

Interview Subject: Captain Leonard Crosby
Interviewer: Logan Collins and Lilah Henderson
Project: Dock Stories
Transcriber: Logan Collins
Primary Investigator: Jennifer Sweeney Tookes
Others present: Rip the dog
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Duration: 1 hours and 35 minutes
Place of Interview: Richmond Hill, Bryan County, Georgia

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LC: This is an interview with Leonard Crosby on February 29 2025 the interview is being conducted in Richmond, Hill, Georgia, about the doc called Bryan county Co-Op dock. This is in part of the research project and interview collection titled dock stories. The interviewers are Logan Collins and

LH: Lilah Henderson. Can you tell us about your dock, or your connection to this dock?

CLC: Do what now?

LC: The connection you had to the co-op dock.

CLC: yeah, we had the co-op dock. And in my book, I tell how it first started, you know what I mean? The University of Georgia wanted us to diversify and not just depend on shrimp because it's seasonal, and the season runs from maybe from May to about December, the 31st in less extended into February. And sometimes they do that, which they did this year. But the University of Georgia wanted us to diversify, Dr. Ed Chen, director of the Marine Extension Service. He hired Dave Arrington, and Dave got with the Fishman up and down the coast and we started fishing offshore. I fished out there for six years and all kinds of weather and everything. We started out we didn't have, we didn't have no equipment to fish with. We just went off shore till we got in the right depth of water. We had fish finders, is all we had is radar fish finders. We didn't have low RAM back then. Dave Aaron calls us pine tree fishermen, because long as we could see land, we was all right. But when we got out there, you know what? I mean, it was a different story, 70 miles offshore. But at the time, they were thinking about building a super port in Brunswick and have a place railway and and to put the boats, pull the boats out, and paint the bottoms and refurbish them, and and they was going to have freezers and all like that. Well, back then, the boats were smaller boats, you know what I mean. And most of them shrimp around where they docked, up and down the coast, and they couldn't afford to run all the way to Brunswick, and because they do so much fishing time and burn fuel, and we run it by Dave, and Dave run it by Dr Chen that let's Build a dock in our area.

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So we decided we had several meetings and Dave carried it back to Dr Ed Chen, and they run it by the powers to be. And they said they done a feasibility study, and they found out from my income taxes for three years that we could afford to pay for a facility as big as we wanted. We ended up getting with the Bryan County Industrial Authority and time the International Paper Company owned the property, but they wouldn't sell it to us. So we got the university, I mean, we got with the Bryan County Industrial Authority, and Dixie Horn. Dixie had the land condemned, and we bought 10 acres of land from the International Paper Company. And after we bought the 10 acres, we found out we needed more land. In the meantime, the International Paper Company guild gives the state 30,000 acres surrounding us, and had put some of it in the

Georgia Conservancy, so we ended up having to go through the red tape to get some of the land back from them that we needed, and we ended up with 24 acres on Kilkenny Creek. We had to go to the Columbia Bank for Cooperatives to borrow the money, we had to borrow 1.3 million to build a dock that we wanted. Each member had to put up \$18,000 a piece to get the loan approved. We got it approved, and they started construction in 79 and they completed it in 1980. The University of Georgia had to get Owen Smith with the university. He was a lawyer, and he got the law changed to make aquatic products, part because there was no cooperative. So he had to get the law changed to make aquatic products part of the cooperative law, and we come under the Department of Agriculture.

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We opened the doors in 1980 and we was already into row shrimp season, which is your biggest as your biggest catch, you know, to start with during May and June and July. That's your money shrimp. And at the time, we was all still docking at different docks, but the members had to sign a marketing agreement stating that they would unload a catch at the Brian fisherman's Co Op, and that's how we got the money that we had to sign a marketing agreement, but the fisherman was scattered from Chatham, Bryan, Liberty, and some in Macintosh. But we got finally got enough. Finally got them all together. Mike Casey on the Geechee girl was the first post boat to unload, and at the time, I was the second one. I had to miss Deniece, named after my daughter. We had a manager and a secretary. We had dock hand, we had guards, and we built a 900 foot dock, 50 by 100 heading house and a 30 by 30 cooler and an ice machine big enough to furnish ice for 25 or 30 boats. Then we also built the marine railway which you could pull your boat out the water and pressure wash the barnacles and paint it and do any kind of repairs needed. At the time when we started the shrimp price in 1980 to the boat was \$6.25 cent for 21-25 heads off shrimp, Red Lobster, would back transfer trucks up, and we would load them up, and they would pay the dock, \$6.85. We were doing good at that price in the same time, same year the European market. put a ban on China imports because they consisted of cancer causing material. They put cancer causing preservatives and all into them, and the European market banned them. Well, when they banned them, they started dumping all the imports into the United States. And this was back in the 80s and at the time, 85% of the shrimp caughtl was import. I mean, 85% of the consumption was imports at the time. In other words, it was all the East Coast and Gulf only produced 15% you know what I mean, of the domestic catch the East Coast. I mean, we didn't, we didn't produce that many shrimp, so they used import but Red Lobster found out they could get them cheaper, and they quit buying our product, and then the prices dropped and fuel went up.

LC: When you say Red Lobster, do you mean like the restaurant?

CLC: Yeah.

LC: oh, that's impressive.

CLC: They quit buying our local and paying the higher price and started buying the cheaper product.

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LC: How many people were employed by the dock?

