

Interview Subject: Christine Skinner
Interviewer: Blake Pavri and Logan Collins
Project: Dock Stories
Transcriber: Blake Pavri
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Others Present: Unknown voice (U1, U2)
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Place of Interview: McIntosh County

00:00

[background noise, setting up from 00:00-02:37]

02:37

BP: This is an interview with Christine Skinner on Ap- not April, February 27, 2025. The interview is being conducted in McIntosh County, Georgia, about the dock called Skinner dock, it is part of the research project and interview collection titled dock stories. And the interviews are Blake Pavri and,

LC: Logan Collins.

BP: So Ms Skinner, can you tell us about the connections to this dock? When did you first come here? When did you work here? When did you become associated with it?

CS: We moved down here in 1972 and so then we bought the land where the dock is now. And so when we got and built the dock, and it was early 80s when we built the dock, and we had been working it ever since, and we had really good shrimp that come in, all of it was just marvelous. We had eight boats at one time here. By now, we can't even, well, we'll go ahead and start in there, you know. But anyway, all those many years, up until the last two years, we've had a good time making money at the dock, but it's gone down so badly because of nobody wanting to pay you for your shrimp. And we have to try to sell everything right now, right by ourselves. So it's been hard, hard on the two boats. And I only got two boats now, so there's, I got another one, but he quit shrimping because of not being able to get rid of the shrimp for a decent price. So it's been hard on the shrimpers, the boat owners.

LC: Why did y'all decide to build the dock?

CS: Why we just decided to build a dock?

LC: Mhm

CS: To unload the boats

LC: So you were already in the shrimping industry

CS: Well, that's why we moved down here. We moved down here, and when we first come down here, we was over there, Mr. Ward's place where the big dock is now we- Mr. Ward let us come down here, and we unloaded with him. And then that's when we decided it would be better to go ahead and build that dock where we could enjoy our own dock, so. That's about the only thing I can tell you about reason we wanted to build it, because we bought the land to the dock is on.

LC: Was it always called Skinner Seafood?

CS: Ever since we started Skinner seafood

LC: Do you have any fun memories from when the dock was being built.

CS: In what?

LC: Any fun memories for when the dock was being built?

06:02

CS: No, it- work is never fun [laughing]

LC: So what has your role been while working at the dock?

CS: Boss.

LC: What does being boss entail for you?

CS: Well, I've just, whatever comes in. I decided where it was going to go to, and I sold all the other boats shrimp, and then I paid them for it. So I've been boss. Like this old saying is, the boss might not be, it must- might not be always right, but she's still the boss.

BP: Do you like being boss?

CS: Hm?

BP: Do you like being the boss of..?

CS: Always been boss of the dock

BP: And you enjoyed it?

CS: Yeah. But my husband, he, we started out and he passed away, so it's kind of hard, you know, for a woman to take over, but I have all my family work with me, my daughter, Cheryl and Ricky.

BP: What does Cheryl and Ricky do?

CS: Cheryl and that, Cheryl and Mike stay out there, working out now.

BP: Oh, they like, find shrimp and everything.

CS: Yeah

BP: Okay,

CS: They had a boat, and they worked their boat, and they unloaded with me. That's my daughter and her husband.

BP: So is, to your knowledge, is this dock similar to other docks around this area, around Georgia?

CS: Ask that again?

BP: Is this dock similar to other docks in Georgia?

CS: [None of them is] similar.

LC: So what makes yours unique?

CS: Mine, we build it from get go all the way up. There was nothing there, so we built that dock and it... so I don't compare it to no dock. Everybody has their own doings and they have a dock.

LC: Have you had to rebuild the dock at all over the years?

CS: Oh, we've had put in new piling, and you had to go from the ceiling down in through the floor to put new piling in. So we've done that. Couple of pilings, gone from the top of the dock all way down to the bottom of the, you know, where the- my son did it with his boat to put the pilings in.

LC: When was that?

CS: That was I'd say maybe, it could be 12 years ago.

09:49

LC: So what has this dock been through while you've had it?

CS: What is it what?

LC: What has it been through?

CS: Been through? Have been through a lot of storms, but nothing has ever messed up down there through the storms.

LC: That's nice.

BP: So while working at the dock, can you tell me about the people that you worked with?

CS: Oh, my family and my neighbors. I've had Teddy and Clara Smith. They helped me so much. Clara worked down there, and she's good neighbor, and that's about the only people I hired.

LC: How many people is- how many people does it take to run the dock?

CS: Right now or back then?

LC: Both.

