

GEORGE AND CAROL TERREBONNE
Seafood Shed–Golden Meadow, LA

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Interviewer: Sara Roahen
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Project: Down the Bayou – Louisiana

[Begin Seafood Shed Interview]

00:00:01

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Monday, October 17, 2011. I'm in Golden Meadow, Louisiana at the Seafood Shed. And may I ask you both to introduce yourselves by telling me your full names and your occupation?

00:00:20

Carol Terrebonne: Carol Terrebonne, owner of the Seafood Shed.

00:00:25

George Terrebonne: Mr. Carol Terrebonne—oh, no, I mean George Terrebonne, retired co-owner of the Seafood Shed. *[Laughs]*

00:00:35

SR: Thank you.

00:00:41

GT: I put everything in my name. That way—smart, I'm smart. That way, if she leaves me she gets nothing, yeah. So there's no way she can leave me.

00:00:47

SR: I get the feeling you don't have to worry about that, but—. May I ask you for your birth dates?

00:00:52

CT: January 2, 1950.

00:00:55

GT: July 23, 1947.

00:00:58

SR: Okay, thank you. You know I'm mostly here to talk to you about your business, but if--if you don't mind, if we could start by you telling me where you grew up and how you met—?

00:01:12

CT: I grew up--grew up in a place called Chauvin, Louisiana, Little Caillou, and we met at a--a local dance hall down there called the Ward Seven Club in Chauvin, Highway 56.

00:01:31

SR: And you were telling me a little—

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GT: I agree.

00:01:35

SR: —you were telling me a little bit in the car, Mr. Terrebonne, about your early courtship.

Can you talk a little bit about that, because I'd like to hear about your time in the service, too?

00:01:47

GT: I guess. Well, the way I met Carol was my cousin and his friend were going out with a girl from over there. And naturally—I was 17, 18, 19 years old; I forgot what I was—I drank and I went over there to meet them, and all of a sudden I just asked my cousin, I said, “Hey, Brud,” I said. “Y'all are going out with some girls over there. I'm going to have to find me a girlfriend.” And he says, “Sure.” He just looked around. He says, “Her over there, she's real nice,” he said. “She's a good friend of ours.” I said, “Okay.”

00:02:20

So, man, I go ask her to dance and I said, “You want to come sit at the table?” And she said, “Yeah.” And my friend calls me and he says, “George, who in the hell is that?” I said, “Why?” He said, “I don't know who that is.” **[Laughs]** And from then on it was—like I said, we went out a couple of--a couple of times, we went out. Even went to the drive-in twice and didn't know what was playing. But that was in the days of a drive-in, but she was a good girl. She was always a good girl.

00:02:52

And when I went into the service, she was all I could think about night and day. And until I went AWOL one day to come propose to her. I said I was stopping at the--the jewelry shop; I had to get a ring for a friend of mine and naturally she was always smarter than me. I said, “Golly, which one in them engagement rings would you find the prettiest?” **[Laughs]**

00:03:20

CT: Of course I knew.

00:03:21

GT: When we got in the car *[Laughs]* I said, “It’s for you. Would like to get married?” She said, “I knew it was for me.” *[Laughs]* She already knew the answer, and like I said, that was 45 years ago and ain’t regretted one second of it. Maybe her—she didn’t say nothing, though, huh?
[Laughs]

00:03:43

SR: I can tell by the smile.

00:03:47

CT: All I’m doing is listening.

00:03:48

SR: And so you went into the service really soon after you met, correct?

00:03:51

GT: Yeah, yeah, well I went straight to Okinawa from—well, from the Carolinas. They put me in a thing called “the cage.” I was in security. And like I said, I had gotten married right before I went overseas. We got married, and that was the longest six months--the longest six months I

ever spent in my life. I slept one night with my wife and then left for six months. That was a long six months. But then when she finally came over, she stayed over there three years with me. We had a baby; he was 22 months old when we came back. And nobody had ever seen him.

00:04:31

SR: We're going to pause this for a minute. All right, we had a little distraction, but we're back.

[Laughs] You were telling me about the three years that you spent together in Okinawa. So you were in the service for four years total, is that right?

00:04:49

GT: Four years.

00:04:51

SR: Was that volunteer or were you drafted?

00:04:53

GT: Well—

00:04:54

CT: Volunteer.

00:04:55

GT: —volunteer. I was so smart that right after I went to get a physical—when you were 18 you had to go get a physical in them days—that I just asked the sergeant that gave us the physical, I said, “Man, when am I going to get drafted?” He just opened up the drawer of his desk, didn't even know my name; he says, “Man,” he said. “Son, you're coming up next.” I said, “Bullshit. I'm going to sign up.” *[Laughs]* So I went straight to—then it was the Coast Guard. I went and signed up for the service and—

00:05:25

SR: So you wanted to?

00:05:28

GT: Oh yeah. I signed up in the Army for four years. I was in communications for four years, Army Security—Army Security Agency. During the main part of Vietnam, yeah.