CLC: Well, when we first opened, we had a manager, a secretary. We had two full time men working in packing the shrimp, and if they brought them in with the heads on, they had to be headed. We had big heading tables and graders, and we'd get local 15 or 20, sometimes local. We had to have a van to go pick them up and carry them, but we had enough headers so they headed to shrimp. If we had a head on market, that was a fresh market, and we sold some of them with

the head on, but the majority of them was headed. Had to take the heads off, and we graded some of them. At the time, we was producing 1/5 at a state's catch, but one out of five boxes. We have had doing row shrimp season as high as 50 boats there, and we helped the economy and all grow around Richmond Hill, because a lot of the shrimpers lived here local and, you know, they do business and all. So we helped the economy but after, the imports flooded the markets, our prices went down and and fuel went up, and we couldn't. Over a period of years, we just couldn't hang on, and we ended up having to sell it, and that was a sad day, because we built it for our families like my son's a shrimper and a lot of them members had, their kids. They had two or three boys, that was captains, and the whole family was shrimpers, but over the years, it's all gone down. I got a list of all the shrimpers that had boats and and I'm gonna give Brian that he can look. I got a list of the shrimperpers that I that unloaded and before we built the Co Op, and after we built the co op that I competed with over the years but we managed to survive, barely

0:15:23

LC: When did the co-op close? When did the co-op close?

CLC: [inaudible]

15:30-16:14 [Papers shuffling while Captain Leonard looks for a letter]

CLC: Here's the letter to the shareholders and the members when we sold a dock in 2004.

LC: Can we get a picture of that at the end of the interview?

CLC: Yeah.

LC: So you were connected to the dock from the 80s until 2004 correct?

CLC: Do what now?

LC: You were connected to the dock from the 80s...

CLC: I managed well, I got it in the book there. Everything in the book. Danny Goodman built it. He lives in Liberty County, and he's a shrimper, and he's like me. We started off in speed boats and worked our way up, but he built three boats in Liberty County, and the first one was the Miss Andrea. It was about a 65 foot boat with twin engine, two engines in it, and my boat. The motor was torn up, and this was not long after we opened. My boat was tore up, and he asked me to run it for him till I get my boat fixed. So I took it down south to Jekyll, shrimp show up a couple of weeks earlier down there on row shrimp in May, and when I come back to the dock, the manager had to resign, and they asked me to manage the dock. And I agreed, and I've run it for six years. I managed to dock for six years, and we finally got it all paid off, and all, got out of debt, but still the imports and the fuel was killing us. What were

LC: What were your duties as manager?

CLC: What?

LC: What were your duties as manager? What did you do?

CLC: As manager I had to make sure the boats was lined up right to unload, because we had, at one time, like, I say, 1/5 of the state catches. We had boats coming and going. I had to call the buyers. We had different buyers that would buy the shrimp, you know, like Red Lobster and Smith and son, Darien. [Phone starts ringing]

LC: Do think that we can pause the recording?

CLC: but where was I at?

LC: You had to call the buyers.

CLC: Yeah, I had to call the buyers, and I had to manage the dock, make sure we got all the repairs done, and we had to keep up with the railway. At the time we leased, I think. 15,000 acres, it is in the book, to plant oysters and clams around Ossabaw. And we'd take and put cement cypress shingles and stick them out in the mud and let the little oysters attached to them.

Then we'd go on the lease and knock them off. The inner coastal waterway run in front of the dock. And what I mean, you could see the boats going by. We was on kill Kenyan Creek, and they was on the inner coastal waterway. They would cause waves, and I think that affected a lot of the oysters and a lot of the clamming that we tried to do, because the waves and all from the yachts and tugboats and all that. But we ended up losing the lease because DNR said, Department of Natural Resources said the hogs and donkeys and all on deer and all on the island polluted the water. Which I didn't agree.

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LH: Can you tell us what's unique about your dock?

CLC: uh?

LH: Can you tell us what's unique about your dock? what's unique about it?

CLC: Do what now?

LC: What was unique about the dock?

CLC: At the tiime, most of the docks, it was a lot of docks, but a lot of them was run down. And the fact that we had 900 foot of dock, and we maintained it, and we kept ladders that kept knocking, you know, ladders off the side of the dock with boats, but we maintained it. We had a place for non members. We had to do 51% under the cooperative law with members. So we could do 49% with non members, and we had a good many non member boats that helped pay for the dock, but we didn't charge any extra, as long as they unloaded it the dock. If they didn't unload at the dock or just wanted to tie up there. We would charge them rent, and some sunk. Some of the boats sunk and all, and we had to get them up. What's unique about it? We had everything that they were going to have at the super port. We had the railway, which was, if you got a net and a wheel and they could put you on the railway and straighten it out. I went on there one time and had to replace a shaft that holds the propeller. I had to replace that. A lot of the gray ghosts had to go on there. And Bob Massey sanded the whole bottom off, and it was 65 foot. He refiberglass while he was on the railway the whole bottom. We had a store room for the shrimpers that needed boots or needed rope or needed oil filters or shackles or anything they needed. We had it in the storeroom, and we had a man that managed the storeroom. I mean, that's how busy it was. It was real busy. We also had soft shell crabs. We kept them in tanks outside, and we also done conching. We brought, bought some of the boats, during off season and conch, we go out there and load the boats down with conches and we would, at the time, we didn't have, couldn't ball them and process them. We'd have to haul them to South Carolina. But we used to haul them by the truck loads when, when you conching and you can, you can fill up the whole boat, just about with conch. They'd be in drums on the stern and the bow would be piled up. Like I say, we had a secretary, and one time we had two secretaries, but Kathy Jones was there the whole time. She pretty well run the office. I'd help her if she wasn't there. I had, I had a little bit of I went to commercial eye and we took, you know, we did typing The fact that I worked at the railroad for 13 years, and we was using computers at the railroad, I was a little familiar. Back then, they was even bigger than a desk. You know the computers were, and you had to cut cards. We went to Armstrong and took courses on the computer. But I done forgot all I learned about them at 85 years old.

