

Wild Caught  
John Wayne Midgett Oral History  
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Interviewer: MB – Matthew Barr  
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: But here we are. Here I am in Greensboro. So, documentaries I like doing because I can totally – the Carnival documentary, that's what I want to say about Carneys really? We just showed that yesterday at the Screen Gem Studios in Wilmington.

Male Speaker: Oh, really? Okay.

MB: Johnny, just to get us going, talk a little bit about growing up in Sneads Ferry. What that was like, small fishing town.

John Wayne Midgett: Well, it was just really quiet and really peaceful. Weren't no crime. It was really nice to grow up in Sneads Ferry. It still is. It's just a nice, small community.

MB: Now you come from a long line of fishermen, don't you?

JWM: Oh, yes. My grandfather was a fisherman and my father was. It's just been passed on from generation to generation.

MB: Well, talk a little bit about that you used to go out with your dad.

JWM: Oh, yes. Well, I started fishing when I was about ten years old, going out with him. We used to shrimp every summer when we'd get out for summer vacation. That's where I started, was with him. Then when I got to be about fourteen, I started crabbing. That's what I do mostly now. When I got out of school, I just crab mostly. That's what I started doing.

MB: So, yes, I noticed with your son, Andrew, he plays with the buoys here.

JWM: Oh, yes. He loves to play with buoys in the yard. He thinks he's crabbing you know?

MB: Did you used to do the same thing?

JWM: No, I wasn't as wrapped up in it as he is. He's involved in it more than what I was at that age. He just enjoys it. I carry him with me and he's just got a passion for it. He just loves to play with them.

MB: So, talking about fishing, is fishing kind of like a way of life?

JWM: Oh, yes. Fishing is a way of life. It's just it gets in your blood and you just can't get rid of it. It's just enjoyable work. You get to be your own boss and you get to do like you want to really. If you make a living at it and do good, why wouldn't you want to be a fisherman? It's just enjoyable work. You get to work outside. Some days it's bad, but it's still enjoyable, working on water is to me.

MB: Well, take us through like what happened today. Start us off with what happened, just to give some idea. A lot of people really don't know anything about farming and fishing and a lot of things. They like to eat their shrimp or crab or whatever or mullet. But they don't really know anything about what's involved in really making that food available to them. Talk a little bit

about what you went through. Well, really back us all the way up to, in other words – because we filmed you doing this – you had to go to the fish house.

JWM: Well, I usually go to the fish house every evening and take out bait. You had to use bait to put in the traps or trap the crabs. I usually do that every evening and put the gas in the boat and the baskets. Then I'll get up most of the time around 5:00 a.m. and just go work traps all day like we did today and get in. Sometimes it's late. When it's hot this time of year, I get in at 12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m. But in the fall and in early spring when it's cool, I work until dark most days crabbing. Basically, that's about it. When it comes to crabbing, that's about the way I do it.

MB: I haven't filmed you doing that. Seems to be there's a lot to it though really. You got to know where to put those. Basically, you're going around. How many crab pots do you have?

JWM: About five hundred, give or take a few.

MB: You mean you have five hundred traps out there right now?

JWM: Well, I don't have five hundred overboard now. I got about four hundred over right now but I own about five hundred, give or take a few either way. Most of the time that's about what I try to keep on hand.

MB: So, right now on the water, how many traps would you estimate are out there right now?

JWM: Of mine, about four hundred.

MB: How do you even know? I don't understand a lot of those things. Can anybody put a crab pot anywhere they want or –

JWM: Well, you could put a crab pot anywhere except in a marked channel. The state just opened up crabbing to anybody with a scuffle. So, it's got a commercial fishing license, so anybody can go crabbing now. You can put them anywhere you want to unless it's a marked channel. I like certain areas to set mine in and it's repetitious. It's not hard to keep up with them. A lot of people say, "Well, how do you keep up with four hundred traps?" It isn't hard. You just do it day in and day out. You get used to where you set them and it isn't a problem.

MB: But there is a tremendous amount of experience that you have because you've been doing this for over twenty years now, right?

JWM: Well, you're right, twenty years I've been doing it. But I don't know. It's just I don't know.

MB: Yes. But how do you know where to put them because we talked –

JWM: It's just experience. I trust tried different places when I was crabbing. The more traps I got, the more places I tried. I know about every place what time the crabs would show up in one area. Timing is everything. Just knowing when to put them, where to put them at a certain time,

that's the key to everything. That's the key to shrimping or crabbing or fishing with nets, anything. Most of the time it's just knowing when the season is and knowing when things are going to move and just knowing the right places to put everything at the right time.

MB: Now, we did talk to that young man – and I felt kind of bad for him – who seemed to think that, well, you just buy your skiff and your boat, your motor, and you buy some crab pots and you're now a crabber. But as we know, there's more to it than that.

JWM: Well, there's a lot more to it than that. He just decided it wasn't what he wanted to do. He went and bought him a shrimp boat. Now, he wants to do that.

MB: Then they might find out that there's a lot more to shrimping than that.

JWM: Well, maybe he'll do good. I hope he does.

MB: Yes, I do too.

JWM: I'm glad to see him get him a boat if that's what he wants. I don't know many rich fishermen. It's just you do good and you do bad. A lot of people get into it thinking there's a lot of money into it, but there's really not. It's just a way of life. It's just I enjoy the work more than I do the money. Of course, I know there's not that much money, but you'll never be rich working in the water, or I won't. So, I just enjoy it. I don't know nothing else I could do that I enjoy that good as far as work.

MB: This has been your work your whole life, right?

JWM: Oh, yes. That's all I've ever done since I was about ten years old.

MB: Well, it's good you found something you really like to do, because a lot of people never do find that thing that they really like to do.

JWM: That's right. I enjoy it and that's why I like doing it. I couldn't stand to work in a building. I would if I had to, but I just don't believe I could stand to do it, factory work or whatever. I don't believe I could do it.

MB: Well, this is a long tradition in your family –

JWM: Oh, yes.

MB: – and a number of other families. Your wife, Kim, she comes from a fishing family, right?

JWM: Well, this really is a fishing community. There are not many people that have lived here over the years that weren't involved in fishing in some way. Yes, her family they fish too. They still fish right on. But most of the people that live here have been involved in fishing in one way or the other over the years at some point in time. A lot of them have got out of fishing because they just wanted to move on and do different things. A lot of the younger people weren't

interested. Years back, there were a lot more people involved in the fishing because there wasn't nothing else to do around here. Fishing and farming were the only two things that there was to do in Sneads Ferry at one time. The military base came along and a few people worked over there. But basically, your farmers would farm through the summer and they would fish in the fall for mullet and then they would oyster through the wintertime. There were a lot more people involved in there because the younger people were involved with fishing because there wasn't no industry. As the Food Lion came and McDonald's and just all different little stores stuff, a lot of younger peoples got away from working in the water. Well, it's a lot easier, some of it. You work inside and you aren't working in the weather. The weather can be bad a lot of times. The money, you do good or you do bad. Like, if you work a public job, you kind of count on what you're going to make. A lot of people just got away from fishing. Well, there used to be a lot more people. That's why the families traditionally were fishing, but some of them aren't now, because a lot of the younger people just got away from fishing.