00:05:46

SR: And after four years, you chose to come back I guess.

00:05:52

CT: Well he was born over there—my son, Austin, was born over there. He was 22 months before—before—

00:06:04

GT: Anybody seen him.

00:06:04

CT: —we were able to come back. Before his grandparents saw him, he was 22 months.

00:06:08

SR: You must have been dying to show him off.

00:06:10

CT: Oh yeah. For sure. [*Laughs*] For sure.

00:06:13

GT: Everybody mugged him at the airport all at one time, and he was screaming. Ah, they all rushed him, all the grandmas and grandpas—

00:06:22

CT: He would hit everybody when they would come up because he didn't know these people.

00:06:23

GT: —and everybody.

00:06:25

CT: You know.

00:06:25

SR: And when you came back, did you know what kind of a career you were going to come home to? Was your family in this business, or what were you thinking?

00:06:34

GT: No, really didn't know. I started off working on a--on a small job and I didn't care for the oil field. And me and her got a service station, so that was—that was, I think, the best time in my life. We used to sell minnows and all that.

00:06:55

SR: Oh, you owned a service station?

00:06:57

GT: Yeah.

00:06:59

CT: Yeah.

00:06:59

GT: Or rented, leased, and we'd sell bait and all kind of stuff like that, some goods. It was a good living, good living. But we've always worked together. I had a trawl boat, and that was my best deckhand until she worked for about a month and then became captain and—.

00:07:19

SR: So you—where was the service station?

00:07:20

GT: Leeville.

00:07:22

CT: In Leeville.

00:07:23

GT: Uh-hm, Texaco Station. Which, at the time, Texaco was the only company inside the waters in Louisiana. I thought Texaco was the only oil field--oil thing that they had. [*Laughs*]

00:07:39

SR: So then you--you went—you were shrimpers. How long did you do that?

00:07:48

GT: On and off for 10--15 years probably.

00:07:50

CT: Uh-hm.

00:07:52

GT: We were working for somebody else—she was, and I was shrimping. And we got to where—this was our best friends and things happen. We started not getting along with his wife. And one thing led to another and we were fired. Well, it was a quit-situation, you know, like “We can't do this anymore.”

00:08:28

CT: Ten years we worked for—well another dock. Ten years at another place out here we worked.

00:08:34

GT: Uh-hm. I'd tell you the story but it gets a little bit too involved.

00:08:37

CT: I did it 10 years. *[Laughs]*

00:08:41

GT: There was some money missing, and the bookkeeper—it was his wife that was writing checks on the company, so what Ronald did, he put the checkbook in her name and the shit hit the fan. *[Laughs]* So naturally, he had to choose between her and us, and we made the decision for them. We quit. Okay, and in the meantime, [Carol] used to be--she used to help teach aerobics. She was taking aerobics all the time. And her best friend invited us to go to New Orleans to State Street. That's where the guy has got a house, really uptown, the Israels on State Street. They own shipping lines and all. It's a Jewish from New York.

00:09:33

Well, he was good friends with Bubut—invited us, and we didn't know exactly what they had planned. Bubut had bought out this property right here, and he offered us a shrimp shed. He said, "I'll give y'all one-third working share if y'all take the shed, if y'all run my shrimp shed." And she wanted it and I didn't, you know. I wanted to keep on trawling. She wanted to keep on working in the shrimp shed. So it's her fault that we did all right.

00:10:08

So after about four years they got involved in another business, and it would be a conflict of interest—they being part-owners. We put up the work; he put up the shrimp shed; and the other Israel from New Orleans put up the working capital. And after about three years, we bought him out, we bought out the corporation, and then we bought another place in Leeville. And from there, make a living. Everybody thinks we're multi-millionaires. We just make a good living; make a good living for my son, my grandson. We're supporting them while they go to school, you know. It's just like I said, she lives for--for that family.

00:10:55

SR: Did you miss trawling, or do you now miss trawling?

00:10:59

GT: Yeah. Trawling is my second love, okay. That's my first love. *[Laughs]*

00:11:10

CT: He'd rather trawl than be in this place. *[Laughs]*

00:11:13

GT: I'd rather trawl than being over here.

00:11:16

CT: If he could have got away, he would have. [*Laughs*]

00:11:18

GT: They got stems in here.

00:11:26

SR: You're eating a granola bar and it's not working out?

00:11:28

GT: They got little sticks. But yeah, but now--now I can't. I know I can't now because there's no way I could stand on a boat and trawl for 48 hours the way we used to do before. When I trawled, that was the best deckhand I ever had in my life. Not only would she cook breakfast for me, but how many men got a deckhand they sleep with, you know? [*Laughs*]

00:11:56

SR: Well, I was going to ask that: Is it common for couples to trawl together?

00:12:00

CT: Yeah.

00:12:00

GT: Yeah, yeah, it used to be almost all men and wives that used to trawl.

00:12:04

CT: Some wives don't like it. I loved it. I loved it out there.