LC: Along with Miss Kathy who else did you work with at the dock?

CLC: uh?

LC: Along with Miss Kath, who else did you work with at the dock?

CLC: Well, I worked with Robert Jenkins. He'd weigh the shrimp up and do maintenance work. Ralph Gaskins, he was from Liberty County. He was familiar with the graders and all. He made

sure that all the shrimp, and all that were graded was the right size, because you get seven or eight different counts when you're grading the shrimp, you start off, you get your bigger ones, and then they keep coming down in size when you're grading them. We sold like I say, we sold to Smith and Sons and Darion, and we sold to Stevens in Louisiana. They'd come all the way over here and transfer trucks, and we'd load them down. Red Lobster after they kept buying the imports, they quit buying and we had a lot of local and Savannah and all that. Charlie Russo, he'd back up the door and get 25 or 30 boxes. He had a fish market in Savannah. Matthews, they used to come and buy. I uh, they'd come from all around, you know, and we'd charge them. We tried to make a profit above the buyer's price of \$25 a box. And they covered the labor and all and then we had a retail market one time, and we charged 50 Cent, you know, above the buyer's price to locals that come and bought shrimp. We had it going on. I mean, it couldn't be any better. But, like I say, you didn't always have a good season. You had good seasons and a bad, bad season. Before we opened the Co Op, Jimmy Carter was president, and they allowed that Muriel boatlift, where they brought In all the shrimp boats went down to Miami or to the keys and went 90 miles across there, and people with money had relatives in Cuba, and they would pay the captains and the owners to go over to Cuba to get the get their relatives. Well, it didn't work out that way. When they got over there, they wouldn't let them come back. One of my captains lives, who had the Grey Ghost lives right up the road, half a mile from Henton or so. They put him in Mary [Phone Rings] like Henton, they kept him in and that inlet over there, Mario, that Mario inlet, I think it is, but it wouldn't let him leave till they put all empty, just like they do, and just like they did under Biden, they emptied all The prisons and asylums. And when the boats come back, it was almost sunk, with so many people on there. Some of them got in the hall, Cubans, and then things were tough, and a lot of them was hauling dope. That was, you know, in the 70s and 80s, they was hauling marijuana. A lot of them got confiscated, and a lot of them served time. Some of my best friends, served time, you know, because they made the wrong choice. They they didn't say no. Anyway, we got down to 12 members until four. I mean, 2004 we didn't have but 12 members a couple of them didn't have boats. You had to have a boat to be a member, but things were so bad we decided against. I didn't want to sell it. None of them wanted to sell it, but we didn't have no choice. We couldn't support a dock that big with just 12 members. Started off we had 22 members, and but all the non member boats was gone, just about it, and we just couldn't afford it, so we had to put it up for sale.

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LH: Can you tell us more about like, the hard times that a dock had been through?

CLC: Do what now?

LH: What can you tell us more about the hard times that the dock been through?

CLC: About the hard..

LC: Yeah has the dock been through? What did it go through during all that time? You guys had it?

CLC: What did the dock go through? Well, when we built the dock, the EMC down at, Electric Membership Corporation they they decided to run an underground cable four and a half miles to the dock, and they buried that cable going to the dock. We had all our equipment was 443, phase. A lot of times when you had a power surge, it burn up our motors. You know what I mean? Because it would be a power surge. A lot of times them lines and that underground cable would blow out, and it'd be days before we could get it. Took them a while to get it back.

LC: How did those blowouts affect business at the dock?

CLC: Well, we didn't have no electricity and we didn't have a lot of them when we finally got it back on. Our motors, electric motors, would be burned up like we unloaded the boats with a hoist, and then we had a VAT that we brought the shrimp out after you dumped them in the VAT, we brought them in. We lost a lot of period of time. A lot of motors and and like I say, without boats, you can't make any money. Had to let some of our help go because we had guards down there, 24 hours a day, you know.

LC: What did the guards do?

CLC: The guards, they'd walk the property, and if his boat looked like it was listing or something, and they would pumping out, they get on the phone and call whoever was running a dock at the time. And they looked out for the dock, and made sure nobody didn't tote everything off.

LC: Do you have any stories where the security had to do some real like heavy lifting? Were there any incidents where they had to be used?

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CLC: You talking about the guards? I remember I got a phone call one night. I uh, buddy Martin called me and he said, I'm about ready to leave this dock. We had a little aluminum house, and so they did aluminum house. And he said, I'm about, I'm fixing leave what it is you got worms that eat wood they get, that's why you have to go on the railway and paint the bottom, because they'll get into your boat and they'll eat your boards up. He said, there must be a million down in the water. He says, they start on this bank, crawling up this bank. I'm coming home, I'm fixing to go home. Another time, a tornado went through there and picked him up in the guard shack and blew him about 100 yards, through the guard shack off the foundation. It was just an aluminum building. Luckily, nobody got hurt, but that's two episodes I know of that. I remember one of the guards I was down there, and he had a seizure, and I had to take my wallet and put it in his mouth, to keep him from swallowing his tongue. But they were, they were pretty well elderly, you know, retired people that worked down as guards. I had one work as an engineer. He was a retired engineer. He was, he lived over at seascape. He invited me to go over there one day and look at his sailboat. He had built a cement sailboat in his yard, and it was, I mean, a big sailboat, he said I got to turn it to magnetic north. And I said, How you going to turn it? He said he's going to get cue balls, you know, like pool with and he was going to rig up some way to let it under the keel, where you could turn the boat to old boat, cement boat, magnetic north, and let it sit there for a year and all that Metal and all would be pointed north, magnetic north.

