

Wild Caught  
Jeremy Edens Oral History  
Date of Interview: September 1, 2003  
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Length of Interview: 14:11  
Interviewer: MB – Matthew Barr  
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: Hi, John. I mean, you know, I've known you for almost five years now. I've been doing the documentary about Sneads Ferry and all of that. It was great to go out with you and (Chops?) about three years ago out from the Deep Sea Vision. Tell me how this season's been so far for you.

John Edens: It's been pretty well. We caught a few fish, had a slow time there for a little while. But it's been, all in all, a good spring, a good summer.

MB: Well, for some of the people that don't like this river, it seems like it's been a really terrible year.

JE: It's been a very terrible year. It's – I don't know that many shrimps start with. What we did have was small. So, that and imports sort of put a damper on things.

MB: From what I've been hearing, some boats are for sale I mean, there are a whole lot of things going on at same time, you know, besides the import. Well, what else is happening to make it tough for like the shrimpers?

JE: Oh, man [laughter]. Well, fuel prices [laughter]. Shoot, we put – we paid like \$1.95 a gallon for it. You get \$1.95 a gallon. You have to pay that for the fuel. Then you don't get but \$1 pound for your shrimp. It's just like you're doing and going in the hole. You know, you can't afford to do it. That's a big thing.

MB: So, it's been the fuel and the imports too, right?

JE: Yes. Well, they cut the price. I mean, if they can get them for half the price and make double the profit, I mean [laughter], of course they're going to do it.

MB: Well, now, but for you, you've been a shrimper yourself.

JE: Oh, yes.

MB: You've done everything, right?

JE: Yes, shrimp, fish, clam, oyster, scallop, I mean, a lot of net fishing, I guess about anything you can do on the water to make a living.

MB: Well, now, one thing since we last really did our main interview, you're with son, Rob, now.

JE: Yes.

MB: Talk about how – I mean –

JE: Yes. Well –

MB: You were leery about that, weren't you?

JE: [laughter] still am. I mean, he – I gave him his own, you know, chance. I mean, he can do what he wants to do. But I guess he's going to fish for a living [laughter].

MB: Well, what's it like working with your son?

JE: Oh, man, it's all right. You know, we have a good time. We get out there [inaudible] catch fish. I mean, it's a lot easier for me having him living here. I don't have to worry about going and get my mates up or something, you know. It's easier for him to just – knock on his door. "Get up [laughter]."

MB: So, how long do you typically go out for? What are you fishing for?

JE: We snapper, grouper fish. We usually do 3, 4 days. Usually at the end of the – or the beginning of the fourth day, we're putting anchor on the boat and coming home. You know, it's been so hot. Ice doesn't hold that well. So, we're a small boat. We really don't carry that much. So, we – about three or four days is our limit.

MB: So, how big a boat are you working on now?

JE: It's a 32-foot Crusader. It's pretty nice. It's a comfortable boat. It's not – no Titanic by any means, but it's comfortable.

MB: Well, the last time when I went out with you, it was like you were working with Chops.

JE: Yes.

MB: Partnerships kind of come and go in this, right?

JE: Oh, yes. Shoot, that's all the time, just about. It's hard to find a good crew and keep a good crew, I mean, you know, someone who knows what to do. You don't have to sit there and explain to them every time you do something, you know, "Do it this way." I mean, it's – it makes it nice, keeping the same crew, but it's pretty tough to get a good crew and keep them.

MB: Chops was a great crew, right?

JE: Oh, yes. Chops is good. He learned pretty quick.

MB: He's on his own now, right?

JE: Yes, he – well, he fished this whole spring. We fished right around each other, you know, offer –

MB: So, you realize the Grandmaster kind of taught him a lot of stuff, right?

JE: Well, yes, I guess I learned him a little bit [laughter].

MB: All right. Well, let's kind of switch back. You know, you grew up in this town. You raised your family here. What about what's going on now with all this crazy real estate like we were talking about at dinner?

JE: Well, that's – I mean this is a lot of money for a lot of people, but [laughter] I don't like it. I mean, I just [inaudible] it stays a small town, instead of all this growth, you know what I mean? You've got so many people. It's just – I don't know. I'm more of a small-town guy. I don't like –

MB: What do you think is going to happen to Sneads Ferry? What's going to happen here? Well, what it's going to do is it's going to become a tourist town just like Myrtle Beach or any – you know, Atlantic Beach, any of the other popular beaches. It's just going to be like a resort.

MB: What's that going to do with the fishing town aspect?

JE: Well, it's not going to be good for it. As you know, more population means more pollution. So, it can't be good for, you know, any of the fishing industry. Well, you've got so much pavement. I mean, you know, you don't have grass. You've got pavement. And it's just – everything runs right off it and runs right in the river. It isn't like the woods or, you know, grass; it filters the stuff maybe.

MB: Right. Or the runoff goes right in there.

