

Wild Caught
Terrie Huie Oral History
Date of Interview: Unknown
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Length of Interview: 14:18
Interviewer: MB – Matthew Barr
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: How should I call you? Mrs. Huie?

Terry Huie: Terry's fine.

MB: Terry. Your last name is spelled how?

TH: H-U-I-E.

MB: Well, maybe just to get the ball rolling, how did you come to meet your husband? We have just been interviewing him.

TH: Well, about twenty-two years ago, my sister was married to a marine in the Marine Corps, and he was stationed here at Camp Lejeune. I came down to stay with her for about a month, and I met Little Paul. That was history. Here I stay. [laughter]

MB: So, where did you grow up?

TH: New York. Right outside Buffalo, New York.

MB: Oh, that is a cool county. Not near Hamburg by any chance?

TH: It's not far from there. It's not far from there. There's a place called North Tonawanda, right outside Niagara Falls.

MB: I was there for my previous documentary, filming in Hamburg and at the county fair there and went to Niagara Falls. That was pretty exciting, but I do not know about the winters there.

TH: They're very cold, very cold. I don't miss it.

MB: Well, tell me this. What has it been like being the wife of a commercial fisherman? How has that been for you?

TH: It's been good. It's been a good life. Better so in the past than it is now. I mean, as he was telling you, there are so many new laws, new licenses, more expense all the time. They don't keep you up to date. Like, for instance, Core Creek was open last week. They put out a proclamation by Marine Fisheries. But the fish houses, they don't put the proclamations up. A lot of us feel like with all the money that fishermen pay for licenses, the least that they could do is get like a newsletter, stating the closings and the openings of (New Bottom?) to where they can go to work because if the proclamations aren't put up at the various fish houses around here, the fishermen don't know. That's extra money that they could make.

MB: So, the rules or regulations and –

TH: They've got tough over the years. I'd say in the last five years, they've got even tougher. I mean, with the limits on oysters – there's no limits on clams. But with the limits on oysters and stuff, it used to be – I remember him going out, coming, and catching twelve, fifteen bushels of

oysters. Same way with clams, they could go out there, and they used to catch boatloads of clams. A lot of it now isn't as thick as it used to be because the small clams aren't bedded.

MB: Well, talk about your family with Little Paul. Can you talk about your children, your three sons?

TH: Well, we have three. My oldest son is twenty-six or twenty-seven. He just turned twenty-seven. He's a plumber. He works in the river part-time. Usually on his days off, he'll go out there to make some extra money, clamming. Christopher, he just graduated as a paramedic, soon to go onto medical school. He's doing it as a part-time basis. Jason, he just graduated from high school, fixing to go into school for oceanography. He does it on a part-time basis, which I'm very glad that none of them are going to do it for their livelihood. I've always kind of stressed to them that I wanted them to get a college education because they know how hard their dad has worked. He's worked very hard over the years to support the family. Out in the cold, bad weather, and you never know what kind of income you're going to have. Just like when hurricanes, Bertha and Fran, came through, they were out of work. There was trash in the river, trees and everything. They were tearing nets up, left and right, shrimping. Bottom is closed to clamming. They can't clam. I just want it to where my sons – they know they have money coming in. They know they have money in their pocket to pay the bills and feed the family and buy the kids school clothes. I don't want them to face the rough times that we've faced in the past.

MB: So, part of the challenge of being a commercial fisherman and their families is there are so many things out of your control.

TH: Right. It's basically up to nature and marine fisheries, too, to what they want to close. I mean, if we get an inch of rain, something's going to close. An inch of rain and they totally close everything, so they're out of work. So, when it starts raining or you hear a storm coming up, you're constantly praying, "Oh, please let it stop." Because you know they won't be working.

MB: Why do they have to close because of the rain?

TH: Something to do with too much freshwater pollutes saltwater. I don't have a clue. Years ago, they didn't do that. That's probably been maybe in the last ten years that I remember them ever doing it. They never used to do it because we've been out there. I've gone out clamming with him when I was brave enough, too, to get in that water and got lost in the fog and rainstorms and everything. He'd be out there clamming through a rainstorm. They never closed it.

MB: So, you have been out clamming?

TH: Oh, I used to. I caught a bag of clams before. That's not my thing. [laughter] There's too many things you can step on, like sea urchins. I stepped on a sea urchin one time, and he had to dig it out of my foot. I didn't like that.

MB: So, there are some things –

TH: Oh, there's things out there. They're used to them. But as far as crabs and sea urchins and stuff like that –

MB: What about the crabs?

TH: Oh, they'll bite. They'll get hold of your toe. They'll bite you. [laughter]

MB: They can bite pretty hard.

TH: Yes, they don't let go.