LH: Can you tell us anything about the deck hands that you work with? The deck hands?

CLC: I can't hear what she's saying.

LC: Do you have any funny memories with the people who work there, the deck hands.

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CLC: Oh the deck hands. Oh, Lottie, we had a time with them. We had the signs up on the dock, no alcohol, no drugs, as long as I run the dock I didn't have no problem. But what they done on the boat, I couldn't keep up with that. I've run into some characters now. I got one in my book, that every time he'd go out or come in with money, he'd get to drinking and all and lose his white boots. It seemed like every time he had to go out, he had to buy a new pair of boots, and I drew the cartoon of him. He said, it says, Do you think I'm a 40 year old idiot? We was out there shrimping. I had him on the boat with me, and we was out there shrimping, and that was during 9/11 when the when the Twin Towers got burned up I was dragging out at the time. [Talking to dog] come here Rip Come here boy. I was dragging out at the time, and I had him on the boat with me, and my Dog, chubby, which I got a chapter on him in the book. He was a big red

pointer, but his mom was a full blooded pit. He was a pointer and he took after his daddy. Anyway, I had him on the boat, and they started boarding the boats up there at the line, at the sound limit sign, and the tide was going out, and I wanted to make low water, so I run out. I drug out the channel to pass the three mile line, because the state didn't have authority past three mile line. Anyway, there were four or five in the boat, and they I was past three mile line, and they pulled upside them and told me to get them up, get the rigs up. They wanted to check the turtle shooters. And I told him, give me 30 minutes, because it was low water. That's your best time behind low water to catch a shrimp and chubby, he was steady barking at him. Anyway, he pulled back up and said we got a federal authority. In other words, after 911 the government gave the State Game Wardens federal authority where they could go into federal waters past three mile line. So I had to get them up. So I got them up, and everything was all right. They checked Doug's Doug's license, where's your license? He didn't have a license. He had a passport. They wouldn't accept that. They sent me to the dock. In other words, I lost that rest of the day fishing because he didn't have his state license. Yeah, all he had was a passport, even though I was in federal waters.

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LC: What was the funniest thing that ever happened at the dock?

CLC: The funniest thing. Oh, Lord, I know one thing that wasn't wasn't too funny, but I had at the time, I had blue, that's chubby's Mama on the boat with me, and she was on the dock, and somebody give her a bone. She was eating the bone and somebody went up there and was going to try to take the bone from her. That was a mistake. She bit him on the hand. That wasn't funny, I know, but it wasn't too much funny stuff going on. We was pretty serious. Another thing I'll tell you, when we get those girls to come in all the way from [iceboro??] and all, and they'd come in there. We called them when they come in they had flat chests, and when they went to go out they had big boobs. Come to find out they were sticking shrimp in there. I thought that was funny.

LC: Well, maybe not funniest, but you have a favorite or best memory from the dock.

CLC: The what now?

LC: Do have a favorite or a best memory from the dock or a story.

CLC: Well again, they got to read the book. But we started the first, along with the Chamber of Commerce, we started the first Seafood Festival, and we run it. We had to clear land for parking, and we had 10 or 12 booths. We had a stage. See, this is all the way to the from the Crossroads downhill, which is the main hub of Richmond Hill at 144 and 17, it was 10 miles down 144 and four and a half miles to Co Op, so it's almost 15 miles down there, but we had food booths set up, and this was in the 80s. We had booths set up, and we had a band, we had a cement slab out there for dancing, and a lot of the local people would be there back then, they put all that many arts and crafts like they are now, but you just got to read the book.

[0:46:59](#)

LC: Oh, well, we'll read it when we get it, trust me,

CLC: Because it explains all of it. But we had dancing and all and everybody had a good time. After a couple of years, they moved it down to Richmond Hill. It was named the Geechee Seafood Festival. Well, it's been going on till, attended that year I think it was and they had a crowd, but this year to cancel it. I don't know why they cancel it, but they cancel it.

LC: How many years was that festival hosted at the dock?

CLC: At our dock? I think it was two years, or maybe three, I can't remember exactly.

LC: And they were successful? They had to be. They were very successful?

CLC: Yeah it was successful. We had Governor Joe Frank Harris and his wife come down, and they brought the Georgia Bulldog around and tied it up to the dock, and they had tours, let people go on the Georgia Bulldog. We had displays in there, telling showing the people how we shrimp and crabbed and fished and I couldn't find a picture, but I got a picture somewhere of Governor Joe Frank Harris standing up at one of the heading tables with the strikers on both sides. Some of them look kind of rough.

LH: So it was really popular with the public. It was really popular with the public.

CLC: Do what now?

LH: It was really popular with the public.

LC: It was really popular with the public, the community liked it?

CLC: Oh, yeah, we had so many people down there. We couldn't, my granddaughter, I can't understand half what she said, because it's a voice, and I'm already hard of hearing.

