

Nompumelelo Hlophe: So, my name is Nompumelelo Hlophe. I am here with my colleague, Ahmauri Alford. We are Georgia Southern University students. I am here with mister – what is your name again? Ben McDowell. Did I say that correctly?

Ben McDowell: Yes.

NH: Thank you. We are conducting an oral history interview as part of a project fishing traditions and fishing futures. I have already received informed consent, permission to record from Thomas McDowell, but I just want to make sure that this interview is still okay. I just want to hear verbally. Is it okay?

BM: Yes.

NH: Thank you very much.

BM: Have a run at it.

NH: I have a couple of questions to ask, but we can just float. It is just a conversation between me, you, and Ahmauri. That is it. So, can you just please tell us about you? Tell us who Mr. Ben McDowell is.

BM: I was born in 1952, and I'm still fishing today. I'm sixty-five-year-old. I've seen a lot of changes, not good changes. It was better when I was a child. Today, it's too much regulation. Everybody will tell you when to go to work and how to work, and they know nothing about the job. They know nothing at all about shrimp fishing, but they will make laws for you to live by. (The wrong ones?). They make a lot of law changing would help make their job better because there would be more shrimps, more boats. All your boats are gone. All your fish house is gone. It isn't nothing like the old days. In the old days, you can work eight months out a year and didn't worry about the winter time. You're wanted at sea more time. You spend time with your family. You have money to pay your bills, to eat. Now, you show up, but we got to go hundreds of miles away from home to even pay the lot bill. We used to before DNR, and everybody got to tell us how to fish. They don't even know how to tie the bag when they try it. They know nothing, but they will make laws for people who live out. That's everywhere you go. On land, you all a bit worried land, bill in the house. Somebody will come make law on how to build a house. (They haven't never drove a nail?) and they'll make laws. Some of them know how to do it. But the shrimping industry, you can ask anybody you want about all the boats. There were a hundred boats, a hundred fifty boats running the dock before. Now, you got twenty boat tops. That's the most of it now. I've seen fifteen boats in the whole harbor. (Frankly, I'm going to crap on county laws?). The people who makes it know nothing at all about fishing. You can carry them anywhere and feed them farm shrimp. You turn around and feed them our shrimp. Oh, what kind of shrimp is this? That's all it is about. The government won't deal away with us and feed everybody something raised in a farm. They don't care what we eating, you know what mean? We eat our shrimp. Put shrimp here, our shrimp here. They'll say, "What the hell? What have I been eating?" But they don't want us to make a living out of it no more. Everybody wants them, then why you all pushing us out our business? We're born and raised here. Sixty-five years ago, I was born in shrimping. My daddy would have been fishing fifty years before I

