know, we don't go out there and dig a hole. Some of these guys that have to do it every day. They wind up digging a hole, owing a company store, you know, they'll go for two or three weeks and just burn fuel trying to catch something. And then when they do catch something, they owe the fish house 2 or 3, \$4,000. So that's got to be that come right off the top. So you know, it just seems like it's hard to catch it when you get behind. That's been the other thing that's been very fortunate with me is that I've had my fire department and other things. So you know, if something tore up, I didn't actually have to depend on the boat to make the money to fix it, I could keep it going with by means I had, you know, it's pretty much just black gill, sharks, upkeep and in, you know, getting people to want to work.

30:56

MB: Do you have any recommendations that you think would help the future of the commercial fishing industry?

31:06

JT: Maybe if there was some kind of subsidies that would help the fisherman, when its rough times I mean, we send subsidies to Mexico, we send subsidies everywhere else, farm, them guys raising pond shrimp, you know, in a third world countries, they get subsidies, maybe something like that offering some kind of apprenticeship like I was talking about. And I think they're already trying to do that, offer apprenticeship program, something to get people interested in it, and to be able to help these guys get a boat. You can not get a commercial boat finance, your banking industry, just not maybe if there were something like I said with subsidies or something to where the SBA would would make it more viable to back people up and get started. Because you got a lot of overhead, you know, the boat I bought was \$60,000. And that was not, that was a deal. That boat brand new would have been probably 180 or \$200,000, and the price of things are going up so high. You need some help. You need some way to teach these people to find a way into it, and then some financial help to get them started. Thats what I would think.

32:26

MB: So do you think that there's a lot against the industry then the future of it?

32:33

JT: Don't look real good. But, but it's not just fishing. I mean, we don't, I don't feel like we've been singled out or treated, treated unfairly. I just think the way things are economy wise, and everything else right now is, is hard. You know, I don't like getting into politics too much. But you know, this time, a year ago, diesel fuel was a buck 80. And I you know, and I get 1000 gallons at a time, it was \$1,800. Okay, now it was 3.43 the last time so it was \$3,430 for the same amount of fuel. I mean, that's before you ever put a net in the water. You got that? You got that overhead so you know, the price of everything's going up and not being able to get things so I don't know. Everybody's feeling the crunch right now. It's not just us. I would have normally, they closed the beaches December 31. And we can go outside three miles, through January first of February and catch shrimp but it just wasn't with the price a fuel. We go from catching up on the beach the last day that they weren't on a beach, my boat had about 900 pounds on one drag. He went offshore the next day and had 90 so I can't, I can't make money by the time I pay them what little bit of money they're going to make off at 90 pounds 60 or \$80 for three of them and then I pay fuel there's nothing left. So you know we tied up already because of that last year or the year before last we fish till they closed it in February because it was still viable, you know we can still make money, main thing's your overhead.

34:21

MB: Going back to some boats that you've worked on. Um, can we talk about how long you've worked on different boats?

34:33

JT: Yes, I uh, man started when I was 10. I worked on a boat name *The Wave* that's my dad's boat 'til I was probably 15 years old, then he started me, allowing me to go fishing with other people. I worked on a boat named *The Sidewinder*, it was about a 50 foot boat. That gentlemen, Captain Bobby, thats the guy that I work with, he actually years later wound up working for me. He was retired and needed some extra money so he fished on a boat with me. Boat named, a big steel hull, named *The Miss BJ*. That was probably, that's when I was in Key West with, while we had a mess and everything got tangled up my car got lost overboard. Was on it for a couple years then I went to the Gulf on a boat named *The Miss Tara*, Poteet Seafood, owned it work Key West primarily we were Cocoa Beach, Cape Canaveral, New Shamar {?}, St. Augustine, it was a bigger boat we worked down there. Then I got own a 68 foot glass named *The Cherokee*, and I ran it for a while, it was brand new. I ran it for a while, while I worked I

