

Interview Subject: Peggy Skinner  
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00:00

PS: And then, when we started getting more boats, we decided it was time to- Ricky's dad own this land, so they just put the dock here So we would have a place for our boats, and we started unloading our own boats.

KM: Um, is there anything unique about this talk?

PS: Yeah, it's ran by women.

KM: Yeah, I like that

PS: It was, I mean, lately, that's not been anything, so we don't work much anymore. But before it was ran by four, one two three, five women?

KM: Wow! Wow, that's a rarity

PS: Three family, and the other two were. Uh, or, yeah, just boat- boat owners that would come and help. So, and the dock was kept clean. You know, when you got women, they gonna. We kept it up. It was probably one of the better.

KM: What has this dock been through over the years either while you were here or even before you were here?

PS: Like, what do you mean what's it been through? We've been through hurricanes.

KM: Yes, so yeah, that's what we're talking about, like storms.

PS: Yeah, hurricanes. In fact, I pulled up a couple pictures I can. I was looking at 'em earlier. Of what the dock actually looked like, hang on. Let's see. [trying to find photos]

KM: Was it one of the recent storms that you had?

PS: Yeah. All around the dock was the Marsh Rack.

KM: Yeah

PS: All in between here. The tide was really high. I had pictures. I just cleaned them out.

KM: Did you- Did you get some flooding in here?

PS: Yeah. In fact, right out there on one of the boards, it got up this high.

KM: Wow!

PS: You know in here and- in fact, I remember that the day of the storm. I had walked down. My husband said you, you got to come look at the tide it was coming in. It was during one of those Russian ties, and I walked down. And Ricky's mom had stayed over at my house, which I live right across the road. She had stayed up there with me during the storm. And she had taken and gone to lay down. She was tired so. The tide started rushing in, and I told Ricky, I said, I got to get your mama so she can see this. So I ran up to the house and got her, and by the time we were back, it was inside this, and it was halfway up the lot out there. It's crazy, never seen it like that. As quick as it came in, it went back out.

KM: Wow, and that's the most severe flooding you've ever had here?

PS: It's the only time it flooded like that.

LH: Did it damage anything?

PS: Not really. We had everything lifted up. Just dirty.

KM: Yeah

PS: But that's about it.

03:49

KM: Do you want to tell me about some of the people you worked with at the dock? Whether that be fishermen or the women? Yeah, some of you some of your female workers.

PS: Well, we all work just for the boats. None of us have ever been paid, you know, it was just our boats. My boat, Clara's boat, Cheryl's boat, which is out there. She's out there. Ricky's mom was the dock owner, and she was the manager

KM: Gotcha, the head honcho

PS: The head honcho. But now she's a mess. She's funny. You get on her- Push her too far, though, and you know, you pushed her too far. We love her though. Clara. Their boat, they were Clara and [Teddy] were from North Carolina. So she would come down here when her boat unloaded. Well, we would all help each other. But it was just a, like I said, a bunch of women.

We sold the shrimp, you know, we did it all pretty much.

KM: Were the other women- sorry. Were the other women also wives of fishermen like you, yeah?

PS: You got Clara Smith Wick over here. Cheryl Fleming, which is out there working on the dock- the rail, her husband Michael. They were here. But they retired. We had Pat. Pat was here. Pat and Jesse. Jesse would come down and help. It's just, you know, it was what we had to do to make more money for our boats. You know, when you don't have to pay as much packing by unloading. It just helps a little bit. Just 25 dollars a boat- or a box got shrimp.

KM: Wow!

PS: So. And we did our own fuel too, so.

KM: Your own ice.

PS: No. We have ice for the actual dock, but no, we would get the ice wherever at one time we had the ice blower, which came from Amason's. Over, you know, I'm sure y'all been over there. He had an ice plant, so we blew ice. And then, now we get it from over here. That- Harris' okay, Sapelo Shrimp

KM: Gotcha

PS: But yeah. We had our few boats get the fuel here, but that's about it. And unloading. My husband keeps [this] dock up pretty much. He live- we live here, though. Cheryl and Michael, you know, they've moved away so, but he keeps the dock up pretty much.

KM: And he was fishing long before y'all got married.

PS: Yeah, he started when he was 13.