MB: Are you worried about that trend of the younger generation moving away from it?

JWM: Well, I worry about it. Yes. You need people to fish for a living. You need young people to get into it. But on the other hand, as the consumer part of it, a lot of people have got away from buying fish because who wants to cook it? They don't know how to clean it. They don't know how to cook it. They'd rather run down here to McDonald's or Harvey's and get a hamburger or either go buy it already cooked. That's going to hurt us on that part of it too. You got to have the consumer to buy the product. A lot of people have got completely away from buying seafood. I worry about that part of it. A lot of your younger people don't even know what an oyster is or have never seen one or a real fish. They buy fish in a box and that's fish. That's not really fish. It's some kind of fish, but it isn't fresh fish.

MB: That's for sure. It looks like something out of a chicken factory or something.

JWM: Well, it's just processed. Some people will taste a fresh fish and they'll think there's something wrong with it and they're like – but that's what fresh fish tastes like. Fish you buy in a box, it's bland tasting and it doesn't have any taste much. So, yes, I worry about the younger people not being into fishing. Like I said, on the other end, the consumer part of it too, because we need both ends of it. We need people to fish for a living. My boys fish behind me and theirs's will fish behind them if they want to. But, yes, I worry about it, man. I really do.

MB: Young Andrew, he probably wants to follow your footsteps.

JWM: Yes. Maybe he will. I would like to see him do it if he wants to do it and Zachary too. Kayla, she might get into it somehow. I don't know. But if they all want do it, I'd be glad to see them do it. I think it's one of the best jobs there is to have.

MB: It's funny, Ray, was talking last night about in terms of the Bible and Jesus and the fishermen and how timeless the job is. But by the same token, Ray was also talking about the fact that people don't always have a lot of respect for fishermen in terms of the public image that they – I don't understand why that is.

JWM: Well, I don't know much about that part of it. I know fishermen, they're hardworking like anybody else. They're taxpayers and they try to do good for their families and everything. I don't know exactly what he was referring to, but I just don't know that much about the respect part for the fishermen. I know there's a lot of special interest groups that are trying to do away with fishing for their own personal reasons and I couldn't tell you why. But they're known to the public. They're always lobbying to putting gillnet bans on people and stop inside trawling and the list goes on and on. I guess you could say that's not having no respect for nobody just trying to take his job, to have no facts to back any of it up. I've sat on committee meetings for three years and they don't have no data. You can ask them for data, "Well, is the fish stocks down?" "Well, we can't tell you." "Are the crab stocks down?" "Well, we can't tell you that either." "How much is too much?" "Well, we can't tell you that either." "How much fishing is too much?" They don't know. So, they can't pinpoint a reason, Matt, for wanting you out of there. They just don't want you there for some reason. I guess that's part of the non-respect part of it as far as I'm concerned.

MB: So, who are these special interests that are trying to –

JWM: Well, I'd rather not pinpoint any person, but they're out there. Because you hear it on TV, which I hear it through other channels. But you hear it on TV all the time, gillnet bans proposed. There are just certain people that for some reason, they just want fishing done away with. I don't know why. I guess it's just a personal agenda for some reason. But I wouldn't want to take anybody's job. I'm glad to see everybody do good. I just don't realize or understand why they want to put people out of work. I don't know. I just don't. I don't understand why they would want to do that.

MB: Well, I think personally, it's really important that it continues and the –

JWM: Well, it's like any other industry. If people quit getting into it, it'll die. With all these rules and regulations and the interest groups fighting to put it out of business, and then if they ever do get a gillnet ban put on it, it probably will. They'll end up choking, ever who they are, the industry to death because you won't be able to jump from fishery to fishery, and they're closing this fishery and closing that fishery. They'll just tighten it down so tight until there won't be much left to do. So, who would want to be a fisherman? If you can't work and do like you want to, why would you want to be one? That's what ended up happening in the industry. Almost like any other industry, you can't just take and take and take just so much. But maybe it'll go on for a while anyway. I hope so.

MB: Well, I'm sure it will. One thing that's really appealing about it, it seems to be one of those industries where an individual like you, you can still make a living and you don't have to be part of a big company or whatever. You're an independent. Nobody tells you what to do. You set your own rules and figure things out. That's pretty neat.

JWM: Well, that's one reason that it's enjoyable. You don't really have to answer to nobody but yourself. It's just enjoyable, Matt, being able to do that. That's why I hope it goes on so I can keep doing it until I can't work anymore. Just doing like I want to do.

MB: So, now you concentrate on crabbing. But you shrimped or something?

JWM: Oh, I've done just about all of it. I'm just set up to crab. Most of my equipment pertains to crabbing. I don't even own a gillnet anymore. I used to have some of those and I got rid of them. We don't scallop anymore. There's hardly any more of those. I clam a little bit when I can't go crabbing and shrimp. I shrimp a little bit. I got a boat; I go shrimping whatever now and then. But basically, I just crab when I can.

MB: What about the Fisherman's Association? I know you have been president.

JWM: Yes.

MB: Can you talk a little about what the Fishermen's Association does?

JWM: Well, it's just a few of us that got together and started a Fishermen's Association. We're associated or affiliated with NC Fish and North Carolina Fisheries Association. We get the rules and regulations and the new ones that are being passed. We have a say in some of them sometimes. We kind of try to keep the community involved with what's going on and what's coming next, what kind of laws they're trying to put on us. Sometimes we write letters in support or against whatever. Then our association, we like to try to help people in the community. If somebody gets down and out, needs some help in whatever way, we try to help them that way. It's just an organization to try to keep the community aware of what's going on in the fishing and help the community in any way we can.

MB: Yes, I thought that was really neat that you guys are going to take some money to the parents of the – talk about it without names or anything. But in other words, that's kind of unusual. Nobody's doing that too much in Los Angeles or any city.

JWM: I'd rather not do that, man. Because I don't know how they'd feel about it. I'd rather not say nothing about it.

MB: Well, yes. But I was just saying without naming names. In other words, you're bringing some money to some people who need a little help, right?

JWM: Well, we help anybody that needs help. Especially if they've been fishermen before and they need some help, a little money, we usually try to help them out. It's better to give. We just like helping people. If they need it and we got it, they can have it. That's just the way we do it. It makes me feel good to be good to others, to give to people especially when they need it and they're down and out. Because I might be in the same position one day, maybe somebody will do me that way.

MB: The old what comes around goes around.

JWM: That's right.

MB: Which is really true.