CS: Back then it took a lot of what run the dock, because we've had so many boats. We had eight and 10 boats coming in unloading. But now we don't have it. Have to have anybody. They live- the boat owners is taking care of selling their own shrimp. Now that's how bad it's got you.

BP: So can you tell me the funniest thing or the funniest memory that you have relating to the dock?

CS: Just being with my friends.

LC: Yeah?

CS: That's about the only thing, and I-

BP: Nothing stands out to you?

CS: And everybody loved everybody that was down there at the dock.

LC: And all the time that you had here, have y'all ever [hosted] any community events or anything down here where you had a bunch of neighbors and family come?

CS: They- I've had people coming from all over Georgia, buying shrimp from me. Yeah, all friends.

[12:56](#)

LC: Do you have a favorite memory from the dock? Doesn't have to be funny or anything like that, just your favorite memory.

CS: Just making money. [laughing]

[U1 enters room 13:15-13:26]

LC: So we talked about this a little bit at the beginning with you're seeing less shrimpers now. But have there been any other changes in the industry that you've noticed with the waters or with the weather or anything like that?

CS: No.

LC: What about the kind of catch that's being brought in? Has that changed at all?

CS: The what?

LC: The catch that's being brought in? Are you seeing more fish or less shrimp?

CS: Less fish. You just got to know where to go to catch, you know, to shrimp, and it has changed a little bit, even the shrimp they're not catching as many as they used to. [to U1] You can answer some of these questions. [laughs]

LC: Why do you think they're catching less shrimp?

U1: Price.

CS: Price. [laughs] Well, the, what I think, I think there's, I think it's the sharks,. It's catching. They're, I think this- is starving. The sharks is and they're eating more of the fish especially. I think that's what I would say.

LC: Are you seeing a lot of shrimpers come back in with torn nets from sharks biting out of it all.

CS: Oh, yeah.

LC: Do you ever see sharks out here?

CS: I don't think I've seen too many sharks out here, but when you're on the shrimp boat out there, those sharks eat your nets up. I mean, and my son, he, you know, had a bycatch, and they throw out some, you ought to see those sharks. It's like you better not fall in it, in that water. But

I think the sharks is having a lot to do with different times. They used to let you catch sharks, but they don't. And you can sell their fins over to China and places and make a lot of money, but they won't let you catch sharks anymore. But my son in law was- her husband, my daughter there, he used to have the license to catch the sharks, and then they could sell parts of the sharks, but they won't let them go out there no more and do that. Which it should. They should let them do that. There's too many sharks out there in the waters. And that's my opinion. And I think my opinion is right.

LC: I believe you.

BP: Is there a reason why they say that he can't go out catching sharks, or do they just say no?

CS: They just won't give you a license. What's his name? Here was here and here with you.

BP: Bryan

CS: He ought to know why, but I don't know why, but they're eating us up with- they'll eat your net clean up, holes all in your nets, and you come back in. You go out one day and stay out for a couple of days. You come back, two days it takes them to, and three days to get hire somebody to cat- to fix your nets.

18:01

BP: How much does it cost to fix the nets?

CS: It's according to whatever you can get somebody to do it for.

LC: How many people still know how to repair the nets?

CS: Well, every boat owner ought to know how to. But you got to stand out there on that all day long, for two days or three days sometimes, to fix what you went out there and caught shrimp for two days. So the owner of the boat, if he knows how to do it. If he don't, he's got to hire somebody. And Claire and Teddy. Teddy fixes nets. My son, Ricky, fixes his own nets most of the time, but he's so tired when he comes out back in from fishing, then it's hard on him.

LC: Speaking of your son, did you raise your kids at this dock, or were they already grown when you started?

CS: Well, Ricky was, he's the baby of the- and he was started off fishing when he was 12 years old, helping his daddy. So he's the only one that was raised up in it, in fishing business. Because Cheryl is few years older than he is, so she was already married. And Michael, he was in the business too for long while.

LC: What about your granddaughters and your grandkids? Did they ever come down to the dock?

CS: Oh, yeah, they come down, but they don't do nothing, you know.

LC: Did they ever go play in the water or anything or?

CS: No, I wouldn't want them to.

LC: When did- there hasn't always been a restaurant next to you, has there?

CS: Oh, yeah, when we moved, they built that restaurant down there the year, I believe it was the year we moved down here, and it was a Pelican Point then and now, it's the Fish Dock. But he had to change it. He bought it from his daddy, and he had to do it because of the, his business had to be named Fish Dock. The restaurant had to go under his corporation. So that's why that's like it is now it's changed to Fish Dock.