was born. My daddy was sixty years old when I was born. That's all he was. That's all my granddaddy was in about eighteen hundred. Now, everything has gone up, all but our shrimp prices. The summer goes by. Hell, back in the [19]60s and [19]70s, we got used them up back then than we're doing today, but our calls is up. We used to buy a net for, shit, two, \$300 a net and I made fifteen hundred to \$2,000 a net. When I was born with 16 cents, and it went to two fifty to \$3. Shrimp price is \$5. How the hell you going to overcome that when you're behind a [inaudible] and you're coming up? Hell, we sold shrimp for 80 cents. A few with almost \$4. How the hell are you going to pay that? Go up to the market with only \$10. They used to sell them for 80 cents. Hard to make a living out of that. You got little kids to the house, and I got grandbabies to the house. At work today, a man should go fishing, I'll go out. I can't go fishing like I used to. All the young the people, hell, they can't come and go out fishing. How are you going to raise your family some week and no check at all for months? Not right now. It's [inaudible] twenty-five mile, hell, fishing isn't no shrimp. We don't go running there. Why the hell are you looking at us like we stupid as hell? Oh, we going to drove you down for twenty-five miles. Make no damn shrimp for [inaudible], no way. Before [inaudible], you guys got to go somewhere, you know what I mean? (It isn't like the boats going to get drag for?) month and month for nothing, two, three-pound drag. Hell, you overcome a few. The government does shit like close it down like we stupid as hell and we don't know nothing about shrimping. They never been shrimping. If it isn't nothing there, you can't order that. Why are you worried about closing? It's like being in communist. They're going to [inaudible] you. Bitch, you have not never been in the ocean. Get off those red boots you're holding up, it has never done a damn thing in the ocean. Nothing. You only go to the beach. So, how the hell you going to go and then get your yacht all of summer and make laws for me? That's what's pissing me off. It's not like you know nothing about fishing, but you're going to come and tell me how to do it. Can you move the boat away from the dock? Hell, no. How are you going to come tell me how to do it? You don't know nothing about it at all, (crank and loader?) and you're going to make law for me? I go home with my wife and young, I got no money in my hand. What the hell I'd go home for? She doesn't need me, and I am not bringing nothing to eat, (but that's what count these laws?). Let's all mix all the fishermen out. Fifteen, twenty bucks (down at the dock?), no hundred fifty down at dock. Fish out, get pushed. Do it over and over. There are no boats, so what's your going to fish out for? Fishermen can't stay in business when you don't make nothing. Farmers can't stay in business when zero home for him, you know what I mean? How the hell are you going to work? They still do it. Well, we're going to do this. We're going to do that. Well, what about me, sir? Well, we're not worried about you right now. What the hell they going to when they want some good shrimp? They're going to go buy farm shrimp. People will tell, "Oh, yes, they'll deal with your shrimp." [inaudible] on the truck. It's been proven out here only about your (Captain Joe's?) and was sitting on the window, Georgia wild shrimp. I went in there and she want a shrimp. We ordered it. I put one on my mouth, poof, I spit it out. I told them, "Ma'am, let me tell you something. Your shrimp is not no Georgia." She said, "What makes you think such a connoisseur?" I said, "Fifty goddamn years of catching shrimp. Definitely not Georgia wild shrimp, I promise you." Then she gave me and my lady the steak in the house. Everything we wanted for free so tell a damn lie. They stuck it on the window. They were serving Georgia wild shrimp. No, you're not. But they sell them for that. When they got no shrimp in that business, they going to sell any-damn-thing to get their hands on. I'm telling you. You all consumer, you all are no different. Some of you like the shrimp. (How is it that you just wait for another county to kill something that you can in United States?)? Everything you get is

from another county. China, you name it. I mean it in some, you've had America on the backseat. "Thank you for helping us out." (All we worry about is killing?) from America. Damn [inaudible] somewhere. Tell you people, all you got to do is come down here and force it. How many people you going to kill? You're going to eat, aren't you? You're going to eat. I don't care who you all got better to do, you're going to eat your goddamn shrimp. They look like shrimp. Look, hell, I don't know where they come from. Hell, they taste all right. Definitely know about shrimp. (I'll add a bunch of seasoning on bread, oh, yes, put a shrimp in it?). [inaudible]. It isn't hard to. There's something going on over there, then we go. But the fishing industry here is different. In the last twenty years, business [inaudible] got lost. It's all over when somebody tell them how to fish. (I'll make fishing with an attitude?). [inaudible]. You come down in a boat, you can't go fishing today. We come up with a brand-new idea. But damn, no fishermen in the damn fishing association, and you want to make laws. You talk to us all about, well, this thing would help fishing. No, hell, they won't. We went to college. We know everything about the ocean and everything. We know what goes on there. But you have not never been there. Go do something before you come tell a man what to do when something wrong in there. That'd be like me going to goddamn college, where you all girls from, I'm the damn professor that day. I'm going to teach you all shrimping. What the hell would you teach? Shrimping. [inaudible]. Yes. But everybody else can come make laws for us. Now, when my grandfather and my daddy start fishing about in 1890, [inaudible] 2010 or fifteen [inaudible]. They were surviving, taking care of their family. Now, they don't give a damn about that. Why the world living on food stamp, welfare, twenty-five, thirty-year-old men? Simple, we do not work. Too easy for the government to feed you. Too easy. But then it won't kill everything that built this county, you know what I mean? What in the hell? What are you going to do? That's your backbone. That's where you all started from. Why you don't say [inaudible]. You might have to go by and [inaudible] Fiji. But they don't see that way about Georgia fishermen. Really nowhere. North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, they don't give a (fat baby's ass?), you know what I mean? They can buy shit from Mexico or wherever ready in the phone. What are they eating? Shrimp industry nowadays said we go here. (We were raising chicken when we were young?). It was six months old before you eat them, not six weeks. (Dope them, eat them?). Same with that shrimping farm. Dope them, feed them, ship them out every six months, you know what I mean? They'll feed them all kind of steroids or something else [inaudible] Most change come from the ocean, no dope or nothing else. [inaudible]. Don't care what was out. Too easy to live in the fast way. That's what happened to the damn sea. They'll say, "What do you want to do?" I know you buy shrimp from a man for two, \$3, and nobody sell them for ten or twelve. You go home, and there is not going to be [inaudible]. I wrote you a check today. They worked ten days and made \$500 [inaudible]. Somebody made fifteen thousand for doing nothing. They didn't buy no fuel. They didn't buy no nets. They didn't do a damn thing. I had a \$5,000 light bill this month. Okay. I put two thousand gallons of fuel on my boat at two fifty. That's \$5,000. That's in a week. You do that four times that week, I got, what, \$20,000 in fuel. They got \$5,000 light bill. I get \$4 for my shrimp. They get ten, twelve for their shrimp. They caught some shrimp and go cash it. Not one dime. The older fishermen (can't see that?). We're not going to survive. My dad told me, when I was a boy young, he said, "Son, they would be a day [inaudible] when you're older, you won't see a shrimp boat there. You don't fish out." What are you seeing? What the hell are you seeing? The boats are gone. [inaudible]. I want nothing but shrimp boats, fish out when I was young. I was born in 1952. My dad is born 1895. That's a long damn time at least you'd be looking at it. He told me back then in the shrimp business,