LH: I apologize.

0:49:25

LC: So it sounds like you were in the industry for a very long time. What changes did you see in the industry over the years?

CLC: Well, at one time they was around 1500 license sold when the sounds was open. They closed the sounds, and with the promise of reopening it, they never reopened it. DNR didn't, didn't open it back up. Now I guarantee you this year, there'd be less than 200 licenses sold in Georgia.

LC: Did you see any changes in the weather or in the water at all?

CLC: I hadn't, the only change that I've seen in the water is I noticed over the years, we used to tag shrimp, and back then, when we tagged them, this was in the 80s, some of them would go north and some of them would go south, and then some of them would stay around. You know what I mean, just according with the temperature of the water and the time of the year. What seemed like to me now that they might be catching shrimp a little bit further north than the past, but you go through cycles. I don't believe it's global warming doing it that much, because we go through cycles. Sometimes it might be a 10 year cycle. Sometime it might be a five year cycle, but our weather had snowed it the other day, and I have seen it snow on the dock. I got pictures of where it snowed a foot on the dock. I've been off shore out there fishing in the 80s, and it snowed in the Gulf Stream on me. And like I say, we go through cycles, just like the hurricanes, and all day it goes, we just go through different cycles,

LH: Did and did those hurricanes affect business? Did the hurricanes affect business?

CPC: The Hurricanes, when you get a hurricane after the Hurricane blows, you usually get out there and when it calms down, you usually do good with the shrimp, because all that fresh water and all pushing them all shore. When Hugo come through my belief, and today, we have trouble with black Gill in the shrimp, I'm sure you heard of that, the gills get black and they can't breathe, and they end up dying. But when Hugo come through all them, all up in North Carolina and all them hog farms and whatever, flushed all that come down and moved out in the ocean. It seemed like after that, when I first seen black Gill. They got different aspects of it, but that's what I believe caused it is pollution. Yeah, after Hugo.

0:53:59

LC: Did Hugo or any other hurricanes affect the dock? Did it get any damages or anything?

CLC: Gotta look at the book.

LC: The people can't see the book.

CLC: I got a chapter in there bout, Sunbury Lodge. I got a picture of it. It drew when I first went around there, before it was in the 70s, when I had the Mickey Mouse. That was the first boat I bought. And I went around and Elaine Morgan, JW Morgan and his daddy were on the dock, and she wanted me to draw a picture in ink of the Sunberry Lodge. At the time, they were running it in the 60s. And it was a restaurant and a bar and all that. She asked me to draw one in ink, and so I drew it for her. A couple of years later, I got a Christmas card, and she had made, took copies of it, made a Christmas card and put JW and Elaine Morgan and Lori their daughter and when they sent it to me I got the envelope with the stamp date on it and all. They mailed it at Midway. And I took it and put in my file cabinet out at my studio and four, five, about three or four years ago, I pulled it out and I took and made copies of it and put down at the bottom of it some very large operated by J David Elaine Morgan in the 60s, and made a copy of it and framed it and carried it over there. I was going to give it to Elaine, and Lori was there, and she says, I got, we got a copy of the menu on the wall here. I said, can I borrow it and she loaned it to me. I took the menu and took it out of the frame and carried it and had copies made of it. So I got the Sunbury Lodge and the menu back then under it. That's one of my best sellers. I sell it. I sell it framed and prints. But anyway, when Ima through it blew it. Come right through here and blew pretty good. My boat was tied up at Sunbury, because after we sold the dock, I didn't have no place to go. And I went to two or three small dock, I ended up back at Sunbury, where I started. When Ima come through, it blew the restaurant onto the boat, where there's a boat ramp right side of it, blew the whole thing out onto the boat ramp and destroyed it. And my boat was a half a mile from them. I didn't get no damage. But my son, Mike, went to go down there to pull the boat in, because we had it wouldn't touch dock. He slipped and messed his arm up a little bit, and he still had trouble from it, but, but I was lucky I got to do I told Mike I wanted some of the boards off. Get me some of the boards off of it before they scrap it. So he messed around and didn't get me no board, but I got a door, a door off of it. And when I go to the shows, I take the hang the Sunberry Lodge and all up on that door, because his door that's big and seven foot high, and I just hang my frame pictures on it.

LC: You talked about earlier a tornado hit the co op dock,

CLC: Yeah

LC: And that blew off the guard shed, but did that cause any other damage to the dock?

CLC: No, but I don't know whether it was the same one or not, but the Geechee girl was anchored in Ossabaw for the night, and when it come through, our tornado went through, and we Got fiberglass bibs on the front of the boat, like on that picture there, there's a bib up down. It's kind of hard to see a bib right there. See how wide it is right there. It tore the bib off to Geechee girl, which is a sister to that boat, my boat. It tore the bib off and tore the radar off while he was on Anchor. The captain's name was Bigfoot, and he was worried about his life. You know what I mean.

LH: Was there any financial troubles because of it?

CLC: Do what?

LH: Were there any financial troubles because of it?

LC: Were there any financial troubles because of the hurricane or because of the tornado

CLC: Was anybody hurt?

LC: Were there any financial troubles? Did that hurt the dock financially.

CLC: No, we hadn't, had never, had no damages I can remember from hurricanes or tornadoes,

LC: Were there any other financial struggles that happened at the dock?