LC: Do you think being next to a seafood restaurant gives your dock a leg up over other docks, or do you think that makes your dock special in any way?

CS: Nah

LC: No?

BP: So I think you talked about this a little bit, but you said that storms and hurricanes haven't

really affected your dock, right?

21:48

CS: No, not really.

BP: Not really?

CS: Not really, no.

BP: Nothing with high tides or anything like that out here?

CS: Well, we had high tides one time, and it went through my office down there at the dock, and my son got out there into water coming out of the dock, and he was pretending he was, this is just for y'all. He was pretending that he was a big man, telling us about the weather. Weather man, that was so funny. He was like swimming in it. But that did come by- the water came in and messed up, and I had to redo in my office, the floors and all. It was full of water, my office was, but that's one time, and it come up to my doorsteps out here, my walkway coming in the water come up to it, and that's as far as they got, up towards the house.

LC: When was that?

CS: I can't remember what year it was. I can't- I couldn't even remember that year. It ain't been but about three years ago, probably.

LC: Was there a big storm coming soon? Or did it just do that one day?

CS: Well, it was because of the tide, the wind blowing in, the tide more than we ever had it, it come across out there, just a little bit across where I put, got the thing out there, and it went up. I think it [stumbling over words] my I got some orange tree. Out that one orange tree, and I think it got onto my orange tree, and it ain't made oranges like it used to be. So I think the slammed water over into the yard and got it messed up my orange tree I think.

LC: That's sad.

CS: That was some best of oranges you ever put in your mouth.

BP: Fresh oranges are great, just plucked from the tree and everything. They're so good.

CS: And I got not only orange tree. I got a grapefruit tree out there too, but it didn't mess with that bit.

LC: Do you like living out here on the dock and next to the water?

CS: Oh yeah, I love my place here. I'll be here too, my last breath probably.

LC: What do you love most about it?

CS: I like the view.

BP: It is a nice view.

CS: And we built this house ourselves.

BP: It's gorgeous.

CS: Yep. And I got to redo some of the stuff, you know, after... when we built it, it was, I forget what year, what year we built this house. I don't remember what year it was. It was right after we bought the land for the dock. So we, Mike Phillips owned it, and he sold us the land, but his daughter was living here, and the house that was on here burnt down, and we had to clean all of this out, you know. And then we built the house here. But I can't remember the year it was.

26:14

BP: Where did you move from? You said, you moved down here.

CS: We were living in Richmond Hill that my kids graduated from Richmond Hill

BP: Okay.

CS: But I'm- we're- we was born and raised, me and my husband both in Baxley, Georgia.

BP: Where's that?

CS: [Appling] County, Baxley. Baxley, Georgia.

BP: Got it.

LC: Were you doing shrimping stuff up in Richmond Hill?

CS: We bought, yeah, a boat, and we had to move from down up there the reed. We brought that and brought the boat with us. And was working with Mr. Ward, unloading with him. He was, I don't know where y'all probably don't know who Mr. Ward was.

BP: We do not

CS: But Ward Seafood.

LC: What happened to Ward Seafood?

CS: Well, he passed away, and then their family tried to run it, and then they decided they was going to sell it. And so, another man around here bought it. And put that big building up over there. They didn't know what they was doing when they built it. That's, you cut that out.

LC: Make a note. So what hard times has this dock experienced?

CS: Eh?

LC: What hard times has this dock experienced?

CS: I had no hard time.

LC: No business disruptions?

CS: It just did, just hard times is selling the shrimp now. That's about only thing. It's a hard time.

LC: Did COVID impact how the dock was working at all?

CS: Nah.

BP: That's really interesting to hear, because a lot of interviews that we've done, other dock owners have also said that COVID impacted them, or like something, they all fell on hard times. So hearing that this dock didn't really fall on hard times is really-

CS: No, COVID didn't mess us up.

LC: Is it because your family-

CS: I never had COVID.

BP: Good.

CS: That's one thing [to remember] and I don't know any of my kids that had it, not back then. I don't remember.

29:20

LC: So out of all the years, it's been good, steady business, there's not been really any financial issues at all at the dock?

CS: No. The only thing that was bad about it is when the drops started to drop in the prices, that's the only hardship that the everybody's habit after that, then they dropped the shrimp prices and what, what made that is but imported. Now, they should have never import shrimp, because you don't know where they coming from. You don't know what they fed them. It may be in a, you know, they may have it, have it in a pond somewhere. You don't know what kind of shape them shrimps in, you know, you don't know what you're eating. But if you get them wild caught out there and bring them in, you know what you eat. But you don't know what you eating and coming across the state, wherever they... anywhere.