scalloped on it. We scalloped in long line we did a tie fishing, goldentie fishing with it plus shrimp fishing. Then I had a boat named *The Country Girl*, which was a 31 foot Thompson Trawler, it was a single rig for one guy could work it myself on my days off from the fire department. Then were when I got rid of it, I had a boat named *The Showdown*. It was a 50 foot boat that I had that had been tied up at Jekyll Island when I was little and I always wanted it and it came up for sale and I bought it and I had it for three or four years and sold it and got a boat name the first boat it was named *The Lucy Helen* I renamed it the *The Warrior*, and I had it for probably six or eight years, and then I got the boat that I have now which is named *The Warrior*. So I don't know how many boats is that six or eight or ten that I've worked on or either owned. I've owned half of them worked on them. But... working on em, made it to where, I knew what to do when I when I got my own boat and I watched I learned by other people's mistakes too. You know, you can't spend more money then you make you know. When your output exceeds your income, you're in trouble. So I learned learn pretty well. Fire Department helped me a lot. I have an upper hand with that because when I got my fire science degree, it's got business management in it, and it helped me to look at things the other way financial wise and what to do this way and another. It helped me to manage my money so it gave me kind of a upper hand if I hadn't been afforded that I think that's probably 50% of the success and I've done okay with the boats, 50% of my success has been you know what that I was acclimated to and the opportunities I had other than just fishing boats and that's you know going to get a degree. That had totally something out another whole you know, fire science is a whole nother thing but it entailed stuff that could apply fishing so it you know. I was real fortunate to be able to do that.

38:21

MB: What do you better understand now about fishing or boats compared to when you started?

38:27

JT: Oh yeah, most definitely.

38:29

MB: Is there anything specific?

38:31

JT: I just, well when I was young, it was just exciting and fun and I wanted to go fishing. You know I remember that... in the summer times when I was smaller the nights that we were going to go fishing I couldn't sleep you know because I enjoyed going out there that much going out there fishing and then it got to be where I enjoyed it but it was also a job you know when I grew up but uh you know, it was a it

was a very good experience. My dad told me when I was really young and he had me actually I was running his boat, could drive his boat with him on there when I was 13, 14 years old. He said I may never be able to help you with a lot of money but I can teach you to work and you know that was you know, he did and he taught me to be honest and do things the right way you know, the harder you work you can make your own paycheck fishing. So he instilled some good, that was some good things that I got out of it, fishing. Probably wouldn't have got it if I went any other route. You know I enjoyed doing it and it was fit just right, fire department, work 24 hour or 48. You know I could take those two days and mess with my boat if I caught shrimp good, if I didn't that was fine. Yeah, it wasn't the end of the world, so. Took a lot of the stress and pressure off of it and some of these guys that were doing it day in and day out. You know, had so mine kind of like a, kind of a unique situation. Now them guys are kind of done the same thing that I've done. They found something else to do. Buba... you know, he's a mill guy. He's a welder and does he works at pump mills and stuff he fishes when the shrimp are good and then otherwise his boats tied up. You know, and he's working somewhere trying to make a living so it's getting more of a you got to have something else to do to keep you going other than just that.

40:26

SS: So you're on the warrior right now.

JT: Yeah. On the warrior.

SS: How long have you been on that boat?

JT: For five years now? I can't remember exactly 2016, 2017.

SS: Is it similar to other boats currently operating in Georgia?

40:47

JT: What do you mean?

SS: Like just the fiberglass.

JT: Is it rigged the same way? Yes.

SS: Yes, and you said its low lying?

JT: You know, it draws less water.

SS: It draws less water. Thank you.

JT: It draws less water. Drawing water is how much it takes to float. That's the depth you have *Georgia Bulldog* out here this boat, its 9, 10 feet. And it's light that boat, you can load it down because you know that that boat back in the day was a Cadillac, the one you have out here and it could, you could make it draw 13 foot of water if you want to load it down with fuel and ice, while it would tote so 13 feet, I

mean you know, this room's about 15, 14 feet high see where they're where it take. You know, they'd have to have that much water to float in, minus 42 inches. So there's a big difference. Now that can take a lot more rough weather than I can take. But I can go where it can't go. So and that's one of the primary reasons I bought it was because of the power that it had. It had a lot of power for the size and what I did, instead of pulling 4 nets that everybody does, and barely being able to pull them and burnin' a lot of fuel, I put 2 nets on there and I pulled them twice as fast. I cover twice the ground. So where they're pulling four, 35 or four, 40 foot nets through at one time, I'm pulling two, 50 foot nets through the area twice. So I'm putting more actually more webbing on the bottom than they are and it's not costing me as much because I don't have to run my engine as hard to pull a smaller rig. My dad taught me that. You know give something that's efficient and pull it and you can pull it anywhere. Some of these boats here with what they're pulling when the tide starts running. You know you got high water and low water and right before, when the tide changes the first hour of it, it doesn't run too hard but about till about half tide the second, second and third hour of tide, six hour tide it runs real hard, they have to stop and wait for the tide to slack up. I don't have to stop my boat, will keep going because I can pull what I have. So you know I've just learned a lot of different things.

42:55

SS: You talked about *The Showdown* as your dream boat. Kind of you said you wanted it for a long time?