KM: All right,

PS: And worked. He's been in it a long time. He's not happy now doing it. They've just hurt the industry so bad, it's not-

KM: Who's they?

07:11

PS: Well, you've got regulations, so that's the DNR, you know they- they regulate us to death, you know, Coast Guard. When they come, check everything. You know, you've got things that you have to have on the boat, which it's not a big deal because my husband, he's going to have it on his. But a lot of it is the important. You know, they're bringing in farm-raised shrimp and don't know what you get when you get that. Once you've tasted these shrimp and you compare

them to that. You know.

KM: Absolutely!

PS: Yeah, you don't want them.

KM: What about the shrimp prices? Have those...

PS: Oh, they're terrible.

KM: Yeah

PS: They're terrible. That's another one that unloaded here. Billy. Which he's out of it too now, yeah, the prices. This year, my husband wouldn't even work.

KM: Really, just not even worth going out?

PS: Not even worth going out. It's sad, you know, this is one of the oldest industries in the world. You know?

KM: Wow...

U1: How you doing Peggy?

PS: I'm good. How are you Billy

U1: Okay. I don't mean to interrupt you, but is there a reason I can't use Ricky's welder for five minutes?

PS: No, yeah.

U1: Okay, thank you. He's still got the key to the door on?

PS: I have no idea.

U1: Well, they used to be right here on these keys. I'll find it.

PS: Yeah.

KM: Oh, go ahead Lilah.

LH: And then, can you just tell us about any of the funniest moments at the docks that you have?

PS: Funny. Oh my gosh.

LH: Or interesting? [I think you think we should]-

KM: Yeah, that stand out to you.

LH: Yeah.

KM: All your years working here.

PS: Oh my gosh. I know we- Ricky brought in a fish one time. He sent a picture of it to his sister and told her that he had caught it off the dock. She was having a cow. I can't think of anything funny. My mother-in-law fell off the dock one time. Grandma did.

KM: Yeah?

PS: She fell. We were blow- they were blowing ice. I had just left it was going out of town for the day, and she was blowing ice on my husband's boat and she was out standing out there. It bumped her or something, and she fell and straddled the [inaudible]- did you get it?

U1: No. They was all for looks. It wasn't locked.

PS: Oh, okay. That don't surprise me. But anyway. The way she fell, anybody else that would have broke them. And, she fell off of the dock onto the boat, and it was low water. So it was way down. We've had boats come in here and just about run over the dock. We just all work together, you know?

KM: So, piggybacking off that a little bit. What about your favorite memory, your favorite moment that's been here at the dock?

PS: Oh, when they would- well, one specific time was when we- it was close to Christmas, and all the boats were catching shrimp like crazy. And we were told that we were going to get a really good price for 'em. It was like \$3 and something a pound for head on shrimp

KM: Okay

PS: And all of the boats were out there, you know? They had not been able to fish before, and they were all catching 'em. They come to the dock. And my boat was the first one to unload, so we had started taking them off. Well, Smith and Sons called us because it was three or four days before Christmas. He called us and said, I can't buy your shrimp. And we said, you know what? He said, it's too close to Christmas. We can't do anything with them. I said, well. So, what are we supposed to do, you know? Anyway. That was a way to drop the price. He dropped the price to a dollar-

KM: No!

PS: A pound. And once you pay that dollar a pound or you unload them, you lose a quarter or 20 cent on the pound to unload them, so the boats were not going to be making but about 80 cent a pound. And we had, I think our boat had, like, 70 something, 100 pounds. The other boats had that many, if not more. So my husband said, I'm not giving my shrimp to John. He said, I'm not doing it. We cannot afford to do that. So, we got on the radios. Got- Ricky's mom was out of town. She was, I think she was in Mexico [inaudible]. Anyway, we got on the phone. And called the radio stations. We had news reporters to come to our dock. And we sold probably close to 900 boxes.

KM: Wow!

PS: Of shrimp, we had- down this road out here. There would be trucks, and it was to local people

KM: Nice.

[13:14](#)

PS: You know, people were buying 100 pounds at the time we were selling them for a dollar and a half a pound. And I know it was around 900 boxes.

KM: Wow

PS: That we sold, and we were, we had run out of shrimp here, so we would get other docks to bring their shrimp here and load them up onto the trucks. But it was all the way down the road. You know, people backed up waiting to come to our dock to get shrimp.