"Son, there won't be no shrimp boat, no fish out when you get older." What a damn thing. Old people crazy as hell. You don't tell them that you're stupid, but not listening. They read a book. Man, no goddamn book. He going to tell you what you want to hear. Women and men in a bar, "Oh, man. She didn't let her go out. Damn. Well, you don't tell Mitch. All we got to do tell her what she wants to hear." You don't want fifty minutes, then you don't talk what she talking. I want to hear you talking. She telling what she wants to hear. Guarantee, you take her home with you or go out on a date with her. I promise you. I already [inaudible] one time. She's like this business right here. They don't tell us what we want to hear. They tell us what in the goddamn hell we going to do and don't know nothing about our business. Nothing at all, but we do about the laws. It's going to [inaudible], buddy. It is not no going back. Always going to be better next year. How in the hell it's going to get better? You're catching less shrimp every year. Back in the day, my dad was on [inaudible]. All you can catch for fishing [inaudible] that day [inaudible]. My dad told, "Son, [inaudible] 30 cents for no shrimp." My dad won't go home like that until your boat show [inaudible]. He had fourteen young. Why would he go down and push in front boat when you got all the young to your house? He was a man. He shook his hand. Tell him, "Well, (Captain Frank?) is like this. When we come back, it'd better be like that. Nowadays, they give you what they want you to have. What in the hell you going to do with them? You can't push them overboard nowadays. Daddy had a \$300 fuel bill, not five thousand. He can afford [inaudible] all the fishermen. He said, "In ten years, you don't see no boats here." Ten years. If it stays like it is right now, we're dead. [inaudible] with a bunch of, "Well, that's what shrimp raised." Well, you're probably right. They did raise them there. But how in the hell they're going to raise it in a jungle? Back in the day, when the boat used to drag and I kept it clean like garden. He going to plant you a garden and don't ever go buying weed at some men. You don't get no beans. You don't get nothing. We going to starve you to death. They'll say, "Where's the food or meal?" (They float whatever goddamn they float and closed the fruit meal down?), if that's the case. Close that son of a bitch down and you closed us down. Big money and we'll stop that. (They make you fly with a bullshit like we all?). Back in the day, [inaudible 00:18:18] to go get some shrimp. Not no more. (If I really ask all?) the money that fishing was spent right here, we don't just buy. They'll tell you, buy gas. You buy fuel. Oh, that come [inaudible]. Why the hell they have not looking at that? I own a truck. On the road, you'd buy couple two, three hundred gallons of fuel to fill this tank up. What about two, three, four, five, ten thousand gallons of fuel one time. I'll refuel. I [inaudible]. Go to the store, make some money. Do about four, \$500 from groceries to make a trip with you. [inaudible]. Oh, hell, they'll get to the bullshit. You better count what fishing has spent in this town, especially with all the boats in here. It may look no more boats we got right now. [inaudible]. Ask them, "Who puts the money in that place?" Fishermen. [inaudible], fishermen spent whole hell of a lot more money up here trying to keep them boats with power so they can go in the ocean. You get it because you're young like it's your kingdom, something bright. But they look at it. It would push the fishermen out. The hell with us. We can do other things other than with the fishing industry. We can do whatever you want to. I'm going to survive. I won't give a damn if I had to [inaudible] and die forward, you know what I mean? I'm going to survive too.

