

Wild Caught  
Johnny Oral History  
Date of Interview: Unknown  
Location: Unknown  
Length of Interview: 07:30  
Interviewer: MS – Unknown  
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: Johnny, tell me a little bit about growing up here around these parts. Did you grow up in a fishing family?

Male Speaker: Pretty much. When I was probably 18 years old, I grew up around fish houses a lot. My father was into commercial fishing. I've always loved it. I always just couldn't get enough of it.

MB: So, tell me about when you first actually started working yourself in commercial fishing.

MS: I was 15, 16-year-old. I was old enough to get out on my own. I started clamming, shrimping a little bit with a skiff, a little dory. It kind of went from there. Graduated up, getting on a little big boat. [laughter]

MB: So, is this considered a little big boat?

MS: Yes, this is a little big boat. [laughter]

MB: Talk a little bit about the seasons, how shrimping goes. Because we are now in –

MS: Well, we're now in brown shrimping. The first ones are spotted shrimp. That starts in the spring of the year. Depending on if we go south or not, catch rose shrimp, which is the big white shrimp from the previous year. It comes (from just?) spotted shrimp into the brownies, which we're into now. Then they'll get bigger. In the fall of the year, we go into the white shrimping. How long the season lasts here will depend on if we go to South Carolina (and work?) cold water shrimp. That pretty much sums it up on the shrimping.

MB: Tell me about what your job is here like on the boat.

MS: Well, I take care of the deck. I do all the culling. Make sure everything's straight. Keep everything going right. Make it work as easy as possible, or that's what I try to do. [laughter] You can't think of everything all the time, but you just got to stay alert and pay attention to your job. Make sure nothing's fouled up, nothing's twisted.

MB: Would you ultimately like to have your own boat?

MS: Oh, yes. Yes. I've been seriously considering it the last couple years, but the right opportunity hadn't come along. It's nothing like I wanted, but it's in the near future.

MB: In other words, what would your title be now?

MS: Well, I'm crew.

MB: You are crew.

MS: I'm deckhand. Mike takes care of all the steering and where we're working at, and I take care of the rest of it.

MB: So, in terms of what we did today, what do you call it? We had two passes.

MS: We made two drags. The first drag, we made to Jeffries Tower, what we call Jeffries Tower. Things didn't pay off. We left, went to Goose Bay. It was better there this morning, but it was over with when we got there. But I take care of everything that goes on on the deck most of the time. That's my job. Try and do it the best of my capability.

MB: What are some of the other kinds of work you have done?

MS: Well, I've clammed, oyster, fish, sink net. There is not much that I haven't done. I've pretty much covered all the resources we have around here. But it's a small place to have a lot of stuff going on, and it's seasonal. Everything happens in routine. In the wintertime, there's not much going on unless you get on a clam boat, which, that consists of – I'll say wintertime is December and after until spring, May, and that's when we start shrimping.

MB: So, are shrimp the main thing that people are going for, (what you say?), around here?

MS: The majority of it, yes. The majority of the commercial (fishing?) shrimp. That's one of our biggest industries. The gillnetting is not so good now as it used to be. I guess it's because there's so many people doing it, using so much net. There's a lot of people that does it north of here, south of here. The further you go south, the less of it you see.

MB: So, what do you enjoy about it? I mean, does it get in the blood?

MS: Yes, it's definitely in the blood. If it wasn't in the blood, you wouldn't do it. [laughter] You get too aggravated too quick, you'd quit it. It's something that if you grow up in it and you love it, you're going to do it. Because there is nothing else you're going to want to do. You won't be happy nowhere else. I've done my fair share of the building. It's like you say, it's in the blood. If it is not in the blood, you wouldn't do it.

MB: Well, I think that covers it. Thanks, Johnny.

[end of transcript]