KM: Wow,

PS: It was crazy. We had about a good full week of that.

KM: So, what year was that?

PS: Oh gosh, I don't. Probably in the early 2000s. I'm thinking I'm not really sure about the actual date.

KM: Okay.

PS: But it was crazy.

LH: Did you ever go back to Smith and Sons?

PS: Oh yeah, I mean, he's there, you know, if you have shrimp, you can't get rid of them. He has to, you know, you gotta have somewhere to sell them. And now, that was just something that. And I'm, I know it. I shouldn't say it, but I feel like that was just some- a way to get the shrimp cheap, you know, but he didn't get them.

KM: Yeah,

PS: He didn't get any of our shrimp

KM: Other people got them.

PS: We sold them to the public. We called Baxley. We have family in Baxley. People were coming from way down in Florida to buy them.

KM: Nice

PS: All over. It's crazy.

KM: Cool!

PS: Yeah.

KM: So we talked a little bit about changes in the industry already with the regulations and imported shrimp and stuff. What about the water and weather and sea life over the years? Have you seen any changes in that sort of thing?

PS: Used to- when we first got married, I can get on the boat with Ricky and go down into the engine room, where he was working or something. And you could hear catfish. Don't- they're not around anymore, and if you ever fish down here, just reeling rod fishing, you don't find many, in fact, it's been years since I've seen a catfish right here. So, yeah, it's changed.

KM: What about the weather? Or, like, just water quality?

PS: I don't- I don't see a change necessarily in the water, the weather? Yeah, we've had real cold winters and it affect the shrimp. And you know, I don't know what this year will do. With snow. Oh no. We've had snow a couple of times years back and it would put the season off for the next season until after June. In fact, I think they wouldn't even open the beaches up till after that. Because there wouldn't be anything any crop, and we usually would catch anything till the following September. But this year, I'm- where everybody's hoping that it was late enough that the shrimp had moved on out. So maybe, anyway,

KM: Yeah, hopefully.

LH: And then what hard times have this dock experienced?

PS: Hard times? When they [won't] shrimp. I mean, we've had seasons where... and black gill killed shrimp, so that is something else too, black gill. Affected the boats, and you do okay in the spring for the rose shrimp, but then by September there was probably five or six years that the black gill would kill all the shrimp and we wouldn't catch anything for the fall crop

KM: Gotcha.

[17:27](#)

PS: So. But yeah, that's- that was bad. But that's about the only time it was bad is when there was no shrimp. Or they'd be sitting out there in the sound, and you can't touch them out there.

KM: Yeah, because the season is not open

PS: No it's open, but you can't go into the sound. And if it didn't get cold enough, the shrimp wouldn't move

KM: Gotcha,

PS: So you, you just have to sit and wait on them to go off out into the ocean. Off of Blackbeard and St Catharines and all that. Postponed it for a while. Make it hard and the weather this past year? The crazy wind we had? It was crazy this year.

KM: [It cost to change]

PS: And we have a little boat, so my husband can't fish when it's like that

KM: Gotcha.

PS: And a lot of the boats can't, but you've got these monster boats. That'll- that can go out there and fight through it.

KM: What about business disruptions of, like during COVID? Did COVID had any effect of you- on y'all?

PS: Not really

KM: No. Okay,

PS: We still, you know, we've still fished, you know, wasn't the crew stay so far away. It wasn't that, I can't say, is it affected us like that, any? But, but they did. I take that back, it did, because after they sent those checks out, then you couldn't find anybody that would want to go to work.

KM: Gotcha, the stimulus checks.

PS: And it's still like that.

KM: Really?

PS: Yeah, we have a time finding a crew.

KM: Is that a recent thing? A hard time finding crew?

PS: Oh yes, it's still now.

KM: Yeah.

PS: But a lot of them. Once they got those checks- well in every industry, I mean the restaurants and all have that problem, you know, don't find anybody that wants to work anymore. And, but it- that got pretty bad, you know, and it's still bad. Teddy Smithwick? You know, his- he didn't fish any last year. Couldn't find a crew. And you gotta have somebody go out there with you.