CLC: Well, like I say, they almost they come in there with a suitcase fixing to foreclose from Columbia Bank at time we opened the door, just about it, and we had to get Dr Ed Chen director, marine extension. We had to hire Gerald Edenfield, the attorney in Statesboro. And we all had to go and some of the members and all we had to go to Columbus, South Carolina, and we also had Fred Lotter with us too, I think, and meet with the Columbia Bank for Cooperatives, because they was about to foreclose on us. But we worked out a deal, and we managed to pay it off eventually.

LC: So when you think about the future of commercial fishing in Georgia, what do the docks today need to be successful?

CLC: Well, they need docks. They need a place for the boats to tie up. They just, you know, in Darien, which has been a shrimping industry thats how people made a livin' shrimpin'. Now they've done sold. I got a picture of the dock before they built the Co Op, I mean, before they sold the docks. I got a picture of the boats that I drew from a photo when they were docks from the bridge all the way down the Boone's dock. They sold a railway that was there to and now they got condos and restaurants on no railway, and they had a dock with about 10 or 15 boats between where they built this new stuff. And I heard they just sold it, and now all the 15 boats that was theirs. Got to find them a place to go. And the only dock left would be Boone's dock, and Skipper's dock on the north side of 17. That's where I bought, when I started Shrimping, that's where I bought my first boat, right at Skipper had a railway down. Now you got the restaurant and condos. He do. I think he's got a dock, maybe three or four boats, five boats there. But the railway is gone, everything, and there's no dock at the time when I started shrimping. Roy Seitz had a dock at Rabbit Hill in Bryan County, and he had the Joanne was the name of his boat, and it was a small boat with a 471 in it, and I worked my way up. Learned how to catch shrimp with a speed boat. And once you get that shrimping in your blood, you just can't stand it, and I had to have a boat anyway. Walter Fisher in Darien, he had a little boat, was about 40 foot long, nine foot wide, had a 471, in it. And when I seen it, I'd had to have it. And he put it on the railway at skippers dock, and I got Roy Seitz that had the Joanne that go down there with me. And the first thing he done pulled out his pocket knife and started jabbing it in the bottom of the boat, because the boards had been eaten by worms. By them worms, the knife would slip on in into the wood, but when he checked it, it was solid, and he and the wheel and and the rudder and all looked good. So I bought the boat, and he helped me run it around Rabbit Hill, and I docked at Rabbit Hill and worked at the railroad. I was working at the railroad at that time, I went to work at the railroad when I got out of high school, and I worked there 13 years. I'd anchor at Kilkenny the Mickey Mouse, and I'd go out from Kilkenny, and then if I come in, I got a picture of it. If I come in, it took four hours to run up the Geechee river because you have to go around one bend that was seven miles. And back then, they was unloading pulpwood. My fall in law, at the time, was cutting. They were cutting six foot logs. They wasn't cutting these long ones. They was cutting six foot logs and loading them in racks. They had a wood yard down there, and they sent a barge from Georgetown, tugboat and barges from Georgetown, and they load the wood up on barges, and then they carry them to Georgetown, South Carolina, and process them into paper. But every now and then while they would load them, one of them six foot pieces of wood, logs would fall overboard, and they were green, and they went and they'd float about two or three inches above the water, and the rest of it was underwater, and you had to be real careful running up that Geechee at the time, because of that pulpwood floating. In fact, there's still some of them on the banks. If you ever go down there on the water, you can see them. But anyway, I decided to I asked JW daddy, he was alive at the

time. I said, Can I bring my boat around to Sunbury? And he said, Yes. I carried around the Sunbury and I docked there a couple of years and shrimped it. The sounds was it open. It didn't take me about 30 minutes to get there to the sounds, and it was shallow draft, and most of the boats there tied up, and it was about 15 boats or better tied up. But they was deep draft. They was anywhere from five to seven foot, and I had an advantage on the beach and all with my shallow draft. And there wasn't that many boats shallow draft, and I caught more shrimp than a lot of the bigger boats at that time. Anyway, I ended up selling it. 1973 I sold a Mickey Mouse, and I worked on the back deck for a year while they were building my boat. I had to pick up shrimp and wash them down, it's in the book.

[1:09:35](#)

LC: When you think ahead to, we had hurricane Helene come in this year, we had the hurricane Helene come in this year, and you think ahead to other hurricanes or other big storms. Do you think there's anything that the docks that are still around can do to help prepare for those

CLC: How can they prepare for a storm? There's nothing, not much. I rode out one. I rode out David, and I ain't gonna ride out no more. I had the lines running to the oak trees on the hill. You couldn't get your arms around. We was on the boat, and when it come across it about 90 mile an hour, I think, when it come across from Florida. When that hit, my boat went one way. And, I mean, it blew and then when it, when the eye come away, it slide off a little bit, and then when it passed, the boat went opposite way, but on the dock. And just lucky, luckily, you know, I had enough ropes and all tied off. There's not, I mean, you just got to, like, in our case when a storm comes, we take and put a anchor off the bow and an anchor off the stern in the river, and then tighten up on it, and that holds the boat off from the dock. Those boats is like a die down were they won't go all the way under, but they'll scare you. If you ever fished off shore, you know what I mean. But they, they pretty well ride the water if the docks capable of withstanding, you know, you got good power and all, but there's not much you can do then do when a hurricane is coming.

[1:11:38](#)

LH: What about for high tides? What about for high tides?

CLC: High tides? Well, high tides really don't affect us, because the pilings you don't have, well, on New Moon and full moon, you got eight, nine, sometimes 10 foot tides. They come and but your docks are usually got piling long enough that they can ride up and down with the tides.