JWM: You never can tell what's right around the corner. You could be doing really good one day, and be hurt or down and out the next. You just never know what's going to happen next.

MB: That's the truth. Well, talk about your family, your wife, your children. You can describe them a little bit. Well, maybe you can start out talking about how you met Kim and how you ended up getting married and all that stuff.

JWM: Well, my wife, Kim, I've known her my whole life anyway. We grew up together and went to school together. We weren't that close, but somehow, we just got together ten, eleven years ago. We got married and had three children. Best of times. I love my family and I wouldn't take nothing for them. Family is what it's all about anyway. Never going to have no money, but I'm rich. I'm the richest person in the world because I got just what I wanted. I got a family. That's what it's all about to me.

MB: So, well we went to that pig picking the other day and worked out of the pig picking. I've been telling people ever since that was some of the best food I've ever had in my life, and I've had a lot of good food. Not only was it great food, but it was a nice sense of family and warmth there, like an extended family a little bit.

JWM: Right.

MB: Besides that chocolate cake that I forgot to have.

JWM: [laughter] It was pretty good, wasn't it?

MB: Oh, man, it concentrated.

JWM: You all ate it all and I didn't get any. How about that?

MB: That's the most unfortunate situation.

JWM: [laughter]

MB: But I'm sorry to hear that, Johnny. But that's a pretty special thing. I grew up out in California and I love my family. I just was out at a wedding.

JWM: We like to do that. I like to see all my family get together and it's enjoyable. You get to see people that you don't get to see every day. That's why I like Thanksgiving and Christmas so good because my wife, she likes to cook and she'll cook a great big, old meal. The whole family comes over and it's just really enjoyable of course. I like to see the whole family get together. You just don't do it that often. Then that pig picking, that was a really good deal the other day too. Everybody got together and ate and talked and just enjoyed each other's company for a while.

MB: Yes. It's kind of like the way things used to be. I remember when I was a kid, we'd have



picnics and it'd be boring. I remember once when I was a kid, in the middle of California, we went to a ranch. They had the ribs and the barbecue beans in the iron pot. I thought, man, this is like heaven here with beautiful hills there and all. I was like, this is great, this is pretty neat having all these people here and the good food. I think in modern life sometimes people get away from that a little bit. They don't have the pig pickings and all that. Not just the pig pickings, but the sense of community and togetherness. I guess on a different scale, the shrimp festival is a way of trying to do that a little bit, isn't it?

JWM: I don't know exactly how the shrimp festival – the shrimp festival is for the community, but it attracts a lot of tourism. A lot of the locals don't go to the shrimp festival kind of because of the crowd. But a lot of them do. But I know a lot of locals don't because of the crowd. So, yes, it kind of brings the community together, I guess. But it just brings a lot of tourism too. A lot of people come to see what's going on.

MB: But you guys have the association.

JWM: Oh, yes. Yes. We have a booth out there every year and we have live shrimp out there where people can come by and see the live shrimp. We're going to have some videotapes this year of TEDs working and turtle excluder devices and finfish devices where they're being filmed under the water. We're going to have some videos of that to show you how they work. We have a big shrimp trawl out there every year that we tie up and the kids get to jump all over it and climb through it. It was the biggest event at shrimp festival last year. They didn't have any rides and we tied the trawl up and every little kid that came along was out there jumping on it and enjoying it. It went over really good. So, we're going to do that again this year.

MB: That's good. They were talking about that at that meeting I went to last Wednesday.

JWM: Oh, yes?

MB: Oh, yes.

JWM: What about the shrimp trawl?

MB: Yes. They said that was the biggest thing.

JWM: It was. See, last year, we all got to the shrimp festival and the guy that had the rides called them that day or something and backed out and there weren't no rides. That shrimp trawl went over. It was a hit with those kids. You saw them, you were out there. They were jumping all over it and they enjoyed it. So, we went down the net shop and had it dipped and rehung and got it fixed up really good this year so that they really enjoy it. So, maybe it'll go over again, I hope so. Plus, we're going to have other things there for people to come by and look at; all of our gear and equipment and gillnets. Just a lot of stuff there for them to come by and see.

MB: Right. One thing that strikes me sometimes because I've been out with you filming a little bit when you come in back to the fish house, is your mom and dad will be there sometimes.

JWM: Yes.

MB: Talk about all that. That's kind of neat.

JWM: Well, my father, he's semi-retired from fishing anymore. He doesn't fish as much as he used to. Most of the times he's always waiting for me when I get there. Especially when I'm working late in the fall and it's close to dark, he knows it'll be late when I get in, he's always waiting for me. It's a good feeling that he's there because if I'm not there by dark, he'll come looking for me. My mother, she comes down some, but not as much as he does. She has to work before I get in most days. He just worries about me and that's why he comes down there a lot to make sure that I'm there when I'm supposed to be.

MB: Well, he worries about you being safe out there and coming back.

JWM: Yes. Well, you know how you can't tell you could have motor problems, break down, or something. He knows if I'm not there right after dark, that something's wrong. Then he'll get in his boat and he'll come find me. So, that's a good feeling that he's watching out for me.

MB: Has he ever done that?

JWM: No. I've never been in a situation where he had to come find me. But it's a good feeling knowing that I won't be down there too long and he'll be there to get me if something happens.

MB: That's true. Because you could have a problem fairly close to the shore. Not you, but you know? What I'm saying is that fishing, as we know, can be dangerous. Anytime you're near the water things can happen. It could be a lightning storm; you could be right there.

JWM: Yes. Anything can happen. I've learned that anything can happen. You never know. So, you just have to be careful when you're doing things. A lot of times you get busy and you aren't so careful. But crabbing is basically not that dangerous. Pulling traps is not as involved as some of your shrimp boats and stuff where you got a lot of winches and a lot of ropes that can get tangled around your feet or in the ocean where it's rough. You've been crabbing. It's not really that dangerous. Basically, what I'm saying is if the motor breaks down or something, he'll come find me.

MB: Because you've done shrimping and all that, it's a dangerous job in terms of being out there.

JWM: Oh, yes, shrimping is pretty dangerous if you're in ocean. Most times you're out there before it gets day or you're either working at night. All the gear is really heavy and you can't let it hit you when it comes on the boat. You got to watch where your feet's at so you don't get a line around your feet and it pulls you over. It's just really dangerous work. You had to keep your eyes on what you're doing all the time. But basically, here in the river it's not that dangerous because you're not dealing with rough weather so much as you are in ocean. But it's still dangerous. You got to watch what you're doing.

MB: There have been people who've died from this town, just like any fishing town, right?

JWM: Oh, yes. There have been several people over the years that's died from drowning. Well, basically, the only people I know that ever died was from drowning, boat sinking, or falling over. I never knew anybody that got caught in a winch and it killed them or something fell on them and it killed them. But, yes, there have been several people that's died.