00:12:06

GT: Oh man, hey. She's the one that caught onto anything—boom, like that. I'd work the deck and she'd run through the wells and all at night—nighttime, go through them oil wells pulling—

00:12:21

CT: That's before they had their—

00:12:20

GT: —pulling the trawl.

00:12:21

CT: —the radar or whatever.

00:12:24

GT: That was before radar and before we had—we didn't have no radar or no nothing. She just—

00:12:26

CT: Yeah, no air-condition, trawl at night and sleep in the sun—you know, the hot during the day. Wow.

00:12:32

GT: Sleep in the daytime, 100-degrees in the cabin. Nowadays they won't even leave the dock if their air-conditioner don't work.

00:12:38

CT: Yeah, the generator don't work, they won't—. [*Laughs*]

00:12:41

SR: How long—so, were you trawling offshore?

00:12:44

GT: No, inshore.

00:12:45

CT: No, not offshore. Everything is inshore, yeah.

00:12:47

SR: And so you would just—you would come back every day, is that right?

00:12:51

GT: No. No, we'd stay five--six days at a time, uh-hm.

00:12:56

SR: And what did you love about it?

00:12:58

CT: Just when you're out there, it's like you're away from everything. You know, you don't have to worry about this. You don't have to worry about that.

00:13:06

GT: She didn't have migraines.

00:13:08

CT: It was--it was nice.

00:13:09

GT: She didn't have no migraine headaches. *[Laughs]*

00:13:10

CT: It's a getaway.

00:13:13

SR: It's hard work, though, right?

00:13:15

CT: Yeah. Oh, that it is. It was for sure. It was—it is.

00:13:20

SR: But I hear that a lot from people who love to be out on the water that it's just very peaceful, and it seems to me—I mean, I don't—it seems to me to be in conflict with how hard it is, but I guess—

00:13:31

CT: No. They say they got it easier now though with skimmers. We didn't have skimmers. We -
-we pulled a trawl.

00:13:37

GT: I really don't—I really don't see what's hard. It's a job.

00:13:45

CT: It was tiring. I remember being so tired.

00:13:46

GT: The hours is what--what really got to you.

00:13:48

CT: But I remember being so tired when we'd go to bed. Oh, that was rough; it was rough.

00:13:55

GT: Well, what was rough is we trawled all night and we'd let the kids sleep. The two kids sometimes would be with us, and then in the daytime when we had to sleep, they had no patience. "Oh Daddy, we don't want to sleep." "But I don't want y'all out on the deck. Y'all are too young to be out on the deck by yourself." So it made us extra--extra tired, you know.

[Laughs]

00:14:16

SR: Right. How young were they when they would go out with you?

00:14:19

GT: Ten and seven, you know.

00:14:26

CT: Nine, yeah, yeah.

00:14:28

GT: We had--we had an old-style boat, and my daughter—we had saved a whole basketful of fish. And we had the old-style—it's called a yo-yo cabin. That means that it's short in the front and the back comes up like this [*Gestures*] and then the front is shorter that goes over the engine, and that's your engine room with a sliding door. We'd have to go around that--that part. It was dangerous walking the side of the deck. So that night—oh, we'd stay; we'd feed the porpoise. You know, it's beautiful out there at night.

00:15:00

So she was sitting there with my little girl, and my little girl wanted to fish, so we worked out a pretty good plan. I went inside the cabin with a whole bushel of fish. And remember now, inside that cabin—it's 100-degrees outside, and there's a GM [motor] in there that had been running all day, and it's 150-degrees in that cabin; you're just pouring sweat. I went in there with a bushel of fish, and she sat on top of this part of the cabin, and there's a sliding door where the engine is at. I'm under there.

00:15:31

And so Carol and my--my little girl—she's just barely young enough to handle a little line. She dropped the line. I'd grab it. My little girl couldn't see. She was not quite by the edge. I'd hook a little trout, a fish, and I'd throw it in the water, and Carol [would say] "We got another one! We got another one!" [*Laughs*] We--we stayed there until she emptied that whole bushel of fish. Of course I had dehydrated 10--15 pounds, you know, but—. [*Laughs*] My little girl caught a whole basket of fish. She never forgot her good fishing trip like that.

00:16:05

SR: Oh, that's entertainment for you, huh?

00:16:08

GT: Oh that--that's the kind of memories that--that really stick to you.

00:16:14

SR: Yeah. Tell me your children's names.

00:16:17

CT: Tina, she's Serigny now, and Wade.

00:16:28

SR: Okay, thanks.

00:16:30

GT: They're both on their second marriage.

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CT: No, Wade didn't get married.

00:16:35

GT: Wade didn't get married. He'll never get married again.

00:16:37

CT: Tina remarried. Tina married her—

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GT: Her first boyfriend.

00:16:42

CT: —childhood boyfriend after being married for 18 years. Divorced and then married—they both had each two boys—

00:16:51

GT: Three.

00:16:52

CT: —three boys. Both of them had three boys with different [people]. And so now they got—they're together and they got six boys. [*Laughs*]

00:17:03

SR: The *Brady Bunch*, only all boys.