KM: What about any financial struggles? Has the dock been in any- through any financial struggles other than you know, no shrimp? Obviously

PS: Yeah, really. She hasn't. You know, the upkeep. We do what we absolutely have to do on the dock. But rather than hire like, put new pylons down? My husband always does that. He uses his boat to do it. Not, you know, we've just had to... whatever gets done. We may not have the money to do it, but he's got the know-how to do it.

KM: Gotcha

PS: You know?

KM: And doing it in-house probably saves you some. A pretty penny.

PS: Oh yeah.

KM: Go ahead.

LH: When you think about the future of commercial fishing in Georgia. What do the docks of today need to be for them to be successful?

21:05

PS: Better prices. Less regulations. Lower fuel prices too.

KM: Oh, has fuel gone up?

PS: It has, that was something else that affected us bad, too, was, yeah, the boats, you know, couldn't afford fuel. And that was, this past year was like that. Fuel was high. That's about it, I guess.

KM: You mentioned import. Is there anything like you'd like to see happen to, like, I'm sure you don't want imports to come in at all, like, zip it?

PS: Yeah. It's terrible. I wish they couldn't even sell them here. Seriously. They are... I don't know if you've ever tasted these shrimp down here. I'm- did you eat shrimp down there today?

KM: Um, no, I had some clams

PS: Okay. There's a big difference in the way our shrimp tastes and an imported shrimp. You taste the imports and it's like you're eating rubber. And they put so many antibiotics and preservatives in them. That you don't know what you're putting in your body.

KM: Gotcha

PS: Now, see my boat. This boat, and that one right there when they go out. They don't stay, but a couple of days. So we don't have to put any kind of preservatives on ours when you buy Skinner Seafood shrimp. They are as fresh. You don't worry about any kind of preservatives. People like to buy. I've got people that'll buy just my shrimp because of that, and they unload in two days instead of going out there and putting the preservatives on them and keeping them for a week. You know, we don't. We don't do that. I don't. I don't. I don't want to sell something to somebody that I wouldn't eat.

KM: You have ice boats? I can't see [down here]

PS: Yes. Yeah, yeah, no ours is ice

KM: Gotcha

PS: I don't want- I don't like the frozen shrimp like that. I like to get them on the dock and if I'm putting them up in my freezer, I take them and have them cleaned and put them in the freezer.

KM: You're making me want some shrimp. But when you think ahead to like future storms and hurricanes, or like unusually high tides like you had, do you think your dock will be okay? How do you think it will fare if...

PS: I think it'll be fine

KM: Good.

PS: I think it'll be fine. But have to get awfully high.

KM: What investments could be made to keep the dock successful over the next, say five to ten years?

PS: I don't know. Getting out of the shrimp industry? [laughing] Did you really want me to say that? Yeah, I don't see it. I just. For us, we're to retirement age. You know, my, if he works another three years? We'll be done. And I don't know what'll happen to the dock, then I, you know, we've got one other boat that we really unload a lot. Teddy doesn't fish anymore so. I don't see it lasting

LH: And what recommendations do you think you might have just for the future of commercial fishing?

PS: Stay as far away from it as you can get. Seriously, I've got, I've got grandsons. I've got a 21 year old grandson. You know he, he hated, like he might like to run the boat, do it. I don't want him doing it.

KM: Yeah,

PS: It's too hard. It's a hard life.

KM: Physically hard, mentally hard, financially hard

PS: Yes, exactly.

KM: Gotcha.

PS: And I don't. I don't want that for him. He needs to find something. And he does. He works for Georgia Power, so. He's got a good career, started

KM: Good.

PS: But that's the only thing I can think of, you know. It was a good life for us, our- we have three daughters and he had more time with them. That was good, you know, because he would have time off and we would do trips and he enjoyed our children growing up. And a lot of people don't have that much time with their kids. You know, I mean, seriously. Yeah, but he did.

[26:10](#)

KM: And all your daughters they grew- did they grow up on the boat and the dock to going out with them and stuff?

PS: The only one that's never been out on it is the youngest one. And she would always fuss at him, and one of my granddaughters wants to go out. He won't let her go either. [laughing] But it's always- the boys have always went. All the boys or the older ones. But... I don't know.

KM: If you had money right now to invest in the dock, what would you spend it on?