MB: Because isn't there a plan for them to try to create a monument to them?

JWM: Yes. Ray Swaney and his son were thinking about making a monument for all the falling fishermen over the years. I think that's a really good idea. We want to put it out to the community building on shrimp festival grounds where everybody can come along and see it and look at some of the names, I guess, to say as who are the people who died working on the water. I think it's a great idea myself. My grandfather, he died on the water and my wife's father, he died on the water too. There's been several others that I don't know their names, but there's been quite a few.

MB: So, within your family?

JWM: Oh, yes, my family.

MB: Talk about your children.

JWM: What do you want to know?

MB: [laughter] Well, why don't you describe their names.

JWM: Well, I got a daughter. Her name's Kayla Midgett. She's my oldest. She's just a good child. She's really smart in school and does really good. I love her. That's about all I can say. I love all of them. Andrew, he's my middle boy. He's the one that's always interested in crab pots. He loves to go fishing with me all the time. Zachary, you can't keep him still long enough to do nothing. He's wide open all the time. He's a little hyper, I believe. I'm going to get him involved in fishing just soon as he gets a little older. He isn't but five. I want him to get up eight, nine and ten years old before I get him on the boat like I did Andrew. That's all of them.

MB: So, how old was Andrew when you first introduced him to fishing?

JWM: Eight. No, he was seven when I started carrying him with me every day. I don't carry him every day, but I carry him a lot of days with me. Well, last year I started carrying him and then he broke his arm. Then he didn't get to go the latter part of the summer. This year he started going with me. Most days he goes.

MB: So, now you have four hundred crab pots. How much does it cost to buy a crab pot?

JWM: \$20 a pot.

MB: Can you make that a sentence like, it cost?

JWM: If you buy a crab pot and rig it like I rigged one, it's \$20 a trap. If you put an iron on it, sinking rope, you got to buy the float, and that's without your time involved. I'm not even counting your time. You got about \$20 a trap is what it costs.

MB: So, that's quite an investment. You have five hundred of them.

JWM: Yes. But it wasn't like I went and bought four hundred or five hundred at one time. It was I started out with a hundred and then I ended up with two hundred and they just kept escalating right on and on. But you got traps left over from one year to the next and I just kept buying more traps and it ended up being five hundred. But it isn't like I went out to buy five hundred at one time.

MB: So, how many people would you say in this town are full-time crabbers like you are?

JWM: Well, I'm not a full-time crabber. I crab mostly. A full-time crabber is somebody that says that all they do is crab and they don't do nothing else. But I mostly crab. There's probably ten or twelve of us that do it that way. I don't know any full-time crabbers, that all they do is crab. But there's a bunch of us that for the most part, that's what we do.

MB: So, what else do you do?

JWM: Well, like I said, I shrimp and fish a little bit. I clam and oyster in the wintertime some. But as long as the weather stays warm enough, I'll just crab.

MB: How many hours a week do you put in? It sounds like more than forty.

JWM: Oh, yes.

MB: That's pretty full time, yes [laughter]. But it's not. But let's talk about that. You work six days a week pretty much?

JWM: Try to work six days a week. I don't like to work on Sundays unless I have to. I just don't work on Sundays most of the time. I was up at 4:00 a.m. Which I didn't go crabbing at 4:00 a.m. but I was up. I left here about 5:30 a.m. I got back at the dock at 12:00 p.m. That's a short day. When the weather's cool to where I can run all my traps, I try to run them all every day. That's a twelve-, fourteen-hour day, every day, is basically what it is.

MB: But when you say run the trap, what does that mean?

JWM: Well, just crabbing. Just fishing and the traps, baiting them and shaking the crabs out of them and basking them and bringing them to the dock.

MB: At night we filmed you taking out these fish. They're frozen. Let them fall out on the dock during the night. Then you get to the boat about 5:30 a.m.

JWM: Yes. In the wintertime it's a little later than that. It's around 6:00 a.m., 6:30 a.m. sometimes in the wintertime when it's real cold. But at that point in time, I'm fishing from 6:30 a.m. until dark. I don't come home until it's dark and about because I got enough traps to where I set it up that way to where I'm fishing from daylight to dark. Because at that time, it's cool when you're trying to catch all you can catch. So, as long as there's daylight, I'm fishing. You're kind of working on that limited schedule because once it gets too cold, you're going to be home. You aren't going to be crabbing no more, so you're trying to catch as many of them as you can until that cutoff point where it gets cold. Because once it gets cold, the water temperature gets really cold, the crabs will hibernate. You don't get to catch any of them anymore.

MB: But like today, how many crab pots did you actually work with?

JWM: Today, I ran about two hundred.

MB: Two hundred, that's a lot.

JWM: I try to work two hundred of them each way a day.

MB: Oh, I see. So, you do half one day. So, every other day you're checking each pot.

JWM: Well, see this time of year it's hot. You can't run four hundred in a day because the crabs would rot in the boat. The heat kills them. So, what I do, I try to run half of them one day and half of them the next. That way I can get in early and you're selling a better product because we don't get paid for dead ones. Plus, really, it's a better fishing practice because the state makes you put cull rings in these traps. All the crabs go in the trap and eat the bait up. Well, once the bait's gone, the little crabs go out and leave through the cull rings. So, within that two-day period, that bait will be gone. Those little crabs will get out. So, when you go to the trap, all you've got mostly is – which there's still a little bit of grading – but it's mostly sellable stuff. You don't have to grade through all the little ones and everything. So, every other day is a good fishing practice with traps.

MB: I see. So, you do two hundred in one day and then the other two hundred the next day.

JWM: Right.

MB: How long are the crab pots out there attracting crabs? I know it sound like a lot of dumb questions.

JWM: Well, it's a forty-eight-hour period.

MB: So, you stuffed the fish in like today when you rebated the traps.

JWM: It'd be forty-eight hours before I get back to that trap.

MB: Every one of your crab pots has your name on it on the buoy, right?

JWM: Right. Yes, you had to put your whole name on the buoy.

MB: Did you ever have any problems with somebody else trying to take your crabs?

JWM: Oh, yes. They steal the crabs and they steal the traps. But you can't worry about that. If you worry about that, you'll just get out of the business. You just don't worry about that part of it because that stuff is going to happen. You know that's going to happen when you put the gear out there. I got \$5,000 worth of gear just lying on the bottom out there now. People come by and don't see it and run over the buoys and then sometimes they do it on purpose. They just steal the traps. I've had a lot of traps stolen from me over the years. Cut the buoys off of them. You can't worry about that part of it.

MB: So, in terms of the seasonal aspect of the crab, do they have a season?

JWM: Not really. You can catch crabs about any time of the year as long as it's halfway warm. But the state's got a law on the books that says you had to have the crab pots out of water come January 24th and toward the eighth day February for a cleanup period. That's for anybody that goes out and just throws traps out and just leaves them and won't take them up. They go around and clean them up and supposedly drop citations to the people that don't get their traps out of water, is what that's for. But basically, I crab nearby year round.