00:17:04

CT: Yeah, yeah, uh-hm.

00:17:07

GT: So we got three boys that's about the size of this desk.

00:17:09

SR: And then—

00:17:10

CT: All my grandkids, the five boys—we have five boys, and the three that my daughter married—the three boys there—and then my first grandkid had the first little girl. That's the little girl.

00:17:27

SR: So you're great-grandparents?

00:17:28

CT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:17:29

GT: That's our five boys. That's when they were small.

00:17:32

CT: Yeah, that's when they were young.

00:17:34

GT: That's the one that got the—. And that baby, you look at that first picture—that's her. I mean that's looking at her, but it's like you're looking at her--

00:17:42

CT: That's her daddy, the first one.

00:17:47

GT: Uh-hm.

00:17:48

SR: So when you decided to, I guess—yeah, when you decided to buy out this shed and stop trawling, what--what made you want to do that instead of keep trawling?

00:18:03

CT: Because I had started—I had quit trawling. I started working for this company, this dock in Leeville, and I just liked it so much and I knew all the buyers, you know, and who to sell the shrimp and all that.

00:18:13

GT: She knew the ins and outs better than I did.

00:18:16

CT: And I just loved the business, and—

00:18:17

GT: And she still does.

00:18:18

CT: —that's how it started. And I love it, because if I'm here every day I got to love the business, you know.

00:18:23

GT: She gets mad because she takes off for Christmas.

00:18:25

SR: What do you love about it?

00:18:27

CT: I don't know. I just like it.

00:18:30

SR: Can you tell me a little bit about like what your days are like, what time you get here and how the days run?

00:18:37

CT: We start at 7 o'clock, and right now, now that it's light until 6:30—because I close at dark. The wintertime, I close a little earlier, but I'm open every day. And right now is the August season, so we're buying shrimp until December. And then I buy what they call CO2 frozen shrimp, and in the winter that's what I sell. I sell the frozen shrimp.

00:19:08

GT: It's a shrimp that when they catch it offshore, they freeze it.

00:19:09

CT: That I retail, you know.

00:19:10

GT: In sacks.

00:19:11

CT: And the bulk of our shrimp goes to the processors. You know, we load it into 18-wheelers, and that goes to the processors.

00:19:20

SR: Okay, so let me make sure I understand. So if you--if you're here at 7:00—and this is a dock, and so boats come right up to the dock.

00:19:27

CT: Uh-hm.

00:19:30

SR: Do they start coming right at 7:00?

00:19:32

CT: No, not always. Some of them, it all depends if they--if the tide finishes early and they're here—they can be here waiting.

00:19:40

GT: During a good season, sometimes we got three or four trucks waiting.

00:19:43

CT: You know.

00:19:43

GT: You know, right here, and a couple of boats waiting that skimmed all night.

00:19:46

CT: And trucks, they bring their--from their boat, you know, the shrimp. They put it--load it in their truck and back up with the truck to unload their shrimp.

00:19:55

GT: Yeah, they might keep their boat in the back of Golden Meadow over there.

00:19:56

CT: Different areas.

00:19:58

GT: They back up their truck to their boat and load their shrimp and bring it over here.

00:20:02

SR: And so all day long you're buying shrimp from boats?

00:20:04

CT: Uh-hm, yes.

00:20:07

SR: And right now it's fairly mechanized. Can you describe the process of how you get the shrimp off the boat?

00:20:18

CT: Uh, we use a vacuum which vacuums—you put water and you take a vacuum, and the water and the shrimp—vacuums it into a wet tank, which divides the ice and the shrimp, and then it goes on a conveyor, and then we have an automatic scale that it weighs the shrimp. We have to take a three-pound count, you know, out of it to see what size it is. But it goes in that

automatic scale; weighs it by 100 pounds and then it drops into a vat. We put ice—ice it up and take that vat and load it in 18-wheelers.

00:20:57

GT: Depending on how hot it is, it depends what we're going to put in the vat. When it's real hot, she goes 500 pounds to the--to the white box. Like right now we can go 700 pounds to the white box.

00:21:08

SR: Because you don't need as much ice, is that why?

00:21:11

GT: It's a little cooler, but still—there's still a couple days without picking up, so she'll still go 500 or 600 pounds.

00:21:17

SR: And so, basically, the boats come right up to the dock and—. But no one has to touch the shrimp, it didn't look like to me, to get them out of the boat or to get them weighed, or even to get them into the truck?

00:21:30

CT: Uh-um, no.

00:21:31

GT: If a boater stopped right now, we'd bring you on the boat and show you. I wish I would have done that.

00:21:37

CT: The only thing--the only thing we touch is just the three-pound count, you know to—

00:21:42

GT: Actually hands-on shrimp.

00:21:45

CT: —yeah.

00:21:46

SR: To see what size they are?

00:21:47

CT: Right, the size. Yeah, the count, uh-hm.

00:21:47

SR: Do the shrimpers separate the shrimp on the boat?