BP: So if your dock, or any other dock in Georgia, would want to become more successful with the commercial fishing in Georgia, how would that look like? What would you guys need to do if anything?

CS: To be more successful? Let them pay the price that they're supposed to pay, the people that buy some instead of bringing in imported to drop our prices. When you drop your price from, say, \$6 we used to get \$7 a pound for the big shrimp. And now we don't, we, they [won't] pay you \$3.50 cent. So that's the hardship. And if it wasn't for imports, they would have to stay,

would buy an hour shrimp?

LC: Well, that makes me curious, because earlier you said that one of your jobs as a boss decide where the shrimp went to.

CS: Yeah.

LC: Did you have [a number-]

CS: But you got so many people that buys shrimp, and if they cut you out by dropping you down, what you gonna do?

LC: How did you find people to sell your shrimp to?

CS: You just, it's [makeup]. It's just like, it's just like you starting a new business, and you keep calling this person, we got some shrimp, would you like to buy them? We got some shrimp. We got shrimp. You want to buy them? Maybe you get started with five or six people, and they'll tell you other people, this is best shrimp you ever had. And they gonna be calling, calling regularly, you'll have your business build up, and that's what we did try to do.

LC: How long did it take you to get your foot in when you first built the dock and you felt like you had a stable business? How long did that take?

CS: It didn't take long. We've had a stable business as long as they would come. The one is supposed to be buying your shrimp. Come and buy your shrimp.

33:32

LC: How do you get boats to come to your dock?

CS: How'd I get them to come? I had friends that had boats and they know I wasn't going to cheat them. I mean, really, hell, I've got people calling now wanting to come to my dock. I told them, no, I'm not. As long as the shrimp prices is like it is, I'm not going to be trying to sell shrimp, somebody else's shrimp, when I can't hardly sell the ones that two boats that I got now. You go from, say seven, six or seven boats to two now, and the other people just quit shrimping, but if they could want to come. Everybody right now don't have a place to leave their boats. That's why that house down yonder, [Scott], that's my daughter's house that she sold to that man, and he's got about five or six boats up there and not even working, just sitting there. And it ain't going to get no better until we quit bringing shrimp. I mean bringing in shrimp from out of United States. Hope it changes.

LC: So you think it's just fixing the import issue with the amount of imported shrimp coming in. Do you think anything that can change with the dock like infrastructure to help host more boats?

CS: Do what now?

LC: You said the man has those five boats just kind of sitting and doing nothing. Are they out in the water?

CS: Yeah

LC: I was picturing them in the backyard.

BP: Yeah. I was picturing them on the ground.

CS: It's just like it is right out here. These two boats is out here right now? So first up yonder, that house up there, it's got five sitting out there in the water, tied to the dock.

BP: And none of them run?

CS: They run, yeah, but they got no place to unload. I won't unload them. I won't unload that bunch of people up there. And because I can't, I can't get rid of the shrimp. That ain't that I would do it and want them. It's just I can't.

LC: Do you feel like, I know the hurricanes haven't really affected this place. And really it really was just that one high tide that caused some issues. Do you think there may be future issues with the weather at all, and hurricanes affecting the dock?

CS: Could be. It could be this house also right here on the water.

LC: Why do you think your dock has survived any of the hurricanes?

CS: Well, I don't know any of my others hadn't survived. Those in Darien have survived, but they're closing because they can't get rid of the shrimp, see, and they those in Darien just give them a certain amount of time to get their boats and move them, move them. It's sad for all of us, not just one for everybody.

BP: So if you had the money to invest in something pertaining to the dock, what would you invest it on?

38:11

CS: On the dock? Nothing, right now, I wouldn't invest nothing, because I can't go buy somebody else's shrimp and sell them if money don't have nothing to do with it, it's just as you got to have the people to buy your shrimp

LC: Something we've heard throughout these interviews, a lot of docks were impacted when the ice plants shut down. Were you impacted by that at all?

CS: Yeah, it was. It was impacted. Yeah, because it's just like this dock over here, they had to go build a building to hold ice, and then it costs us money to keep that ice running all the time. But it affects us a lot.

LC: So where do the boats that dock here now, where do they get ice? Over there?

CS: Over there. See and I had an ice blower that I could get those blocks that they made, 300 pound blocks, and run it through in a hose and put it on my docks- my boats. That was good. All those time, all those years that the ice- we use ice many a time, every day, just about it when we was working back then. But it's easy the way they get it, give you ice [cause] sometimes they have a lot of boats, and it takes a lot of time to get your ice now, but thank God we got the ice plant over there.