NH: So, just to ask you, you just had mentioned that in the 1890s that is when you started to fishing industry.

BM: Yes.

NH: Did dad influence your decision to become a fisherman?

BM: Oh, yes. It was in my blood. My daddy used to say (shark?) saltwater. [inaudible] You don't get to decide. No, we're going to be a fisherman the day we're born. Every one of us, even my sisters. I have six brother – or five brothers and eight sisters. Five of them sister were just good at fishing as the boys was. Yes.

Ahmauri Williams-Alford: So, what were some of the best experiences and memories you have growing up and fishing with your father?

BM: Well, when we were catching shrimp, making money, you know what I mean? Back them days, we didn't have no small boats. We brought them hell. Make one or two drag [inaudible]. Hell, you have fifty, sixty boats around it. [inaudible] Hell, they weren't worried about being in the ocean. Every time they go fishing, makes them paycheck real quick. He's everyday fishing. Hell, I enjoy fishing. Hell, I even invited my first wife. Hell, [inaudible] buy one, you know what I mean? Now, I drive what I can [inaudible] and go back. I don't go buy no twenty, \$30,000 automobile. Keep my house up, groceries, if I can. My wife worked every day. Right now, I am [inaudible]. (I am not carrying any dollar on, not the first wife?). Back in the day, even in the winter time, the south was open. They would put carb nets on. Go get crabs. We don't do that no more. Hell, we get started at, "Go get your [inaudible]." Who in the hell going to hire somebody sixty-five-year-old who doesn't work somewhere? Go be at Walmart. "Hey, welcome to Walmart. Get your shit and get out." I don't want to work there. Let me work. I don't want your handout. All that horseshit government money. (Get your damn laughing at me and go to work?). That might make a man out of them and not no bum. [inaudible] to be a bum, I guess, or [inaudible]. But it isn't no good times. (All the bullshit is nothing like it when you're a kid?). No. That's all.

AA: Can you tell us about some of those good times?

BM: Yes. We always wait on my old man to go fishing. You know you're going to make a fat check anytime you wanted to. Hell, [inaudible]. Now, I got three cars. The one I drive here, forty-five, you're lucky to get here. If you got a big *Fraser* boat or half a million-dollar boat, travel around, hell, yes, you can still go to make money from that. They had to do it, you know what I mean? It's really all the big money they make. They pay out. So, the income, he had much more than me. They've turned it on money, but it isn't nothing that you keep [inaudible]. Hell, it isn't no good time. In the old day, if we did catch a bunch of shrimps then we made a few dollars, but life didn't cost you that much. Nowadays, shit. If you don't make 7-, \$80,000 a year [inaudible], you aren't shit. How you going to do it now? There's no way.

NH: So, during your good old times, good old days, can you just let us know how your day used to look like? Like when you went...

AA: What was like your day-to-day routine?

NH: Yes, day-to-day routine. When you wake up, what time would you start? When you can...

BM: In the old days?

NH: Yes.

BM: It was like old good day from (cane to cane?).

NH: Can you tell us what...

BM: (Cane Z to cane Z?).

NH: What does that mean?

AA: Cannot see?