PS: The dock. Just making the repairs on the actual walkways and all making sure they're up to date. And if there's any pylons that need to be replaced, we've replaced most of them. But there still may be...

[fighting in the background, inaudible [27:09-27:50](#)]

KM: Okay, so pilings and walkways. What about to the house or the unloading facility?

PS: I mean, oh no, that's fine, you know. We've got the stainless all of that. That's good, you know? There's surely there's some cosmetic stuff that needs to be done. Sealants, stuff like that. Boxing pretty good. Yeah, in pretty good condition.

KM: Good, yeah. I think Lilah had a follow-up question for you.

LH: You was referring to one of them boats as like monster boats. I was just curious of what that really meant, like the type of boat

PS: Oh, that's like these 90-foot boats, really big boats. In fact, I do have a picture. I can show you what I'm talking about

KM: And those are the ones who freeze the shrimp before they come in.

PS: Yes, yes. Let me see where that picture is at. Oh, there's those pictures. That was of the hurricane.

[all 3 started talking]

KM: That's some high water.

PS: Yeah, it, and let's see. So, that's right out here. There's no marsh or nothing.

KM: Yeah, nothing.

PS: See the Marsh Rack, and it took months for that to leave.

KM: Yeah,

PS: You know, it stayed close to the dock. Let me say, where's that? I've got a picture though that we took of our boat next to one of the big boats. So you can kind of see. Let's see. Okay, that's not really. Okay. See, the big one is right here. I thought I might have had a better one.

KM: Just this size difference in the bow, though you can really see.

PS: Oh yeah, it's, they're really big. And they would come here.

KM: They would make it all the way through? Wow!

PS: They can come- [well] they come out from here, like this, and come in here

KM: Gotcha.

PS: And we used to unload one of the bigger boats. I'm trying to think.

[30:33](#)

KM: Well, we're basically at the end of all the questions we had for you. But is there anything that you wanted to?

PS: That's a really big one.

KM: Oh yeah,

PS: It's really big.

KM: You can see too just because the how big the bridge is, it's like, what five or six windows?

PS: Oh, at least, yeah. In fact, my husband is in Tampa right now working on that boat. Doing some repairs.

KM: Did you have to go all the way to Tampa because you can't get-

PS: That's where the boat is.

Km: Oh gotcha,

PS: Yeah, that's just where that boat is at

KM: Gotcha. Okay.

PS: They come around here. During the- when the season starts here. But, No, I mean, I hope you got some things answered.

KM: Oh, absolutely. But, you know, I just wanted to make sure there's nothing that you're thinking of that we didn't even think to ask you

PS: No. I wish things would- were better for the fishermen. You know, this younger, these

younger ones that are coming up that want to do it. I'm afraid, you know, it's a thing of the past. This [Vern] down here has just got a boat, you know, and he's always ran 'em, but he's got his own boat now, and I just. I hope he can make the money to

LH: Keep it up.

PS: Keep it up. The- when it comes to repairs and stuff on the boats you got, you figure the nets on our little boat is about probably \$6,000 for two nets.

KM: Wow!

PS: You have to have shooters that shoot turtles out. Those things are a thousand dollars per net, and when you're pulling four nets, you know, it's just- there's so much upkeep to them. So much upkeep. I just... I'm thankful my grandson didn't do it. I'm telling you.

KM: Oh wow! So once you guys retire, no more Skinner Seafood it sounds like, unfortunately,

PS: Unless something changes.

KM: Yeah. Okay.

PS: We'll keep the boat as long as we can. Because it, we still, like, shrimp, you know, and I can sell as long as who will work a little bit. I can sell a few, but I, as far as going out and having 20 30 boxes, You can't- if you can't sell them when they come in? It's just

KM: What's the point?

PS: What's the point? What's the point?

KM: Okay, anything you want to ask or add?

PS: Have you looked at any of the boats?

KM: Uh, we've been. Uh, yeah-

PS: Have you been on one?

KM: Yeah, we, well, we went on the Bulldog, but I don't know if that counts.

PS: Yeah. Yeah.

KM: I'd love to go out for a,

PS: Yeah,

KM: For a trawl, but-

PS: Right.

KM: Can't find anyone to take us. Okay. Well, I'm gonna go ahead and stop this. Thank you so much.

PS: You're welcome.

[34:02](#)

Ends interview