LC: So I know that the co-op is closed now, and it has been. But can you think of anything that could have been invested into that dock to keep it successful for another five or 10 years.

CLC: No, at the time, when we put a sale, I was hoping the state might buy it, but the guy that bought it. It was a firm from Atlanta that bought it. In fact, his name was Butler. I got, I don't know what I got pictures of. I got pictures of it when he bought it and all. They had planned on building a cove and building condos and all that there. Well, remember they were going to build houses all back there, behind us, and I couldn't put the sign up on the road because they were going to widen the road and but, you know, when the property fell through, I don't remember the exact year when the property price was, evidently, that group that bought the property, they had borrowed some the money to buy it with, and they they couldn't build what they wanted to build. So it sat down there for a while, and then the county commission in Bryan county purchased it from them, and now they turning it into they're gonna have four boat rounds for the public. They're gonna have walkways for the public. They're gonna have a heading house. They're gonna have a building. They going to have pavilions. That place is down there for people to go and

cook and eat and all that, I mean, cook the food and all. They going to have fishing docks. They going to have boat docks where speed boats and all, ain't got no place for a shrimp boat.

[1:14:48](#)

LC: Well, do you have any recommendations for the future of commercial fishing?

CLC: Well, I hope so. My boat's been torn up for two and a half years, and I've got the motor and all, but prices everything. I went, bought the motor, I went and spent the money on the boat, rigging it, I got another winch and doors, aluminum doors, and rebuilt outriggers and all. I got a loan. When the stimulus money come out, they didn't give me no money. They give me a loan. And I took the loan and spent it on the boat, hoping the motor and all would hold up. Well, it didn't work out that way. After I spent all the money on the rigging and winch and doors and cable, the motor blew up.

LC: So you're trying to get back out on the water? So you're trying to get back out on the water?

CLC: I'm trying to get back out. And I bought another motor after mine tore up, I bought another motor, and I waited about six months, and come to work on it, on the engine, come to find out, I bought a left hand motor. You know, if you got a twin screw, one turns to your left and one turns to the right. Well, I didn't know the man sold me a left handed motor, and I got to change all of it over to a right handed motor. I've been keeping up with all my license, all my documentation, because if you don't keep up with it every year, I got it in my book there were some people, like the Westers, they had three or four boats. Well, when the daddy died, the boys had three boys, and they didn't have no education. All they knew how to do was catch shrimp and run boats, and the Coast Guard papers was messed up, and it was a fiberglass boat. Well, he anchored it over there at Montgomery on the Savannah, and DNR found out about it, and they made him move. They come and move the boat, and they pulled it up in a creek over there, and the boat storm come up and blowed it into the marsh, and it turned over and sunk but it was, it's a shame. Anyway, I keep up with my license. Offshore you have to have National Marine Fisher Service. You have to have offshore fishing permit. I have to renew that every year. You have to have you have to have your documentation. And I pay for a license every year. They got a date, a control date where, you know, like rock shrimping now is limited entry. Fishing offshore while you fished out in six years, limited entry. Shrimping, If they go back to that date, and I can't remember my head what the date is, I'm afraid they're going to go back to that date, and if you didn't have a permit at that date, that you might not have a license to fish. To get a permit, If they ever issue permits, if you go buy it, like these other industries, these permits, they run into big money. Like I say, I want to get her going again. She just turned 50?

LC: Oh really?

CLC: Well, she turned, she was 73, it was 1973 to it was 50 years old.

[1:19:40](#)

LC: Well before we end, I just want to ask, What do you think Georgia's fishing industry needs to be successful?

CLC: Do what now?

LC: What do you think Georgia's commercial fishing industry needs to be successful?

CLC: Well, I hope President Trump does what he says about these imports. By putting a tariff on them and let them stop flooding this market with even though we got to have imports, but make sure they're not buying the imports from China that that the European market rejected. Georgia just passed this law that the restaurants have got to show whether they wild Caught Georgia shrimp or whether they're imports, and that should boost our price. But like I say, in 1980 the boat, I got receipts, boats were getting \$7.25 cent a pound for their shrimp. And now the same

21-25 shrimp at the docks is probably less than \$6 a pound, and you can't with the price of fuel sky high and the price of the shrimp. Unless you've got a big boat and catch a lot of shrimp, we've got a lot of power. I don't, I don't see how to even make it, but some of the boats that I talked to, they need not even breaking even now, with the prices of shrimp. Right now the price of, if you had to do repair work, you can't afford them. I mean, the labor has gone up so high you can't afford to hire a mechanic to work on it. I had a mechanic. The name was Butch. I got it in the book. He could work on anything, you know what I mean? He worked on the car. I met him over there in Port Royal, at the dock at Port Royal and then I got him to come and work on my boat. But he's worked in Darien and Brunswick. He'd work anywhere, and he knew what he was doing. And he come by one morning. I said, I need bearings to go on my boat trailer. He said, Well, I got to go to help this logger up the road here with a fuel pump on a skidder at two o'clock. So by then he had had my bearing. He put the bearings in my wheel, I mean in the wheels on my trailer. You know that part of his tools there and and Wilkie Proman came by and picked him up and carried him up to the woods in Pembroke. He fixed a skidder and he cranked it up, and he could work on anything. Well, he walked down in the woods, and Jerome was loading logs on a truck, long logs, and he didn't know that Butch had walked up, and when he went to swing the logs, the logs hit him in the back and knocked him on the ground, and his head hit one of the stumps. He didn't realize it how bad it was, and EMC went to check him in the woods. He said, I'm all right, no. Well, they come right up the road, where they live, where Wilkie lived. He got to feeling bad, and they sent LifeStar to come get him, and he lived about two weeks, and it killed him. And I miss him. My son misses him, but he taught. He taught Mike a lot, because Mike would help him work on everything. But I surely miss him.