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CT: Yeah, they put the shrimp in a—they'll put salt and water in a tank and throw their catch in there, which is with fish, and then they'll separate the—they take the fish out and the shrimp is left, you know. And then they ice up the shrimp.

00:22:10

SR: But do they separate into different sizes?

00:22:12

CT: Yeah, yeah. They'll divide it on deck, uh-hm. They divide it and pick out the bigger ones. Most of the time they're picking out the bigger ones.

00:22:22

SR: So when they come in, will they maybe have like one load of one size shrimp and one of another?

00:22:28

CT: Some of them up to four different counts. You know, they can divide them into four different counts. It all depends on the money, what's worth more and how they figure it out where they can make more money by dividing it.

00:22:41

SR: I saw one--one boat unload today. How much did they come in with?

00:22:53

CT: Let's see, this morning I had a guy with--with 15 boxes this morning, the first boat I had, and then that small boat had about 500.

00:23:08

SR: Five hundred pounds?

00:23:09

CT: Uh-hm, uh-hm.

00:23:10

GT: The one with 15 had been out three nights.

00:23:12

CT: Yeah, yeah, three nights.

00:23:14

SR: The one with 15 boxes?

00:23:15

CT: Fifteen boxes was out three nights.

00:23:18

SR: And 15 boxes, then, would be how many pounds?

00:23:21

CT: Fifteen hundred, yeah.

00:23:24

SR: Okay, and how much—oh thank you. Water. Thanks. How much money—thank you—do shrimpers get per pound at the moment?

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CT: It varies on what size. Right now the 10--15s, they're getting \$2.85; 16--20s, \$2.65; and then, like a 31--35, \$1.70.

00:23:51

SR: So 31--35—that means 31 to 35 shrimp per pound, correct?

00:23:57

CT: Per pound, uh-hm.

00:23:58

GT: The average.

00:24:01

SR: And we were talking a little bit about—earlier, before we started recording—about how expensive it is for shrimpers just to shrimp.

00:24:12

CT: Yeah, because of the fuel, you know. The fuel—

00:24:14

GT: Same as us.

00:24:15

SR: Same with you what?

00:24:17

GT: The expense.

00:24:18

CT: The expense.

00:24:21

GT: The profit has never gone up. I'm making the same--we're making the same profit that my uncle was making in 1960.

00:24:28

SR: What did your uncle do?

00:24:29

GT: He had a shrimp shed in Leeville around 1960, and he was making the same thing per pound.

00:24:39

CT: Like put on the truck 15-cents a pound—

00:24:40

GT: Diesel was 19-cents a gallon. Workers were \$100 a month.

00:24:46

CT: Uh-hm, that's the difference.

00:24:48

GT: You know, and now everything is 10-times more with the same profit.

00:24:53

CT: And still the same profit.

00:24:56

GT: Uh-hm.

00:24:57

SR: You know, I hear this all the time, but there still seems to be—I mean, is there ever a day when you can't sell all your shrimp?

00:25:04

CT: No.

00:25:07

SR: So there still seems to be demand.

00:25:08

CT: Yeah, yeah. It's still selling, you know. So far with the processors, you know—I mean, the guys are still buying the shrimp. Now as far as—I don't know how many docks he's buying from right now. That, I don't have no way of knowing.

00:25:25

GT: Well, you see, [for] us it's different. Whatever we can't sell right here, we put it on that truck and the truck goes to a processing plant. Now he processes the shrimp and puts it in a freezer. He's got maybe \$4,000,000 or \$5,000,000 backing him up, so he can keep that shrimp in the freezer half a year before he sells it. That's why we have no trouble getting rid of shrimp, because he'll pick up everything we don't—everything we buy, he'll take and peel it and separate it into.

00:25:54

CT: And I don't know if his shrimp is selling or what's going on, you know. The processor is the one that's selling most of the product, you know.

00:26:06

SR: I was just wondering why, if there's still a demand, why prices haven't gone up at all.

00:26:14

CT: We don't make the prices up. The factories—you know, the processors. I don't know—

00:26:19

GT: They don't make the price either. It comes from a lot further up than that.

00:26:23

CT: It's like who they're selling to. It's probably, "I'll buy for this amount," you know.

00:26:29

GT: Direct competition with overseas shrimp. You know, as long as the US don't put a--a big tariff or something on overseas shrimp, and everything else is going up—cars, everything else went up—but not--not the shrimp.

00:26:46

SR: What would happen if you tomorrow decided to start charging \$1 more per pound for your shrimp?

00:26:52

GT: To who?

00:26:55

SR: The consumer.

00:26:55

CT: No, I couldn't do that.

00:26:56

GT: Then they won't buy it.

00:26:58

CT: They won't buy it. If I say, "Oh, I'm going to go up \$1 a pound," they're going to look at the price and say, "Well, then we'll buy it somebody's." You can't. You can't. You have to go according to the market.