MB: Did you use to do more shrimping than you do now or is that something –

JWM: Yes, when I was ten, twelve years old, that's all I ever did. We shrimped every summer. I'd get out of school – I think it was in June sometime we'd get out – right around the 1st of June. I'd shrimp until around Labor Day. We'd shrimp through August and then I had to go back to school the third day of September or something. But yes, we shrimped every summer. Me and my father did. Because it worked out just about the time I got out of school, we'd go shrimping. The season came in good for shrimping.

MB: So, the summer is the best time for the shrimper.

JWM: Right. Here in the river, it is. From June until October is a good time here in the river for shrimping. It used to we didn't have any fall shrimp, which is a different type of shrimp. We just had regular summer shrimps, is all we had back then. Here in the last few years, we started getting a crop of fall shrimp. But I used to shrimp, yes, every summer. It wasn't nothing.

MB: But some of the people like Ray Swaney and other people, Mike, they go out for long periods, right?

JWM: Oh, yes. Well, they work a week at a time shrimping. But that's all they do. Basically, all they do is shrimp for the most part not like my crabbing. They'll do other things maybe to get them through a bad time. But basically, all they do is shrimp. Mike, he'll come home and work on his boat when he isn't shrimping and then go back shrimping. Ray Swaney, that's all he does is shrimp for the most part. As involved as they are in shrimping, you don't hardly get any other

time to do anything but shrimp. Because when you're not shrimping, you had to keep your gear up. They can shrimp nearby year round because they'll change locations. They'll go from state to state or wherever the shrimp's at, that's where they work and they'll come home. When they do take a little time off, they got to work on the boats and get the gear replaced or repaired or whatever. So, they don't have much time to do anything else.

MB: So, they've got a lot of money and time. Like the Davis's, we were talking about them, or other people, Mike, they got to be a kind of an expert. They got to know how to work on it. They can't hire people to do all those things.

JWM: No. If you had to hire people to do it, you couldn't do it. You need to be a jack of all trades. Anything on that boat, they can work on it. That's the way you've got to be. You get out somewhere and you get broke down somewhere, there's nobody there to work on it but you. You tear a net up, catch a rock or a tree or anything, you got to be able to sew it up and fix it and do anything. The boat tears up, you got to be able to repair it right there. You need to know how to do it all, and they do.

MB: Well, now how about bad weather? Have you had some experiences of bad weather out there?

JWM: I've been in some storms before, but nothing really bad like some of them have been in. Most time you are in the river here, you're close to the dock and you get in before it gets really bad. Every now and then you'll get in a bad thunderstorm. I've been in those before, but you get really windy and rainy. But I've never been anywhere that's really bad, where it was about to turn the boat over or nothing. I never been like that.

MB: But now you used to do a type of night fishing and Kim, you didn't like it too much. Like what that guy –

JWM: Oh, that was channel netting at night.

MB: What's that?

JWM: It's a practice where you take a 120-foot net and you go down and you sit down here in the lower part of the river where all the shrimp they've got to come. Shrimp by nature, he'll leave and go in the ocean out of the tributaries and rivers. What you do, you get out there and you anchor this net. It's stationary and it just sets in the water. The tide flows through the net and you catch the shrimp as they're coming by, basically is what that is. I used to sit down here in the inlet and there was a lot of tide. You just had to be really careful because you're working at night and you can't see all that good anyway. It's really dangerous. You don't want to fall over in the net or over. Somebody not see you, you might end up drowning. It's kind of dangerous. I didn't think much about it. But it is dangerous when you get right down really thinking about it.

MB: Well, again, there's always that level of danger around the water.

JWM: Yes.

MB: Well, how about the future of fishing? Do you think it's got to be part of our culture?

JWM: Yes, it needs to be. I think the future of fishing if they don't regulate the fishing to where you can't make it, I believe the fishing will go on for generations. I believe there's plenty of fish to be caught right on and plenty of crabs and plenty of everything. It just runs in cycles. Some years you have shrimp and some years you don't and the crabs and the fish, it's all the same. You do good one year and next year you don't do some good. It's been that way for generations. You can hear a lot of your older guys, well, such and such a year, thirty years ago or twenty years ago, you couldn't catch enough shrimp to fry. Next year, you were catching so many the price was down on them. It's just everything goes in cycles. There's plenty of fish right on today. If there weren't no fish, you'd see people shutting fish houses down and people selling boats and getting – well, you couldn't sell the boat because nobody would want it for nothing. You see people do good fishing right on. It's a big misconception, there's no fish. Most of the time there are so many fish on the market until the price is always down on them. You can't hardly get a things way. But for some reason people say, "Oh, there's no fish. The fish stocks are down." But there again, best available data. Fish stocks are down. How do you know the fish stocks are down? All you know is what's been caught. What if we had some bad weather this time when the fish ran by this year and the weather was pretty last year and we got to catch a pile of fish because weather was pretty. This year you had a big, old bad weather scene. Fish went offshore and went by us. Yes, the fish stocks are down, but that doesn't mean the fish weren't there. You just didn't get to catch them. Nobody looks at that part of it. But there's plenty of fish. Don't let nobody fool you. There's plenty of them. Those special interest groups that we were talking about earlier, use that against you. "Well, there's no fish. One year they didn't do good and this year they don't do good." There's plenty of fish to go around. Plenty of crabs. Plenty of shrimp. Sometimes you had to go to other locations to find them. But there's plenty of seafood left. I hope that they just don't regulate it to where you can't make a living at it because that'll be the only way that you stop fishing, is by regulation and rules. You keep taking one fishery and another fishery and another fishery. What it'll end up doing if you keep taking several fisheries, it'll push the fishermen and what's left into one fishery or two fisheries. Then that fishery will get so overcrowded until – you can't split the pipe just so many ways. That's basically the way it is, Matt. I just believe there's plenty of stuff to go around if they just don't regulate the fishing to death. The government's regulating things too for some reason.

MB: You've been having a good year.

JWM: Yes, I've had a good year crabbing. Which I usually do all right. But it's been pretty good this year. The prices stayed up really good. I haven't caught that many more crabs than I've ever caught, but the process stayed up good. So, I had a good year.

MB: Well, sometimes you don't want to catch too many because then the price might go down. Oh, you can't never catch too many. You want to catch all you can catch because that way, if they're plentiful and the price does fall down, you can still catch enough to produce to make a living. But if there are not very many crabs around and the price drops, you had to quit. You want enough of any product to where everybody can do good. You don't want just enough to get by. You want to see your neighbors do good and everybody, your friends. You want to see



everybody do good and make money. That's why you need a lot of crabs or shrimp or anything.

MB: Well, on a typical day, how many crabs or bushels will you bring in, like today?