CLC: I was going to ask, you brought up the Mickey Mouse. Was there any other name of boats that you work with?

CLC: Well, at the time Roy Sights, he had the Joanne, and it was tied up at rabbit Hill down at in Richmond Hill. At rabbit Hill on 144 and his brother, JM sites had the Carrie Jo. It was, about a 50 foot boat, and I think it had a Cummins in it, and long outriggers, and that was tied up to the dock. Well, that was the Carrie Jo, it was a North Carolina boat. And then, after I built my boat. I mean, when I had the contract to build my boat, they were building another boat, but I couldn't get contract in time to get it. Roy had sold to Joanne and bought and had the Geechee Girl built. It was a boat just like mine. It was the second one out the mold and it was a Geechee girl. Well, I was trying to get my contract and all where I could with the Dixie PCA. Crab Moore he got some help and went ahead and got the next boat out of the mold, and then named it the Geechee Boy. Then I got the contract on mine and started building the Miss Denise. In the meantime, Crab, he got the boat and he brought it around the rabbit hill, where you had the Geechee Boy and the Carrie Jo. He tied the Geechee Boy, upside the Carrie Jo and the Carrie Jo had long outriggers on it, and he went to go out, and he had a bunch of girls and all that looking at him. He was proud of that boat and all well. He cranked up the Geechee Boy, and went to leave out. He went out there. He didn't realize it, but the cables was hung in the Carrie Jo's outriggers, and turn him over at the dock. Them girls [could not understand]

LC: What about those girls? Finish that thought.

CLC: The girls, they're standing up there looking, I bet you they still remember that. Anyway, they got the Carrie Jo up and JM said, man, it killed all my driving, all my roaches.

[1:28:21](#)

LC: Were there any boats that were memorable that docked at the co op?

CLC: Do what?

LC: Were there any memorable boats that docked at the co op?

CLC: That docked at the co op? memorable?

LC: Yeah, anyone stick out to you?

CLC: Well, you seen this? You know this trial that happened over there in Carolina, a couple of years ago about where, I can't think of his name right this minute. Anyway, he killed his wife and his son. Well, Mike worked for Barrett Bohler. He'd run the boats. He shrimp over there for 10 years. My son and he run different boats for Barrett Bohler. Barret and his boat, and his father had a bunch of wooden boats. Well, everybody was buying boats, and you notice things making a little bit of money and everybody had to get in then. So a lot of wannabe captains back then, and some of them made it, and a lot of them didn't, but like the Water World, it sunk at the end of the dock. I burned a picture of on a piece of plywood. He bought that from Barrett Bohler, thats the Water World. The Southern Lady was wooden boat; he bought it from Barrett Bohler. I met Barrett, in fact I have been on the railway over there with him. Seemed like a nice guy, but I didn't know he was involved in [dope?] or nothing. You know I was always fishing, thats all I done is fish. It was later on that I found out he had been in the drug business. Anyway, he had a boat, the Southern Lady. One of the boys around here, that was probably striking at the time on the back deck, he bought it. Another boy bought, Barrett's wife was named Janine, on of the sons of a member bought the Janine Ann, was the name of the boat. He had a daughter named Heather Marie, and he changed the boat to the Heather Marie. He didn't make the payments on time, and Barrett Bohler took the boat back and sold it to a boy in Brunswick. I can't think of his full name right now. He named the boat the High Stakes and was dragging on row shrimp in the three mile line. You know you can't get inside the three mile line or they'll write you up. He was in the [reck slew?] off of Jekyll and the plan flew over and when on south. When the plan flew over he was going to make him a dip in there behind Jekyll slew. Well he hung up, he was panicked, he said I got to get off this hang. He couldn't get off of it and he asked, there was boat called the BJ. Carrie Abraham he was out there dragging from Carolina, he was from Frogmore South Carolina, and he was there dragging past the three mile line. He called Carrie Abraham, he said can you come pull me off this hang before the plane flies back over. Well Carrie Abraham had a steel hull, it was twin screw, it had two engines. When Carrie went to swing around to catch his bow line, he hit the wrong throttle and the doors on Carrie Abraham's BJ tore the whole bow off the High Stakes. Anyway, he hooked him and pulled him off, but the High Stakes had to go to the dock for major repairs. Well Carrie Abraham when he went back to Frogmore, the [rabbit briggden?] on 84 in Liberty County had built this nice, I mean to me its the best boat on the east coast. Because the first mold he built he tore the whole mold up. He had to be right so built the Bog Bee 2 out of Fiberglass about 65 foot, and he sold it to Daivd White. Which lived down there by [Strawsy Hall?], but David White got brain Cancer and the boat was up for sale again. Carrie Abraham bought it, he sold the BJ and bought that. Carrie Abraham I met him a lot and he told me a lot about fishing in that area because those weren't my fishing grounds. Come to find out he was running the Bog Bee 2 and had a heart attack at the wheel and died. I got a guardian angel, do you see the angel [points to book cover].

LC: Well that's all we have for you today, so thank you so much for talking with us.

[1:35:35](#)

Ends interview