

Wild Caught
Vickie Davis Oral History
Date of Interview: Unknown
Location: Sneads Ferry, North Carolina
Length of Interview: 08:20
Interviewer: MB – Matthew Barr
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: Okay. Vickie, can you talk a little bit about the whole thing here? We filmed that we went out filming with Billy.

Vickie Davis: Billy Davis. Yes. Their grandfather actually was the one who started I guess the whole chain of everything. My husband's father had three boys. All three boys – and they have a girl too. She's married to a fisherman as well. The three boys have picked it up from their father, I guess. They've been doing it ever since they were in high school. They go out shrimping pretty much every day. That's their livelihood, always has been.

MB: Did you grow up around here?

VD: I did. I grew up in Sneads Ferry. My family is not originally from here. But I have lived here my whole life. I've lived here for twenty-four years. So, I've known his family all my life. My grandparents are definitely – were in the fishing industry a long time ago.

MB: So, what was it like growing up in this town?

VD: It was nice. It was a pretty small, quiet town. Wouldn't want to live anywhere else in the world. I really like it here. It's small and quiet. That's good. That's the best positive thing, I guess, about it.

MB: Are you involved yourself? We just filmed you working here.

VD: Yes. I'm actually a dental hygienist, part-time. Then I work down here. I help my husband on the days that I'm not cleaning teeth. I just do that about two days a week. We have a 20-month-old daughter. So, she comes down here with us a lot on the weekends. So, I help him out as much as I can. We sometimes do go out shrimping. But mostly him and I stay here now and actually sell the shrimp and the fish.

MB: So, this is what they call a fish house.

VD: Yes. This is what we call a fish house.

MB: Can you describe what a fish house is?

VD: [laughter] It's where we pack the seafood that the boats bring to the dock. We pack the seafood here. We have wholesalers that come here and buy the seafood from us. We also do a lot of retail, just people wanting a few pounds here and there of shrimp, just to eat. We're mostly dealing shrimp. We do save the fish off of our boats, the flounder and sometimes squid. But that's, for the most part, all that we do, just mostly shrimping.

MB: Tell us about the season when shrimping – right here in July.

VD: Right. Usually, shrimping starts anywhere around April. You can look for it in April. Although this year, it started a little bit late, more like it was after June. Anywhere between April. Most of the time, they shrimp right through Thanksgiving. Although last year, they

shrimped up until Christmas. That's pretty much the end of it. Last year, it was around Christmastime. But usually, it's Thanksgiving. They probably won't be going anymore after Thanksgiving. Last year, the season started late, so it ended late.

MB: I see. So, after the end of the season and before the next season –

VD: Right.

MB: – what kind of activities do you have?

VD: Well, in the past five years or so, we've had so many hurricanes that have damaged all of our docks. So, they spend the rest of the year repairing the docks. This year, they built a new shrimp boat. So, they do things like that, getting ready for the next year. Then we at the fish house, we paint the fish house and redo the floors and redo the inside of the icehouse, things like that, getting ready. It takes us those few months to get ready.

MB: So, this is a real family thing.

VD: Yes, it is. Usually, all of our children are here. We have lots of children. Jody's brothers have three children each. We have one child. His sister has two children. It's definitely a family thing. Everybody here, all of our boats are family. That's the best part. You can spend time with your family here. You don't really have to leave your family. It's not like going to a job, I guess, at a desk, not like a desk job. It's definitely a family affair. Most of the time, the kids will go out shrimping. Every day probably, every other day at least, somebody's bringing their child back with them where they had been shrimping the morning before.

MB: That's nice.

VD: Yes.

MB: Is Sneads Ferry a close-knit community?

VD: I would say so. Yes, sir, I think so. The population is not very big. Like I said, it's very small. It's mostly a fishing community. There are other fish houses in Sneads Ferry. So, I will definitely say that it's a pretty close-knit community.

MB: Will the next generation of the Davis family be going into this?

VD: We hope so. If the FDA and all those, if they allow us then we will. They've put so many restrictions on it just in the past, probably, five or ten years. There are so many restrictions on it. It makes it difficult for us to go out there and make a living. If that will hold up, then we will, if they don't ban it by then.

MB: Yes. Every person we talk to has mentioned this.

VD: Yes. I am not really sure by saying this. Don't quote me on this. But I believe that they

don't allow it in Florida anymore. Parts of Florida, they don't allow shrimping anymore. So, we're probably next.

MB: Well, I hope it doesn't happen.

VD: I hope it doesn't happen because I don't know what all those people would eat in those restaurants. Half the menu of most restaurants are fish and shrimp. So, I don't know what they would eat if they banned it. I don't know where they think it comes from, because it comes from right here.

MB: Plus, obviously, it's a livelihood for many people.

VD: Oh, most everyone in Sneads Ferry, I would say, other than people that have come here to retire. Most of the families in Sneads Ferry have someone in their family that's involved in it. My parents didn't do it, but my grandparents did, on my father's side. Both his grandparents, both of the Davis grandparents, both of them have done it, both of their grandparents and then their parents as well. So, it definitely has, from generation to generation, most everyone in Sneads Ferry, like I said, has someone in their family that is in – it affects their lives daily.

MB: It's more like a way of life than a job.

VD: It is. It definitely is a way of life. It is. It's a great way of life. We enjoy it. We really do enjoy the seafood industry. We do.

MB: Because people work long hours too.

VD: They do. They do work long hours when they go shrimping. I guess, as you know, because you had to get up when you went with them, they leave at 3:00 a.m. Sometimes in the fall, they're weighing up down here at 10:30 p.m. Our boats usually come in every day, here. They usually don't stay the night out in the ocean unless it's too rough where they can't get back in the inlet. But for the most part, they'll come in every day. Sometimes they get up at 3:00 a.m. and get back here, like I said, in the fall, 11:00 p.m. and turn right around and do that four hours later again. Some of our bigger boats, if it's really rough, they have to leave when the tide will allow them to go out of the inlet. He has to leave at midnight just so that he can get out with the tide. He has to anchor up out there until morning. So, he'll leave at midnight and come in at 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 p.m. So, it definitely is long hours, very hard workers.

MB: Unusually hard.

VD: Yes, very unusually hard. Like I said, when they're not shrimping, they're building boats or something. My father-in-law, he usually leaves out with the sun and definitely comes in when the sun goes down, sometimes after.

MB: Six days a week.

VD: Sometimes seven days a week. In the fall, we normally go shrimping on Sundays. Right

now, this time of year, when they're catching 500, 600 pounds, we will rest on Sundays. But when the fall shrimping gets here, you've got to go when it's good. They will usually be here, seven days a week up until Thanksgiving.

MB: Well, okay. Vicki, thanks very much.

VD: Thank you. You're welcome.

MB: Okay. All right.

[end of transcript]