BM: No. That means we work all damn day. There's no sitting around or shit. The old man didn't play. Yes. I mean, it was all work, but you were making a living. You can live a good if you wanted to. You're going to waste your money or you [inaudible]. But it was hard to make a living. [inaudible], we go anywhere to make a fat check. If you want to go to south end, north end, wherever you want to ride. Hell, put [inaudible], you better get shrimp. [inaudible]. Everybody says, "Well, the south has not got shit to do with it." Yes, hell, it did. Since they closed it, shrimping has gone to hell right now. All up in [inaudible], you don't catch shrimp like they used to up there. If you do it in south, [inaudible], you know what I mean? Then when you [inaudible], hell, you can't work in there. I am not saying we don't go by laws. I'm not saying that. Let fishermen make the law that know something about fishing. There are a whole retired fishermen. Put them up there to begin all the talk and make laws, you know what I mean? (It gets hard to me?). Someone will come, what they say goes [inaudible] at any time. They got a good idea like we do. Well, if we do work together, don't say, "[inaudible] fishing. You must have done some business and educated. You all know nothing about fishing." [inaudible] fishing. Leave us the hell alone, you know what I mean? [inaudible] now. We got boundaries. They going to come at you, and you say, "Man, I'm legal." No, you aren't. Write that ticket, take your shrimp. You take an airplane, fly over Georgia by air speed. [inaudible]. We got a goddamn \$5,000 radar. They're going to say, "But you're legal." They fly an airplane, [inaudible] speed. You're 275. Write that ticket, take everything you got on the boat. That's bullshit. You're a liar. When the law comes to you [inaudible], you're a liar no matter what. You're going to get a ticket. Back in the old days, it's all about the shrimp. The side of the boat ship that had side limit on, they get so small, they shut it down. What did they do? (Do away with it with dealing shrimp?). Now, they're hauling about smaller shrimp. Why did you leave that long to [inaudible]? That was the side limit. That's was hollering about now is what it comes to down. The [inaudible] then there it is. It shown itself, you know what I mean? Who knows [inaudible].

NH: So, besides the good paychecks, what do you think was the most rewarding? What was the most rewarding thing about fishing or shrimping?

BM: Right here?

NH: Yes.

BM: Makes you feel good. You go to the ocean, it does make [inaudible] anywhere. They can put me in [inaudible] and they'll give me a ready shrimp boat and let me go fishing because that is what I love to do. I don't want no carpenter job. I don't want to be no mechanic. I want to be a fisherman. I'm going to die fisherman. [inaudible] steering wheel. Boss coming off the deck and see me, I'd be dead at a steering wheel. That's where I want to go. I don't want to go no car wreck or not nada. I will be in the ocean.

NH: Have you taken any of your grandkids?

BM: Huh?

NH: Have you taken any of your grandkids out into...

BM: Oh, yes.

NH: Do they love it?

BM: Oh, they fishing. I have two of them who works in there [inaudible]. [inaudible] boats and they're gone for thirty days. I got a twenty-year-old daughter. When she was five-year-old, she went with [inaudible] and they go fifteen days. She still likes them. She did have new grandbaby. He's four months old. He's going to be a fisherman. [laughter] Yes, when he's old enough, he'll go shrimping anyway, just one time. Yes.

NH: So, it is something that they also love because you have taught them about it.

BM: It's in our blood, you know what I mean? [inaudible]. Most of them was born and raised fishing here. Then you get some younger blood, they got some money. What their mom and dad does, they buy them boats and they'll be in the business. Four or five, ten years, they'll get bored out. (Hell with it?). They'll sell the boat and go do something else. Their granddaddy and their daddy were fishermen. Most of them, [inaudible], they die fishing. [inaudible] your daddy was fishing a long time, way back twenty years and shit like that. So, (Andy?), he's the same way. When you're born in, it's different than you just going to walk in, you know what I mean?

NH: Out of your whole group of siblings, how many did actually go into the fishing industry?

BM: Well, I got three grandsons. They all do it. While the youngest, [inaudible] fourteen, but already want to do it in a ship. But all my nephews and cousins are fishermen. That boat I'm fishing on, my nephew owns it. Hell, my whole family still does it. About 90 percent [inaudible] McDowell. All my nephews, they're fishermen. Like I said, [inaudible] born and your raised.

NH: That is nice. You had touched a bit on about the whole history of fishing. But a person like me from being out of the country, what would you want me to know about the fishing

industry and the fishing community? What would you want me to know?