43:02

JT: Yeah. I when we were tying up at Jekyll dock the name of it was *The Miss Angie* actually the gentleman's got Zachary Seafood here in Brunswick and he had Zachary's on St. Simons. It was tied up at the dock when I was 12, 13, 14 years old and we would have to go across it to get into my dad's boat. It was just the way it looked. The inside of the power house and everything was really nice on it and I'd always thought that, you know, one day I was going to have a boat like that. And I heard that it was in the co-op up at Bryan County, Richmond Hill for sale. So I went up there and looked at it and it needed a little work on it. But I had knew all the people to get it done. So I called the guy up, told him what I was, what I wanted to do you know where that I wanted to buy the boat. He knew my dad, he knew the history that we used to be up at Jekyll, and I told him that I'd always wanted it you know the boat like that. So he made me a really good deal on it. Only thing he asked me to do was to put it back into shape like he had it, and that he wanted some pictures of it and could he come ride on it? And he never did make to come on. But I did send him some pictures and he got some pictures of how it looked and I

think he had him put in this wall maybe and a lady Do an oil color painting because it was, Angie was his daughter. So it was named after his daughter. But yeah, I enjoyed having that boat. That was one you know, you're you 13,12, 13, 14 look at a boat like that thinking one day I'm gonna have and then you have the opportunity to buy it. So you know, I thought that was pretty neat and it did exactly what I thought it was I caught a lot of shrimp with that boat. It was shallow too, so good, boat.

44:52

SS: Can you talk about the experience of moving on from a boat or when it's time to get rid of a boat, what that's like for you?

44:59

JT: Well, mainly I haven't, I haven't had to scrap a boat. Thank goodness, I've sold mine. I kept them in decent enough shape that you know, and people knew that I'd made money with them. That's another thing a boat can have a history of it staying tore up. Nobody wants to touch it, you know, kind of like albatross or there can be a boat that has a history of making money and a lot of times it's got to do, and it's just a term we use, is the loose nut behind the wheel. That means whoever's driving it, you know, has a lot to do with who's making money with it too. But boats get reputations for being able to pull or, or catching shrimp and everyone I've had I've done pretty good with it. So I didn't have any trouble selling I actually had several people wanting it. The boats that I've had. So you know, like I wanted the boat. That guy, *The Warrior*. When I bought it from Thurmond, there were six other people wantin' that. But he had known me growing up fishing. And him and my dad had helped each other so he gave me first. I was first person he call. But there were five other people wanting to buy it when I got it. But, no it's just a basic upkeep on em. You know, people come look at something falling apart and it's not worth... you either got to give it away and most of them don't want to do the what it would take to get it back up and make it feasible to fish again.

46:32

MB: What year were those boats that you discussed?

46:35

JT: When to when? '72, I was born in '62 so '72 I was 10. That's when I went to work with my dad on the, well it wasn't work. That's when I started fishing with my dad on *The Wave*, work one summer, the next summer he gave me and my brother a half share a piece, because we did the work of one guy on the deck, pickin' up, and then the third summer when I was 13, 14 years old, me and my brother were the crew. He didn't have the older gentleman, he used us during the summertime. He would either be here or

Apalachicola, Florida. We fished out Apalachee over there and it was beautiful. We loved it over there. My mom would pack us up, take us over there and drop us off and then she would come like on the weekends and instead of staying on the boat, we get a motel room, we swim in the pool and go out and eat different things like that. You know where I'd never had a vacation vacation and it was kinda like a semi vacation doing that. You know, I enjoyed it.

47:59

MB: Where is your current boat docked?

48:01

JT: It's here in Brunswick. Yeah, yeah.

48:03

MB: Have you docked to many other places?

48:07

JT: No. I always worked outta here. Well, the boats I've worked on, tied up at Jekyll Dock when I was younger, Jekyll Wharf and then at GISCO, Golden Isle Seafood Company, which is at the end of the causeway or, or was it in the causeway on St. Simons, its no longer there. Some people, private industry people bought it and put some condos up so it's gone, or either Brunswick, so it was about a three mile four mile radius. I've had boats tied up, never tied up at any town or anything different.

48:41

SS: Can you tell us about some memories, about any of the boats? A memory or a story about any of the boats?