JWM: Well, today I had eight bushels. It's kind of fell off now some. It isn't as good as what it was. Of course, we caught a lot of the crabs up and they're fixing to shed again. They're going into that soft crab state again right now. But it'll get better. It'll pick back up here in another month and we'll be doing better again.

MB: You can have a Ph.D. in crabs. You know all about crabs.

JWM: Well, I know a little bit about it. If you work at anything for twenty years, you're going to know a little bit about it. I'm not saying I know it all, because I don't. But I know them pretty good for the area I work in and everything. I know how they move and for what weather and stuff like that.

MB: They're kind of nasty little suckers, aren't they? They're cannibals, right?

JWM: Oh, yes, they'll eat each other. They'll eat you if you fall over [laughter]. But they are. They're cannibalistic. They'll eat each other up. But as long as you run your traps like you're supposed to, you don't have that problem very much.

MB: Well, what about the fish houses? You deal with one main. Maybe you could describe for the audience what a fish house is?

JWM: Well, a fish house, he's just a dealer that all the seafood goes through. That's his job. He owns a fish dealership or fish whatever house, you want to call it. We catch the product and we sell it to him. Then he's got distributors or people that come and buy it from him. Then he sells to the public also. But most of the stuff he sells is wholesale to other dealers wanting to buy the seafood. That's where he makes his profit is we'll sell it to him and then he'll add a little bit to it, working cost or whatever. Then he'll sell it to somebody else and it just goes on down the line that way.

MB: So, the crab you catch today might end up –

JWM: The crabs I caught today will be in Maryland tomorrow. A guy will come, pick them up with a truck, and he'll haul them back at night. Then they'll be over there on whatever market. There are several different markets over there in Maryland. Or they'll all end up in New York. Sometimes we send them over to New York over there to Fulton Fish Market and they're over. They'll be over there tomorrow. Or not tomorrow. They'll go tomorrow night and Thursday morning they'll be over there on the market. They don't sit still very long.

MB: It's kind of amazing. Your crabs will be in New York City within a short time, like thirty hours or something. Then somebody will be chomping on them at some fancy restaurant somewhere.

JWM: Yes.

MB: That's kind of amazing to think about that.

JWM: Well, I like to know that I provide a service feeding people. At least you know you're doing something anyway. People eat the product and you sell a good product and people get to enjoy it. That's a good feeling.

MB: Oh, I would imagine so. It's incredibly [laughter] important. If we don't have food, there's nothing more important. Survival. We don't tend to think about that a lot in our society because we take it for granted that there's always food.

JWM: Somebody's got to catch it. That's like the special interest groups that we were talking about earlier. Where do they think it's going to come from? Somebody's got to catch it. They can say, well, you got all those shrimp farms around Ecuador and around. Now, they grow these shrimps. But like this year – I don't know whether it's true or not – but I heard they had a bad crop down there. Something happened to the shrimp farms and that's why the price of shrimp is up really good. Now, where are you going to get them if they have something wrong with their shrimp and then you take the independent shrimpers out of the picture, no shrimp? Where you going to get shrimp from? Well, it is. Like you said a while ago, people don't think about where nothing comes from. That's like they're trying to do away with hog farming, they're trying to do away with tobacco companies, and the list goes on and on. They're trying to do away with the loggers. That paper you're holding in your hand, it came from somewhere and that pencil you're using. These groups that want to do away with everything, I don't think they're really looking down the road or having any foresight of where things come from. You got to have products to live, period, whether it be eating or paper or anything. They're just not realizing what they're doing.

MB: It's kind of like they want to have their cake and eat it too, because it's not like they don't want to have gas for their car and shrimp to eat, this, that, and the other. But somehow, they think they can have it, but there's not going to be –

JWM: Well, that stuff doesn't fall out the sky. Somebody's got to catch it and produce it for the people to have. Just like you said, people, they don't want look at the catching part, they just want to have it in front of them and they want to forget about where it came from.

MB: Kind of like out of sight, out of mind.

JWM: Exactly.

MB: Yes, those are some really good points there. Everything costs to produce whether you're making a car, then you got to make steel and that means you need to use some coke and coal and iron ore. There's going to be stuff involved with doing that.

JWM: That's right.

MB: We all want a car though.

JWM: Well, that's just it. I've never been able to figure it out why people want to do away with fishing. Well, I say everybody, but the majority of people that I have ever met love seafood. They like to eat seafood. But I guarantee the people that are trying to do away with catching seafood, they like seafood too. But where are they going to get it from? Well, I guess people don't have to eat seafood. It's not a necessity. You can eat other kind of foods, but I just don't understand it, man. I really don't.

MB: Yes, of course, a lot of countries it is. Obviously, Japan and the countries like that, that is the main food they eat; a good part of it. They don't have beef or that diet is too expensive. They depend heavily on seafood that's why they have –

JWM: Well, they bought a lot of seafood in this country. They have brokers here that all they do is broker fish all the time. I couldn't say they're friends of mine because we're not really that acquainted, but I know them. They have fish houses up here at Wanchese and around. I have met the people, which they're friends. But I just don't know them really good. But I've heard them talk about they catch swordfish up that way around Virginia border up that way and all kind of other big fishes like marlins and tunas and all kind of stuff. They air freight them to Japan. They buy them. They don't even sell that stuff in this country hardly. So, there's a lot of seafood out of this country that goes that way too.

MB: They get better money for it there.

JWM: I'm sure they do. I never really heard what they pay for it. But time you air freight it and all that stuff, so they must be getting pretty good money out of it.

MS: Can I ask? I know people have tried to farm lobsters and it didn't work. You can't farm crabs.

JWM: I don't know. You must not farm crabs. I never heard of it being done. There are some things that will not reproduce in captivity. I read a book on eels one time, that eels will not reproduce in captivity. Japan tried it. They wanted to grow eels, but eels will not reproduce in captivity. So, I've never heard of nobody producing crabs. The thing about it is, you would have to have a tremendous area because they're cannibalistic. If you didn't feed them enough and you had them in a closed environment, that it was too close for the amount of crab that was there, they'd eat each other until the numbers got down where the water or whatever or you could feed them enough. It's not like shrimp. You can dig a hole and dump salt water in it and dump Dog Chow out there on it, and them shrimp will eat it. It'll just keep growing and growing. They won't eat each other.

MB: Well, it's funny, we were talking about this last night with Ray. He was saying, yes, that's true. But you can taste the difference. Somebody knows. A farm-raised shrimp, it tastes like the feed that it was fed.

JWM: Well, I don't know, Matt. I've never eaten them that I know of, unless I got them in a

restaurant somewhere. Which, like I said, that food in restaurants is good. The food is good, but it doesn't taste – I usually catch and eat my own shrimp here. There's a whole different taste to it than eating it in a restaurant.

MS: So, you're saying you haven't eaten the farmed shrimp.