BM: (Well, like what movie and TV, you see a fisherman that will just be back with most time as fisherman?). Taking care of the whole area. Okay. So, they got two hundred people in the area. So, they walk up and say, "Look, we'll catch you some fishes in the ocean. I'll catch you a fish or drag in a net, set a net. We're going to shoot [inaudible] and leave you right where you at." What would that movie do? I'll start that one to get the Bible, [inaudible] are fishermen. (All they see the side of a fisherman?). That's how they [inaudible]. I want the government or anybody write their own film about it or just put my face. What gives you that right? What gives me that right? Nothing. (Just going to try to live in a day with our faces in the ocean?). You can go to Africa. You can go to China. You can go where you want to go. (Go to fish at Atlantic?). It's right there and I was born in them. What gives anybody a right to give a damn what you wanted? (You better change up?). That's what I'll say to them. If one man got that right or [inaudible], he going to put that right. I don't believe in American way. I believe in America, but I don't believe in the way. No somebody got no right to own nobody. They still own people today. You're going to do it their way or you're just going to start [inaudible]. People will say what they want to, you know what I mean? That's not what I believe, not my [inaudible], but what gives you a right to just say, "Hey, there isn't going to be no more fishing ever. We don't want it here." When, like I said, all the boats are here if we wanted to [inaudible]. [inaudible] boats, working on boats, nothing to fish out there. [inaudible]. I see why they leave. If you could talk [inaudible]. It isn't that long, but it seemed that way. [inaudible]. People with money right next door, they'll come buy. Already [inaudible] or they're going to push you up [inaudible] for sailboats towards you. Nobody has not got that right. Hell, with the business, we can't do it without them. Well, you can, but isn't going to eat trout. You're going to eat some [inaudible]. They don't care nothing about helping us. They'll go, "Hey, who helped the fishermen? They're giving out [inaudible]. They're giving out this." [inaudible] download, fill out paper like this damn high. Tell me, "Well, you don't qualify." I am not making no money like the resto. (My boot is tied to your door like he is?). Well, I am not a good liar than he was. I didn't tell a bunch of shit on that paper and told it like it was. Better than to write a bunch of damn lies. People got a million dollar. I didn't get one dime, but I have a bunch of paperwork. I am not nothing, but a fisherman here. (Because I got to tell you, you girls are young right now?). You'll come back here in ten years. Come back [inaudible] fish at home be gone and no boats. Fishing here, they got to come [inaudible] up in my head, don't be staying right here.

NH: So, I have been hearing a lot about the blessing of the fleet. Can you tell me more about that? Because I do not know anything.

BM: (Well, I used to be a big team?). Head to head, barefoot all down the river, blessing the fleet out to be staying around here. They're still trying to keep theirs alive. It isn't nothing like it was. (The city doesn't know around are all posted and appropriated for fishing, shrimp boats or any kind of fishing boat?). They down right took it, caught a [inaudible] with nothing but different tools. Well, the tools don't matter [inaudible] two shrimp boats. [inaudible] shrimp boats [inaudible]. The blessing of the fleet, oh, hell, they don't do it right down there. [inaudible]. But everybody down there picks up [inaudible]. Hell, before [inaudible], three or four days, they'll let you know. (Everybody is going to stand out there with hot dogs and people

cook and share?). Hell, they were big time. They don't do it no more. I don't really worry about you coming. (Give a Thai flags on the boat, shit is over with in thirty minutes in?). Before [inaudible], Friday, Saturday, and Sunday [inaudible]. It has something to do with the shrimp boat. [inaudible] nothing. It isn't nothing, but drunk and dope head on boat. [inaudible]. Hell, he drunk. I am not. I'm trying to keep him going to jail. [inaudible]. You worry about [inaudible] and that'll make you become a drunk. I still come down to the damn blessing, (just to account what folks stand for here?).

NH: Do you bring your grandkids with you?

BM: Yes. They come get me, "Come on, papa. Let's go get on the boat." They're ready. They're been [inaudible]. They're all excited about it. I remember going home. I just don't care about everybody says. [inaudible].

AA: What do you hope to see within the next generation of the fishing industry?

BM: Actually, it isn't much. I'm just going to go ride mine out. I want to go where I want to go. That's all I'm in this business. I am not got nothing else to do. I'm going to say, it's usually a hell of a boom in that industry. But when you sat here, you've been here for over fifty years, they want you to [inaudible] like somebody with cancer. That's what my business turned to. Everybody got fat pocket with a fish now. They're not fishing [inaudible], you know what I mean? You're fishing. Don't say you don't when you see everybody else with a million dollars and you show them. They 'll get rough, give you attitude. They'll say, "I'll wake in the morning, fine. If I don't, don't work."

NH: Do you think the next generation can change what is happening now, though? Do you believe they can do some changes and maybe...