00:27:08

GT: For a bunch of years, everybody, even the fishermen, [were saying], "Oh, man, price-fixing." Sure, you're damned right it's price-fixing. What--what do you want me to tell you? If

my neighbor pays \$1 a pound to you for his shrimp, you don't think I'm going to pay \$1 a pound? I don't care what it's called. **[Laughs]** You know, if I don't pay \$1 a pound, I ain't going to buy the shrimp from you, you know, so I guess it's called price-fixing. I don't know.

00:27:38

CT: And years ago--years ago, these 10--15s, I was paying up to \$5 a pound to the fishermen.

00:27:44

GT: To the fishermen. That was years ago.

00:27:46

CT: That was in the '90s, uh-hm, 1990s.

00:27:50

SR: And now what are you paying for 10--15s?

00:27:52

CT: Two-eighty-five.

00:27:56

SR: And how—

00:27:57

GT: And--and--

00:27:58

CT: And that's because of imports coming in that affected a lot of—. You didn't have imports coming in in the '90s.

00:28:03

GT: No.

00:28:05

CT: You didn't have all that coming in.

00:28:08

GT: You see, if it gets too high to restaurants up North, they're going to turn to imports. They don't care.

00:28:11

CT: The restaurants are going to buy the imports to sell in their restaurants.

00:28:14

GT: I mean, they don't care. That's why—that's what we have to compete against.

00:28:18

CT: Yeah, that's the reason.

00:28:18

GT: And if my buyer, he can pay me x-amount for my shrimp. We generally make 15-cents, sometimes 20 if we're lucky, but generally 15 and 10. Now where he's competing, he's competing with--with big distributors up North, guys that have trucks that go out to Philadelphia, Atlantic City; you know, they go all over the place, big distributors. Now if this distributor says, "Oh,"—we sell to a guy named Wally—"Wally, I can get it for 5-cents cheaper down the road from you," he's going to have to drop his price. It comes down to us, and it has to go down to the fishermen, you know. So it's--it's a dog-eat-dog thing.

00:29:09

SR: Uh-hm, it's kind of a wonder that anybody is still shrimping.

00:29:13

CT: Uh-hm.

00:29:15

GT: Yeah, uh-huh.

00:29:15

CT: That's true.

00:29:16

GT: Uh-huh, it's eventually going to—

00:29:19

CT: It's scary.

00:29:20

GT: It's very scary.

00:29:20

CT: What's to come is scary, it is.

00:29:25

GT: See, my son, I should have kicked him in the butt when he said he didn't want to—. We had a guy lined up for a damned scholarship. *[Laughs]*

00:29:33

SR: You should have kicked his butt when he wanted to go into the business?

00:29:37

GT: He said, "I want to work with y'all, Daddy." I should have kicked his butt right there, which I can't say nothing because it's going to be his one day.

00:29:46

SR: Well, where do you—what do you see as the future of the shrimping business?

00:29:50

GT: Shew—.

00:29:52

CT: That's hard to say.

00:29:53

GT: It's like the stock market. You going to sell your stock, or are you going to buy some stock? What are you going to do?

00:29:58

CT: Just like right now.

00:30:00

GT: It's scary.

00:30:00

CT: Right now, I should be loading a trailer load of shrimp right now. And what's going on, I don't know.

00:30:06

GT: I told you that in Leeville.

00:30:09

CT: We don't know.

00:30:09

SR: Well, and that's a separate issue, which is that this is a bad season.

00:30:14

CT: Yeah.

00:30:16

GT: Well—

00:30:17

CT: Yeah, it's bad, but we don't know what's really causing it to be that bad.

00:30:23

GT: Yes and no.

00:30:23

CT: You know.

00:30:26

GT: It's bad and it's not—it's bad and it's bad. You see, like the [shrimper] that had 15 boxes in three nights—if that fuel would have been \$1 a [gallon], that guy would have made—instead of \$300--\$400 a night of expense, he would have had \$100 a night of expense. Okay, and—

00:30:46

SR: You mean if the fuel were \$1 a gallon?

00:30:48

GT: A dollar a gallon, yeah, a dollar a gallon.

00:30:49

CT: Right, right.

00:30:51

GT: Now instead of making—some of the shrimp he sold for \$2, and some of it he sold for \$1--something. Instead of making \$2,500 and half of it is expense, he would only have something like \$300 or \$400 expense and the rest all profit. Now, the boats that wouldn't have caught as much, the smaller boats, they can't go out because they can't match their expense to what they're going to make. But if there's—the fuel would be low or the shrimp would be higher, that guy could have gone; he would have pulled all night to make two boxes of shrimp. And we'd have 50

boats out there making two boxes of shrimp a night, which would give us 100--200 boxes of shrimp a day.

00:31:35

But they can't. See, the shrimp is not there and it's there. In other words, if they could--if they could afford to drag, they'd be making shrimp; they'd be doing--they'd be catching shrimp if they could afford to drag. But they can't afford to drag, so we're not buying shrimp and they're not catching shrimp. You know, it's kind of a—

00:31:57

SR: Right; so when I hear that the shrimp just aren't there it might be--are you saying that it might be more of a case of the shrimp not being quite as plentiful and so it's not worth being out there?