48:51

JT: Uh, and just basically the camaraderie of all the boats when back when there was there was numerous boats fishing, we would all work that'd be five or six of us working on Jekyll beach, we would all go tie up and joiner and anchor up one boat behind the other and one boat would cook one thing, and another boat would cook something else and everybody would get on one boat and you know, eat dinner and just have a good time and I mean play cards and you know, just have a good time. Work 4, 5 days and then come to the dock and unload. It's like a extended family back then, you know, because all the guys that I grew up with, whose dad fish, they did the same thing. They worked on the boat. So you know there would be five or six boats there would be two sets of guys on each boat or either one child you know on a boat and we all grew up together. Half of them went their own way. You know I don't know what they're doing anymore and then like my cousin, he was on one of the boats, two of my

cousins, that worked for me were on a boat with their dad so they were somebody I seen real often, but you know just kind of like the life of a pirate, you know? Really, really enjoyed being out there on the water, different. Even though you're not that far away from Brunswick, it seems like you're not really attached to all the other stuff going on. So it's kinda it's peaceful out there fishing.

50:19

SS: You talked about the younger generation needing to be involved. Is anyone in your families the next generation?

50:28

JT: No, my nephew, my I don't have any, I've never been married. I don't have any children that I know of, I'm sure by now somebody would've told me, but um [laughter] I would hope they would. But my brother has kids and my sister has kids and the boys are, one of them's works Kings Bay. He's works on Trident submarines. He does some computer stuff, you know, and then my sister has one and he works at the Department of Defense at Savannah River Plant up in Aiken, South Carolina, so all the boys have went into something technical. They like going fishing, you know, they'll come down and go out on the boat. But about one day is enough. You know, and they want to go back to whatever they're doing. They're not interested in doing it for a living. I mean, you know, they both of these guys come out of high school, six figures. So you know, smart kids, and I don't blame them, you know, but they're not interested in owning a boat or anything. I'm probably, my brother is 18 months younger than me. If something were to happen to me, and I couldn't go to work and go, I would probably give it to him. Because he would, I imagine he would mess with it, you know, he would try to keep it going. But as far as him buying anything or me buying anything else, I'm pretty sure it is probably, I'm 60 years old getting ready to retire. So this is probably my last one and I bought it because it was fiberglass and the upkeep and it's something that I didn't have to run behind the hulls and just good shape today as it was when I bought it, it doesn't deteriorate. So I bought something looking at my retirement, you know what I would want to fish myself and how are going to fish you know, get up early and go out and work till 12 or one o'clock and come in no matter what the tide is. I could come home when I want to, I can go fishing when I want to. So I kind of bought the boat niche, you know the way I like to fish and when, like I said when I retire I'll be probably that's what I'll do, I will probably fish, probably will if I go anywhere other than here, I'll work up around Beaufort, Hilton Head, Beaufort, South Carolina. That's where we went in the summers and I know a lot of people up there, other families the Gay Fish Company and people up there so when I go up there, it's like, you know, I get in my car, sometimes just

ride it there, to see em, you know, if nothin's going on the people that own the fish houses up there. So I would probably work there or here. May spend part of my time stayin' there I'm not sure you know, if it's fishing ,good up there. I might just work out of there. So, you know, I pretty much do whatever I want to, that's about it.

53:15

MB: Is there anything unique about your current boat or any other boats that you've worked on?

53:22

JT: Hmm, no, no, other than the big one that I talked about, *Stephanie Lynn* that it was people everybody was quiet in awe of it because the size it pulled four big nets. It was, the inside of it was like a house. I mean, it was beautiful. It had a refrigerator, freezer. First microwave I ever seen on a commercial fishing boat, hot water, washer and dryer. I mean, that was unheard of, ice plant. So you know, it was it was really getting to what the boats have now, common, you know, your big boats that you get into now they're they just go at, you know, automatic. You don't even have to ask if they say it's a desco or St. Augustine trawler or something, you know, it's coming with all these with all this stuff on it. So, you know, other than that, they were pretty much all run of the mill. Yeah.

54:18

MB: I think that's about all I have, unless you have more.

54:22

JT: Alright ladies I hope that helped.

54:24

MB: Is there anything you'd like to add anything you want to talk about?

54:28

JT: No, but I appreciate y'all taking an interest in this. Yeah, and you know, it can't do anything but help and get some information about it. And maybe people like ya'll ladies can be the one start the groundwork on it, extending it and it having a future you know, somebody's got to get behind it. You know, and it's gonna take more than just the guys that do it. They're not they're not equipped to, but uh, I think our ladies would, you know, it'd be very Good spokesman for us, especially about talking to the guys that do it from the ground up so we appreciate what you're trying to do and just keep up the good work. Bryan speaks highly of y'all ladies. All, y'all come down capt truck in the back do so you keep up the good work. Okay.