BM: Oh, no. No. You ever seen a rich man give up something? If you won the lotto and you have \$300 million, you won the lotto. How many folks do you think the next morning would be scratching at your ass, trying to get something? 99 percent of them have [inaudible], but they won't actually [inaudible]. You won't never see a rich man satisfied. Never. Hell, they [inaudible]. With this situation right now, I don't care what kind of law they come up with now. They will never bring this back. Oh, you wish. This shit had done too far gone. There's nothing much change, eat over cash. Their whole operation didn't work. (Don't say there's going to be some change?). [inaudible] from it. She doesn't want you to make your way or [inaudible] for about ten years. She didn't help. Her old man owed about \$5 million, and she didn't help. They have not said nothing. [inaudible]. They didn't say nothing here. All in good time, people making a living, family, very young, you can forget it. No law is going to change nothing about this. Nothing that they'll go come up with. They're going to come up with something that's going to keep doing their way. We don't know nothing about the business, how the hell you going to make a law to help? I am not no way falling for it. [inaudible]. If I had that power, I'm going to change something wrong with it. But I wasn't [inaudible]. You all can't tell me what we changed and it makes it better. You all have education, [inaudible] your mom and dad, [inaudible]. You all can't tell me. [inaudible]. I'm going to do it my way. Okay. There you all. You all [inaudible]. She couldn't afford it, you know what I'm saying? Same way. I've got to

listen to you all. They ought to listen to us if they're going to help shrimping. They're not interested in that. Ten years you won't see a boat here. [inaudible] come back in ten years. [inaudible]. You'll say, "Old man, you were right." Just give me that. Watch and you'll see the American way. Bullshit. Treat you like a mushroom. [inaudible]. Lawmakers, no. It isn't going to work.

NH: Do you have any message for any young fishermen out there? Is there something that you would like young fishermen to really know like in a...

BM: Get their ass on and get a job. That's what they better do. I tell my grandson that every time. "Papa, I like to fish." I do too, son. What you going to do now when you aren't working? What you going to do? Go home to you mom and daddy and let them pity? [inaudible]. How are you going to feed them, boy? "I don't know, father. I'm going to try find me a job somewhere." Well, get your ass off. (Being they're stupid and young?), they don't like bill, have a car, [inaudible 00:44:03]. [inaudible] with no goddamn 7-, \$8 an hour job. How you going to go make a living at that? You can survive.

NH: So, if this issue was not happening right now, would you encourage him to go into fishing or would you...

BM: Oh, I will. You'd still make a hell of a living fishing. We save everything, but our family. That was [inaudible] come up with a [inaudible]. We were fishing [inaudible]. We caught goddamn trouts. My daddy would catch them. My granddaddy would catch them. [inaudible] boat [inaudible]. We done that the whole time before they ever come up with a [inaudible]. [inaudible] to keep trying to push us out. They'll say, "Well, you don't lose no shrimp." You got a goddamn hole in your net that I can walk in. Not crawl, like walk [inaudible]. I caught me shrimp [inaudible]. But the government won't let us [inaudible] until it's raining. You aren't losing none of your cash. Okay. I personally believe that. My daddy is [inaudible]. You aren't losing no shrimp. [inaudible]. He won't make a living. He won't feed us. The government say, "Well, [inaudible]." The what? [inaudible], me being stupid? No, no. This business is [inaudible]. You won't know what will come bite you, I promise you. [inaudible] talking about going fishing, (that's how much stupid?). He better go to college and get him a job somewhere or go change a tire [inaudible]. That's a better living. [inaudible] check for two weeks. This business right now, no. [inaudible] and not [inaudible]. You got to go. But young man, you going to try [inaudible]. No, this business is never going back. There's no way.

NH: This one question that I just want to ask. I had forgotten to ask earlier. How long have you been out – the longest day that you spent out shore?

BM: Thirty days.

NH: Wow.

BM: Longer than thirty days on the boat.

NH: You were just getting a lot of shrimp?