00:32:12

GT: Well, they just start getting—what, maybe a week ago, they starting getting a little bit of shrimp. Before that they weren't catching zero. They weren't catching nothing. It just showed up and then it stopped again. So this might be really a bad season. There might not be any shrimp. For the past couple of days there had been a few shrimp.

00:32:30

CT: What's worrying me is the smaller shrimp. I should have a lot of smaller shrimp.

00:32:34

GT: Yeah, they're not coming in.

00:32:35

CT: Seventy--eighties, 80--100, you're not seeing it.

00:32:37

GT: They're not there.

00:32:40

CT: Is it going to be a late season or is it—?

00:32:40

GT: That means next month there won't be no shrimp.

00:32:44

CT: Uh-hm, no.

00:32:44

SR: So if there aren't smaller shrimp, that means that there weren't as many babies.

00:32:49

GT: Yeah, exactly.

00:32:51

CT: Or something with the mamas. *[Laughs]* I'll get on a different subject again.

00:32:56

GT: There weren't as many mamas.

00:32:57

CT: You know, because I—the biggest shrimp—in July the biggest shrimp hardly had any with eggs in them, you know. That's what worries me. It worried me then. It worried me in--in June, and usually in June, the end of June—well, June 15th, June 20th—I'd see a bunch of little whites—

00:33:17

GT: Little whites.

00:33:17

CT: —in the Brazil shrimp, in your brown shrimp. This year we didn't see this. And every year we see this, and wondering when are they going to close the season? When are they going to close the season? Because when they have 20-percent of white shrimp in the Brazil, they'll close the May season, you know, because the little white shrimps are out. Well this time, when did they close the May season? Oh, way—

00:33:42

GT: Well they kept half of it open and they kept—

00:33:44

CT: —July—

00:33:45

GT: —they closed it in the middle of the bayou.

00:33:45

CT: You know, late. They closed it late because they didn't have the little white shrimp. And it scared me then, and I see what's--what's happening now, you know. There was no little whites.

00:33:58

SR: And do you—I know that it's--it's too soon to tell what's really going on, but what do you think is going on?

00:34:08

CT: I said--a week ago, I says, "We'll know in about another week," and it's still not happening.

00:34:14

GT: It's still—yeah. As soon as the fronts start, if these next couple of fronts don't produce their shrimp—

00:34:19

CT: A lot of smaller shrimp.

00:34:20

GT: —they won't have any shrimp because it's the fronts that bring out the little shrimp.

00:34:24

CT: Because we wait for this August season. You know, we make good in the August season.

That's our season.

00:34:29

GT: September--October is your money.

00:34:30

CT: To make money.

00:34:30

GT: That's when your money is.

00:34:32

CT: Yeah, and it's just not happening now.

00:34:33

GT: And right now it's not happening.

00:34:35

CT: This year.

00:34:35

SR: What do you mean by "fronts"?

00:34:38

GT: Weather, the northerlies. The northerlies come down, it drives out the water and drives the shrimp out of the marsh. And if that shrimp ain't driven out of the marsh, there's no shrimp.

[Laughs] If within the next fronts—that tide is going to go out fast, and that drains that shrimp out. If there's no shrimp in the next couple of fronts, there's no shrimp, because that--that's what's scary. Is it the dispersant or is it not the dispersant?

00:35:05

CT: That's what we—.

00:35:07

GT: But there's also no crabs, so—.

00:35:10

CT: No crabs either, yeah.

00:35:13

GT: Was this thing [the dispersant used following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill] a Viagra, not a Viagra, what you call that—a birth control? You know, was it a birth control? Don't know, because like Carol said, we didn't see—I didn't see at the beginning of the season the shrimp full of eggs. Usually you see the eggs in the shrimp. You didn't. Usually you see the little white shrimp at the end of your August season, which is your white shrimp for this season. We didn't see it. So what's going on? We don't know.

00:35:42

SR: The dispersant, just for the record, is something that was used after the BP oil spill to disperse the oil. Now before that, tell me a little bit about how Hurricane Katrina in 2005 affected you for better or for worse, and--and how things were going before the oil spill.

00:36:09

CT: In 2005, Hurricane Katrina, we lost this place, so we had only one place to work.

00:36:18

GT: Uh-huh, right.

00:36:18

CT: Katrina was what? August 29th? Yeah, so that was the beginning of your August season.

00:36:24

GT: That was one of the biggest August seasons we ever had.

00:36:25

CT: And when we opened up in Leeville—we opened up October 10th, I remember that—we had so much shrimp. I mean that was one of the best—we bought some shrimp then, after that, you know. And they said for a hurricane, you know, they said a hurricane—always after a hurricane, we have a lot of shrimp.

00:36:49

GT: A change of weather.

00:36:50

CT: So come this--come this little storm that passed, Lee, we thought, “Oh, good. We have a little storm; we’re going to have a lot of shrimp.” It didn't happen.