JWM: I may have eaten farm-raised shrimp and didn't know it.

MS: I was kind of wondering, yes, how do you know. Because sometimes my wife goes down and gets a bag of frozen shrimp. We try to eat fresh shrimp. But how do you know where they're from?

JWM: Well, most of the time if you don't buy shrimp from a local fish house close to any part of the water, he's either been froze, he could be a local froze shrimp. But most of your bigger restaurants are probably getting shrimp out of Ecuador or Honduras. They're farm-raised shrimp because they can call China, they can call and get whatever amount of shrimp they want. They can get whatever size they want. A lot of times they can buy them cheaper than you can buy shrimp here out of U.S. for a bit. If you're anywhere inland, you're not getting fresh shrimp. Now, he might be local shrimp. I can't say whether he is or he isn't, but he's not fresh. I couldn't tell you how to tell. I can't tell. I've never eaten none of that shrimp from down there that I know of.

MS: So, if you're in Denver, you're probably eating shrimp from Ecuador or you might be eating shrimp from here but it's just been frozen for a couple of days?

JWM: Probably. If you're living out there, you're eating frozen shrimp because you have to freeze them to keep them from spoiling.

MB: It's like so many different food products these days. Well take tomatoes for example. The typical tomato you buy in the supermarket really doesn't have a lot of taste to it because they developed a genetically-altered tomato at University of California. I've seen this because I worked on a farm near there one summer.

JWM: It does not have any juice in it.

MB: Well, they pick them green. They pull the entire plant when they're still green tomatoes and it tumbles it. So, the machine is so big about five people can ride on board of one when it rumbles through the field. So, they yank the entire plant out. The tomatoes get tumbled out when they're green. They're packaged up right there on the machine. Forklift comes and it's completely automated. They get shipped out green and then they altered the skin to be thicker. The only problem was at the end of all this business, the things don't have much taste to them. They're kind of starchy. A real tomato, it's a fruit. It's incredible. There are all these varieties, now they have one variety. I think this is what Ray was talking about last night, that ultimately you could have a lot of bland food being produced by these giant companies like all these shrimp farms down in Honduras who could end up really controlling a huge part of the market. We can have one type of shrimp, one tomato, one type of lettuce. It'll all be kind of bland.

JWM: Well, they already do control a lot of the market. They've got a good size of the market control now on the shrimp. Because the shrimpers in the United States probably don't produce enough shrimp for the demand. I guess these big companies saw that was an opportunity to get in on this shrimp and raising these shrimps. Once they did, then if they've got a pile of shrimp, it kind of keeps the price down on local shrimp and stuff.

MB: Yes. The other thing is of course, obviously in Honduras or Ecuador there's cheap labor.

JWM: Well, they can raise shrimp down year round. You're on the equator. They can raise one crop and just soon as they clean the pond out and get it all cleaned up and ready to go again, they can turn right back around and grow another crop. They can raise them year round. See, big shrimps sell good because they found out that most of those ponds will not raise big shrimp. They raise the smaller shrimp. They'll raise them up to a certain size and then they'll sell them. Basically, they've got the small shrimp market tied up, is what they're doing.

MB: The popcorn shrimp? What do they call it?

JWM: Well, they're a little bit bigger than that. But say thirty-six to forty to a pound is about as big as they get most of them. Or maybe a little bit bigger than that. But the big shrimp here in the U.S., you get ten, twelve of them to the pound. Sixteen, twenty of them to the pound. They don't raise many of those shrimps. That's why if you're catching big shrimp, you can get a good price for them.

MB: Well, same thing like the farm-raised salmon. A lot of people say if you really want the taste of salmon that's been out in the sea and fought their way up, that salmon will have a lot more taste to it than a farm-raised salmon.

JWM: Oh, yes. Well, any kind of fish, things like your spots and croakers and mullet and anything that has been in ocean for a while, it's got a better taste to it for some reason. I don't know what it is. Just anything that's come out of the ocean or here in the river, it's just got a better taste to it.

MB: Yes. Well, it's disturbing stuff. But hopefully, it kind of ties us in with a lot of different things we can think about. Like if you want to own a little bookstore, these days it'd be hard to do to compete against these giant chains like Barnes & Noble who can –

JWM: You couldn't compete.

MB: Or a hardware store, how are you going to compete against Home Depot or Lowe's?

JWM: You can't do it. It's virtually impossible to do that. But your independent shrimpers, they still do all right in this country because the shrimp farms don't raise enough to keep the world going too. It is kind of the medium there, sort of. But now if they had enough shrimp farms to where they could raise big shrimp and raise up far more shrimp, yes, you'd be in trouble then.

MB: Well, thank God they can't figure out how to raise crabs.

JWM: Well, it'll all come along one day. You can't never tell.

MB: Yes, they'll figure out the DNA of the crab or something.

JWM: Yes. You can't never –

MB: Maybe they'll have an atomic crab.

JWM: Well, the government in this country ought to step in and look out for all the working people in this country. Not just fishermen, your loggers, and your tobacco people and all your working groups. Sometimes it seems like the federal government just lets you down. They're letting imports pour in this country and ruin the price. It isn't nothing but just big business, is all it is. But it kind of has an effect on working people in this country, a big impact on them. I watched a thing on TV the other day which was saying 90 percent of China's products come to United States, but only 10 percent of the United States' product goes to China. That doesn't sound right, does it? But that's the way it is. The government isn't doing nothing about it. Now, they're wanting to open up this free trade agreement with China and just let them pour any kind of product they want in here. It is going to have a big impact on this country.

MB: Well, yes. I bought a Bausch & Lomb electric toothbrush. It's a great American company that was made in China.

JWM: Yes, cheap labor.

MB: A year later, the thing splits in half.

JWM: [laughter]

MB: It was a hundred dollars electric toothbrush. I would like to buy American products made by American labor as much as I can. But that's not easy sometimes because especially any of the stuff that's on the cheaper end. An electric toothbrush is an expensive product. A lot of stuff is all made in China whether it's tennis shoes or all kinds of. They just pour out products. I don't particularly like buying products made by slave labor or people that make hardly anything.

JWM: Well, there are people in this country doing a lot of it though, Matt. Your big industries leaving this country to get the cheap labor. But then they're putting the people in this country out of business, without jobs, because they went and hunted the cheap labor. You can't do that just so long before you end up ruining – you're not having any economy. Because if you keep doing that so much and you see a lot of your bigger companies are doing it more and more all the time. It's like if Clinton gives China that free trade status, you're going to see a lot of companies in the United States wanting to get in on that cheap labor. The people that were doing that job in this country, well they're going to be out of business. They're going to be out of work. They're going to go over there and get the cheap labor. Yes, they make more money but who's going to buy it? You're running out of people to buy the product because you're putting a lot of people in this

country out of work. If every company in the United States did that, who would buy anything? There wouldn't be nobody left to buy any product. It's a wrong way to go about things, but big businesses don't think that way. All they care about is the bottom line; the numbers. Most, they don't see no faces, they don't see people. They're just looking at a number. Productivity is all they're after.