BM: Oh, yes. Hell, I went to North Carolina in 2000. We caught a lot of shrimp. Eight day, around \$6,800. For eight days, we go to work. Thirty days, I brought home \$9,700. That isn't bad money for thirty days and isn't bad money for eight. You just do shrimp, but [inaudible], you know what I mean? You can't work or some old bullshit always. Goddamn, man, we hungry. So? That's all you get. So? There are hungry people everywhere. Goddamn. (It isn't even called the hungry, we called that to get out of work?) [inaudible] about you. I mean, that's still good money, isn't it? You don't need boats around here, you know what I mean? You make a living. It's about like McDonald's. You figure out the hours you put in and keep making money. On the average right now here you go fishing, don't you say you got \$10,000 or something. You get four, \$5,000 [inaudible]. It's expensive to do cash [inaudible]. Hell, I cannot get down to five thousand. Boat only get half of that. [inaudible] three people on the boat working, you got to spilt that three ways. It's expensive. You got more than the crew and the boat [inaudible]. Then you got to carry that up, motor blew up or something, you got to fix that. What money you going to fix it with? [inaudible], trying to patch it together, you know what I mean? You always have some money to fall back on to fish out. You don't know. Getting that boat fixed so you can go back fishing. We broke. We can't help you. We can't give it all and get your motor fixed so you can go back fishing. We're just hanging out to how much is coming in. Got four, five people working up there, someone needs to make that [inaudible]. If there isn't no money coming, how the hell you paying that kind of money? I didn't know you making that kind of money. [inaudible]. I'm giving you shrimp. [inaudible]. They got a lot of bill, keep the freezer going. We spend more than we ever could. We catch a lot of [inaudible], no way this industry can survive the way it is. No way [inaudible]. I am not [inaudible]. I finished high school. I didn't go to college, but I can [inaudible]. That's what this industry has become now. [inaudible] I mean, you get down to the dock with nothing but shrimp boats. [inaudible], "How you doing, Mr. McDowell?" [inaudible] Nowadays, you go there, [inaudible]. It kept Georgia alive, fishing there. The whole day [inaudible] fishing. I don't want to do this. (Let's do away with it?). [inaudible] shrimp boats they were on. [inaudible] Same old shit. Treat it the same way, you know what I mean? But you aren't no good. You're a poor man, but we're feeding you. Trying to make a living [inaudible] nothing. We make money, we live good. We don't make no money, we know how to live at that too. (There's no difference?). I mean, that's what all fishermen feel, I think. They don't say that they [inaudible], scared to speak up. That's the way you are. I mean, [inaudible]. Ask them all about shrimp business. [inaudible]. Like I said, when it gets like that, that business isn't coming back. You can believe that. But the good times are going [inaudible] boat and call it a good time. No. There were good times back then [inaudible].

NH: Thank you, Mr. McDowell. That was really informative. I am sure a lot of people out there are going to be really interested in this.

BM: Well, all of them have been down the same road I have. [inaudible] nothing.

NH: I do not know if you have anything else to say to us.

AA: Do you have any questions or inquiries?

NH: Do you have any questions?

BM: [inaudible] good times are gone. It all fell. The shrimping industry was a damn wonderful thing to do. I would say back my days, when I get on the boat, "Go ahead and get your job on the boat, son. You make some damn money." That's what we're doing, we make money. I wish I had the money I pissed the ground. Turning them beer cans over, [inaudible]. About twenty-three, I drank some beer and whiskey in the (night bar?). [inaudible] anybody wanted to party, okay. That's the deal. So, when I turned twenty-five years old, all that shit was behind me and I worked [inaudible]. I divorced my first wife. Have a good (living?), you know what I mean? [inaudible]. It's good life for me. I wouldn't take back nothing. If I had a chance to change my life, gentlemen, I wouldn't change a damn thing because I know I'll make a mistake. A whole lot worse destined to happen to me, you know what I mean? If I ever come back and change anything, you [inaudible] I'll make the wrong choice. [inaudible] If I had changed that, I might have died twenty-five or forty-five. I wouldn't change nothing. I would change nothing about the shrimping right now. [inaudible] make a living. That's all they have to do. They can have their damn laws. [inaudible]. I made a living with myself, I have not never asked something else. But it isn't going to be that way. We would not be that way.

AA: Thank you again so much. We really appreciate it.

BM: No, you're welcome. I mean, for me telling a young person, go shrimping now, no, I would not tell you. But the old time, [inaudible] work with them. We're down this wreck together. We eat shrimp. We find something to eat. That's all this business has turned to. It's been a good one, though.

NH: Thank you.

BM: You got to have down bad times to know what good times is. All right. Young ladies, you all have a wonderful day.

NH: Thank you.

AA: Thank you.

[end of transcript]