JE: Yeah.

MB: You've just got to look at me basically. What's amazing to me is like all these people getting – like the fish house being for sale. I mean, what about all that?

JE: I knew it was coming eventually. I mean, you can't stop progress [laughter].

MB: If that's progress, yes.

JE: [laughter] If that's progress. I don't know what to say about it. All I can say is I don't like it [laughter].

MB: I mean, last time I was here, we didn't do this. You talked about maybe moving to some other town or –

JE: It's always a possibility, find somewhere not as crowded [laughter] along the shore, if there is such a place.

MB: That's a good point. It seems like all the vultures suddenly descended on, "Oh, what about this place? It's pretty wide open.

JE: I'm telling you this is – well, it's – I can remember when I knew everybody in Sneads Ferry.

Now, I don't know half the people. I mean, that isn't a lie.

MB: So, that sense of community that I'm really trying to show in the film about I'll be helping all of you here, you know, hot dog, you know, when something bad happens –

JE: Yes.

MB: – a tragedy and how the community really would rally around [inaudible].

JE: Yes, pull right together.

MB: That's still there, isn't it?

JE: Oh, yes. It's -- I guess that's always going to be there. You know, you've got a certain set of people, I guess, until they die off [laughter]. I don't know, you know.

MB: But do you think there's a young generation like your son Rob, who are becoming fishermen or are fishermen, I mean, to keep this thing going? Do you think?

JE: Yes, there's always going to be somebody who wants to keep it going, you know. I mean, if you love fishing, you'll do it. I mean, there's a lot of obstacles you have to overcome, but if you just like your job – if you like your job, you'll cut corners and go here and there, whatever you have to do.

MB: Well, now, how about you? You're not going to stop fishing, right?

JE: Not that I know of [laughter], not until they plant me.

MB: So, for you, this is [inaudible] call, almost like.

JE: Oh, yes. Yes. Well, that's what – I would call it a calling [laughter]. It's in my blood. That's probably [inaudible].

MB: Why? Are you also in his blood?

JE: [laughter] Yes.

MB: What do you think about fishing goes way back to being the first job on Earth prime before there were farmers or fishermen?

JE: Oh, yes.

MB: Jesus and the fishermen and all that.

JE: Well, from what I can gather around here, you know, before, I guess, fishing got too popular, they would catch fish that they couldn't sell. They'll take them into the ground, use

them for fertilizer. I mean, they just had to [inaudible] catching the fish, and they'd dump them in the field, disk them under.

MB: Well, another worrisome thing is if, you know, all the taxes rates going up on haul and everything, they can be expensive. The tax rate could go up here for everybody, right? It could be triple or double. It's going to make it tougher particularly on –

JE: It's going to make it real tough. I mean, right now, taxes, they're going up. I mean, they're outrageous, but not like it would if, you know, like (Northops?) would come in here and incorporate it. Then you'd have to pay city, county taxes, plus state taxes. I mean –

MB: Oh, for real.

JE: – they would triple no doubt

MB: Well, you're going to keep fishing all your life.

JE: I'm going to keep fishing until they put me in jail [laughter] or kill me.

MB: You mean that, right?

JE: Very seriously.

MB: Are the sports fishermen still kind of anticommercial?

JE: Well, they're about half and half now. I mean, you're always going to have that group, you know, that think that it's made for nobody but them. Everybody else, you know, [laughter] stay away from it. There's about half of that – I mean, you know, I guess that's true with all people though. I mean, you're always going to have a certain group against you. You're always going to have a certain group with you. Well, around here, there's a lot with us.

MB: There's a group, the Coastal Conservation Association, those guys are pretty anti-fishermen.

JE: Anti.

MB: They tried to pass a law about killing ads.

JE: Yes.

MB: They're all over the country, not just here.

JE: Yes.

MB: Since we last did the interview – just to try to wrap up where things are from then and now, like, your son's now fishing.

JE: Yes. It's been a lot of changes in five years, I guess. It's the next five that worries me [laughter].

MB: Really?

JE: Yes.

MB: Like [inaudible].

JE: Yes. Like all the regulations are always coming up with – it's and it's always costing more money to fish, you know what I mean? It's sort of like, I don't know, just waiting us out or something. It's always – you've always got so much against you that you have to come out of. I mean, it's not just taxes or, you know, land growth or whatever. I mean, there's nothing good for us in it, put it that way.

MB: Like a lobby, you feel like you're being pushed down.

JE: Pushed down.

MB: [inaudible] in Washington, seems, like you know. Working people in particular I'm talking about.

JE: Yes.

MB: Are having a hard time, so. Well, all right. Well, thanks, John. Anything else you want to add?

JE: I can't think of anything.

MB: All right.

JE: I mean, I could sit here and talk all night, but you couldn't use it [laughter].

MB: We have plenty.

[end of transcript]