LC: You said that, I that you added new pylons in. Has the dock, besides that, has the dock changed at all from when you first built it to right now?

CS: Nope, not inside it hadn't.

LC: What about the outside?

CS: Well, I'm talking about the inside of the building itself. It's the same structure. We hadn't had to change anything since we built it, except the piling, you know, like I say, went through the roof there.

BP: And then our last question is, what are some recommendations you have for the future of commercial fishing?

CS: Quit importing.

BP: I figured that was something you're gonna say.

CS: Yeah, and have everybody buy the shrimp that buys the shrimp. Give us a good price. And this, these shrimp. They especially the big shrimp, 21, 25, they are to be at least six or \$7 a pound. But it won't happen no more under these circumstances is going on now.

LC: You say circumstances. Is there anything else along with the imported shrimp that you feel like is lowering the cost of shrimp?

CS: No, that's it. They can sell those shrimp. When you in a business of buying shrimp and selling shrimp, you can sell those ramp a lot of restaurants in this area, you know.

LC: And the majority of them import shrimp? Even with the access to wild fresh, shrimp?

CS: No, they, you mean the restaurants? No, the restaurants don't. They don't. They can't buy like that. It's got to be somebody that's... really, somebody that's in the business because it takes money to buy shrimp.

43:43

LC: I just want to ask one more time, because you've been sitting here and talking and gotten some memories going, is there anything else you'd like to say about any fun stories or any like family memories about being down here at the dock?

CS: We were, when we first started, we worked so hard. We didn't have nothing fun. It was work.

LC: How long were your days?

CS: Oh, sometime we had midnight. We'd have- we'd stack shrimp up all the way up to near the top of the house. Down there, the loft part. And they would the truck would come and pick them up that time of night. That was when we first started.

LC: And we've heard about shrimpers getting up and leaving before dawn. Were you also up really early in the morning?

CS: No, I didn't get up early in the morning unless I was going out on the boat. I used to go out on the boat, me and my husband run the boat, and Ricky, when he was 12 years old, we went out on the boat together, and I would drive the boat, and men, then most of the time I'd be on the back heading the shrimp. I worked honey, my lifetime. And so I'd get up early then, but when I got little smarter, I let the men do it and hire some, another little guy with Ricky, and they would do it when he was a small child. He- that was Peggy's husband that I'm talking about, was he in here a while ago?

LC: Mhm.

CS: Not my daughter, but Peggy was my daughter in law. Yeah, Ricky. He works all the time.

BP: How often did you go out on the boat?

CS: Every day for years?

BP: For years?

CS: Yeah.

BP: Nice.

CS: Yes, sir, I worked.

LC: Did you prefer being on the boat or working at the dock?

CS: I prefer working at the dock. So I've done both.

46:52

LC: What do you like more about the dock?

CS: Well, you could- you didn't have to head shrimp. They had bring them in already headed. That's the job of heading the shrimp. It hurt your fingers, you know. Y'all need to go out on the boat, a boat

LC: We're trying!

BP: We've been trying to!

CS: You've been trying to?

BP: Yeah. We've been trying to go out on a boat so we can go and, like, experience it. But it hasn't been working.

CS: Oh, really?

BP/LC: Mhm.

[someone walking through the room]

CS: What happened? Y'all ain't through?

U2: Oh, yeah, are y'all through?

LC: No

U2: Oh, okay [laughing]

CS: It must begin to get cold down there in that dock unless they turn the heater on. Of course, she ain't got, they ain't got no heat right out there.

LC: Well it's warm today outside.

CS: Yeah, but you got to sit in the sun to get it. That wind, I was- went out there was- try to help them on the... but it was cold to me. That wind. I get no sunshine, it would be warming up.

LC: Any other questions?

BP: I don't have any other questions.

LC: I'm trying to think. Is there anything that we haven't asked about that you want to tell us about living out here on the dock, working on the dock?

CS: Nah, everything seemed like to me, we've covered a lot of it.

LC: Any more opinions that we missed out on getting from you?

CS: Huh?

LC: Any more opinions that we missed getting from you?

CS: Just the opinion is, if there's any way we can get everything going again like it used to be.

But do- I don't know where it ever happened or not. You never know. Because I think that they're wanting to import more, and they don't care where we make money or not, certain people. I don't like to call names, you know, but I think that's what- that's what it is.

BP: Well, thank you for this interview.

CS: Well,

BP: It was great.

CS: Now, what am I supposed to do with this?

LC: That is just for you to have.

CS: Okay.

LC: If you ever need anything.

50:00

Ends interview