MB: So, it takes a lot of guts and determination to do –

TH: They work very hard for their money. Fishermen are a very hard-working people. They stick close together. They try to help each other out. Just like when he had his heart attack, the whole community. I mean, I've never seen anything like it in my life because where I'm from in New York, you don't hear of people doing that. I mean, the whole town came out. When we came back from the hospital, there were people bringing groceries by the truckload. They raised funds for us and everything. We've never seen anything like it.

MB: Well, that must have made you feel awfully warm.

TH: Yes, it did. It really did. It was fantastic.

MB: So, you really did not want your sons to go into this. Talk a little bit more about that [inaudible].

TH: No. Nobody knows how much longer the commercial fishermen are going to be in business. So, I want them basically to have a good career backing. I want them to have something that they can depend on and that they know how much money they have coming in and how they can support their families. So, they don't have to worry about what the weather is going to do or when is the next hurricane coming or anything like that.

MB: So, the regulations really have fit into this whole thing.

TH: Oh, sure. Definitely. I mean, it's a very honorable profession. These men really work hard. I think they work harder than anybody else as far as labor goes because of all the elements that they have to put up with. But I just want my children to have an easier kind of life. I mean, I don't care if they do it on the side as a hobby. They can keep their license and go out there and make some extra money, but I would rather know that they had a job that they could fall back on.

MB: So, I guess that is part of the documentary that I feel like it is going to change this whole thing.

TH: I think so. I mean, we've slowly seen it change over the years to the quotas that they've put on fishermen, the different licenses. I mean, there's new licenses every year near about that they

have to come up with, the endorsement to sell, the standard commercial fishing license now. They never used to have all that stuff. I mean, I remember when he just had to pay \$25 for a clam and oyster license, and that was it. Now, there's several hundred dollars' worth of licenses.

MB: [laughter] [inaudible] It has been a good life, too.

TH: Oh, yes. Definitely.

MB: You have three wonderful sons.

TH: They've all worked hard. Their dad taught them well.

MB: Well, that is great. There is a lot of pride.

TH: Oh, yes.

MB: In terms of the image of people have about commercial fishermen, what do you think people think out there? What do you get the feeling today?

TH: Sometimes I get a very negative feeling, such as with the sea turtle population. You're constantly reading something in the paper or hearing it on the news that the fishermen are responsible for the extinction of the sea turtles. I don't think that's true. I think the problem is the building on the beach where the turtles won't come up on the beach and lay their eggs because of all the buildings, all the lights. The turtles are not going to come up there and lay their eggs. I don't think that they can honestly – I mean, I'm sure, yes. I'm sure the turtles do get caught in that sometimes, but that's very rare. I don't think the fishermen are the sole ones to be responsible for the extinction of sea turtles.

MB: But it is a lot easier to blame the fishermen than –

TH: Oh, yes. Everything's on the fishermen. There's a lot of stuff on the fishermen that just doesn't even make sense. Not when you sit down and really think about it.

MB: But the problem is nobody is sitting down to think about (what this is like?).

TH: Exactly. I think it's easier to place blame instead of finding out what the true cause is. I don't think a sea turtle will come up on a beach that's full of people and full of houses and lights and noise to lay their eggs.

MB: So, it is all those condos and all that that can really lead to –

TH: I think they're a lot of the problem. I really do.

MB: But also maybe in this country, there are not a lot of respect for working people who actually really work with their hands.

TH: No, there's not. There's not. Because a lot of fishermen have bad names because when they've hit on hard times, they've had to ask for help through the social service departments or whatever. They have been treated very badly, like they don't work at all. Those kinds of systems were designed to supposedly help the working person who got into a bad situation. That would enable them to go back to work. But that's not the way that is either. The fishermen who have these large shrimp boats, they make good money. But most of Sneads Ferry that have the small – the small working-class fishermen that have the small boats that clam and oyster and have the small shrimp boats, they don't make that kind of money. They don't have the boats to travel to Georgia and Florida and South Carolina. A lot of times, they run into a lot of financial trouble.

MB: So, it is a way of life. As your husband said, you have got to love it.

TH: Definitely. He loves it. He's always loved it. He's done some side work when he's had to. He's worked in construction on the beach and stuff like that. But he's always gone. He'll always be in that river. As long as it's there, he'll be in it because he loves it.

MB: Of course, a lot of people never find anything they really love [inaudible].

TH: No. That's true. That's true. Well, his father loved it also. Well, I think all three of his sons, they love it but not to the extent to make a living at it. I mean, they think it's great, fantastic to go out there, and to make some quick money. Because mainly, what they do is clam in the summertime, which Chris for our middle one, he has oystered with his dad during the winter. But I'm glad they're going onto college and they're making something of their self.

MB: Well, thanks much. I appreciate it.

TH: Okay.

[end of transcript]