MB: Yes. That lays it out pretty well. You can't all be .com millionaires just on software products.

JWM: I know there are a lot of them running around though, aren't there?

MB: Well, we sure hear about it. We don't hear about all other regular people that may not be able to –

JWM: Buy a Pepsi Cola.

MB: Who worry about getting from paycheck to paycheck. That's the other reality that nobody's even going to talk about.

JWM: There's a lot of that around too.

MB: That's right. A lot more than people might be willing to think about, including people like Clinton who were just so anxious to do anything to get in with China for some weird reason.

JWM: Well, I was hoping that that free trade stuff wouldn't go through because China's pumping a pile of crab meat in here now and it's affecting the price on crabs. I believe if they go about the free trade, you're going to have a lot more people out of this country that's going to go over there and get that cheap labor and send the crab meat back over here. Produce it there and send it back over here and it's going to affect the price of crabs really bad.

MB: What do they do? They freeze the crab, bring it over in ships or something?

JWM: What about just air freight it. Just fly it back.

MB: They can still make money even on air freight?

JWM: Oh, yes. I don't know if this is true or not, but seeing it was on TV, you can't believe everything you see on TV. But they claimed the average wage in China for the average person is \$600 a year. So, you go over there and you get what are they working for? 50 cent a day? You can afford to air freight it back if you aren't paying nobody nothing to catch it and clean it and all that stuff. So, yes, they can come out on that deal.

MB: That's right.

JWM: See they come over here and they send it back with a cheaper product price wise. The meat is basically the same. It tastes close to just like the meat in this country, the crab meat. So,

the people in this country have got to lower the price to compete so they can sell the product in this country. It just got a bad effect on everything.

MB: Well, that covers a lot of stuff. I think we've covered with the association. Now around here – that's one thing Ray was mentioning – it's kind of unique to have such a huge river and hardly any – maybe because of Camp Lejeune, it's really not that built up around here a lot. How many places are there on the East Coast like this really that –

JWM: Well, the population is down here because of the military base. Well, the military base owns one whole side of the river and half of the other side, if not more than half of the other side. It's really kept the development down on this river. But that's another thing, is pollution. People don't never want to take their part in the pollution. They always want to point the finger at the fishermen. "Oh, the fishermen have killed all the stocks and done away with everything." But pollution played a big part in that too. We're all contributors, me and you and everybody. But the military, basically, if it weren't there, you'd have a lot more development in this area. They put a lot of population here as far as the Marines. There's six thousand of them over there or something, or maybe more than that. I forget the number. But there's a pile of them. It helps the community. As far as the river, it's kept the river in better shape. I tell you, it has really.

MB: Is there anything else that comes to mind? I think we've covered pretty much the gamut of it.

MS: Well, I'd like to ask some technical stuff about crabs. But maybe we'll learn that when we go out crabbing. I know with lobsters, the shedders are the best tasting, you know about crabs.

JWM: You mean soft crabs?

MS: Yes.

JWM: When he's soft.

MS: Yes, soft crab.

JWM: Yes.

MS: In lobsters, they call them shedders.

JWM: Right. Well, they call them the same thing here. But we just call them soft crabs. Yes, they're tasty. Matt, we fed him some of them last time, didn't we? Did he eat some? Well, some people think soft crabs are better. But basically, all you're doing is just eating the whole crab because he's just come out of a molten stage and he's soft. Then some people think that picking the meat out of the claws is better. That he's better when the crab's hard. It's just a preferred taste, whatever you like the best. Then some people like the female crabs. They claim the female crabs taste better. Some people like when they got the eggs in them. They eat the eggs out of them and make soup with them. It's just a preferred taste anyway, ever how you like them. It's like shrimp. Some people like them fried and some people like them boiled. It's just



like anything else, just a preferred way you like to eat stuff.

MS: Then on lobsters – because I've seen lobster and just because I have more experience with them – they have a measuring tool and they have to be a certain size and they can't take them under that size because they can reproduce. Do they have that [talking simultaneously].

JWM: Well, state of North Carolina says you can't have a crab under 5 inches. Crab's got to be at least 5 inches if he's a male. A female can be 2 inches or 3 inches as long as she's an adult crab, she's got an apron on her. She's not a virgin crab, you can keep them. They don't have to have no certain size.

MB: So, we have footage of you measuring them.

JWM: Oh, yes.

MS: Yes. Now, I'm kind of curious how to tell the sex of the crab [laughter]. I don't know if it's the color.

JWM: Well, the best way to tell it is the females are red on the end of their claw and the boys are blue. The best way to tell.

MS: The boys are blue. What is the type of crab here? Because I know in the Chesapeake Bay they have blue crabs.

JWM: That's what it is here, blue crabs.

MS: Then I guess my other thing would be, have there ever been any – sometimes you get red tides and whatnot. Does that affect the crabs now?

JWM: We had a red tide or that's what they called it here one time in 1980. I believe it was in [19]88 or either [19]89. It's been so long back I can't remember exactly. But they claimed it was a red tide. I don't know what it was. But they shut the whole river down for a month or two months for no shellfish. We crabbed in it. It didn't seem to have any effect on the crabs, not that we could tell. It didn't kill them or anything.

MB: Well, speaking about that, in other words, the people like Rich Carpenter or the Marine, in other words, they have people testing the stuff all the time.

JWM: All the time. That's their job, is to test stuff. They go test the shrimp and they measure the crabs. They'll come down and go through the crabs and see how many are to the bushel. They're always taking samples of fish and bottom samples of water samples. That's their job, water quality.

MS: But you don't have major pollution issues here? Because I know some beaches they have red tides every year.

JWM: No. We don't have that kind of problem. But now, we've had some fish kills from pollution and stuff that I don't know what caused it. I don't know where it came from. I can't point the finger at no one person. But we have had a few here in New River.

MB: That pfiesteria thing?

JWM: Well, they claim that's what it was. But I don't know much about pfiesteria. All I know is what I hear on the TV. I've never seen a fish kill here around Lower Park River. Those fish kills where that pfiesteria stuff comes up way up your rivers where there's not much tide movement and the algae blooms and stuff kind of grow where there's no tide. It's like a pond effect. But I don't know much about it.

MB: Anything else Andy?

MS: We saw him with the bait the other day. Is there a preferred bait?

MB: This is getting pretty technical. We really don't need this stuff.

MS: Too technical stuff. That was mullet though, right?

JWM: Yes.

MS: I just thought we could simply get him to talk about it because we got pictures of the mullet.

MB: But, yes, I think we're good on that. Why don't we shut down and take a little breather. Very good.

MS: Excellent.

MB: Very good.

[end of transcript]