00:37:00

GT: All the old-timers say that. Whenever you—you need a good disturbance. You need a good change of weather to make that shrimp come out. It didn't happen this year.

00:37:07

CT: And it happened after Gustav. We had shrimp.

00:37:08

GT: And it happened after every--every big major—

00:37:11

CT: We lost—2008, we lost—

00:37:12

GT: We lost the other one. We lost Leeville.

00:37:13

CT: —the other shed from Gustav, and worked here.

00:37:17

GT: And worked over here.

00:37:18

SR: Okay, so, tell me: This place where we are right now, which is in Golden Meadow—this got wiped out by Katrina?

00:37:23

CT: Uh-hm, yes.

00:37:23

GT: Oh yes, it was a slab.

00:37:26

CT: Yeah, yeah.

00:37:26

GT: They got—

00:37:29

CT: This is the old place. I can show you the picture of the old place.

00:37:33

GT: I got pictures at my house, too. A lot of pictures.

00:37:35

CT: That was before. This is what it is—that was right there. This office stayed. The office stayed. That's the only thing that stayed, this office, you know.

00:37:44

SR: Well that's good, huh?

00:37:45

CT: But this was the shed. That was our shed right there.

00:37:49

SR: Did you have to replace all of your equipment?

00:37:51

GT: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

00:37:52

CT: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

00:37:55

SR: Did you have insurance?

00:37:55

CT: Yeah.

00:37:57

GT: Yeah, but we--we—

00:37:59

CT: Not enough.

00:37:59

GT: —replaced it. We worked. We paid off the place. When the insurance came—not until what? A year and a half, two years later?

00:38:09

CT: What?

00:38:10

GT: Before we got the insurance?

00:38:10

CT: Oh, for for this? I know it took a while.

00:38:12

GT: It took a long time. We had worked and--and made the money up by the time the insurance come. You're just going to sit there? You know, a lot of people wanted to sit down and say, "Oh, please, come help—. You better do something, you know. It's—

00:38:24

CT: It's a shame. Before we got the insurance—I mean, we had insurance. Like all the lumber, we started getting it from the lumberyard. We owed the lumberyard, you know, and when we got the insurance check we paid them. Thank goodness that was—

00:38:34

GT: The people—

00:38:34

CT: —you know, that was—because we had to get it.

00:38:36

GT: The lumber companies worked with us, everything.

00:38:37

CT: To get it going for the May season after Katrina, 2006, yeah. We had it ready.

00:38:46

SR: And then Gustav was—I don't remember—two years after that?

00:38:49

CT: Yeah, it was 2008, September—

00:38:52

GT: She can tell you everything. *[Laughs]*

00:38:54

CT: September 8th, I think, 2008.

00:38:57

SR: And you mentioned your Leeville dock. Can you, just for the record, because we haven't talked about it that much—can you tell me the difference between your two places? What happens here and what happens there?

00:39:07

GT: Over there, generally they'd be buying more shrimp, but she has a fantastic retail business over here to the public, which right now is slow. But right now, that also—we want that reputation to come back. We want the oil field to come back. You know, the oil field is cut in half to what it was, which is a big part of our business here—the traffic. And the reputation. I even had a lady in—right there in Houma, at that Natural Drugs Drugstore. She says, “Oh my god,” she says. “You think that shrimp is safe to eat?” I said, “I don't know, Lady,” I said. “I'm eating it.” I said, “What it's going to do to me down the road, I don't know.” I said, “By the way, do you eat chicken eggs?” She says, “Yeah.” I said, “Didn't they have that big scare with the chicken eggs?” I said, “Didn't they have that big spinach scare in New York, a couple of people died? Oh yeah, and the mad cow disease.” I said, “Oh yeah, and the chickens and the cantaloupes in Colorado.” I said, “Do you eat anything?” You know, I said—. **[Laughs]** “Oh,” she said. “I never thought of it that way.” **[Laughs]** I said, “Everything--everything you eat, my god,” you know. I said, “Live on the edge. Eat a shrimp. Promote seafood; run over a chicken,” you know.

00:40:33

CT: If anybody ate more shrimp, that's me that's for sure.

00:40:35

GT: That woman could live on shrimp.

00:40:37

CT: Oh lord, I ate some shrimp.

00:40:38

GT: She can eat shrimps—

00:40:39

CT: After the oil spill, I continued eating it.

00:40:43

GT: If I wanted--if I wanted a fried shrimp and baked shrimp five days a week for her—

00:40:48

CT: They want to test somebody, they can test me. *[Laughs]*

00:40:49

GT: If we go to a restaurant, she'll order shrimp.

00:40:50

CT: That's for sure. Oh yeah, uh-hm.

00:40:53

GT: She says, “I’m going to promote my business.” She says—

00:40:58

SR: You don’t get tired of it, huh?

00:41:00

CT: Uh-um, any kind of way.

00:41:02

GT: I like nothing but the best.

00:41:03

SR: You love what?

00:41:05

GT: I love the best. I like rich foods, boiled potatoes and salt meat, hmm, and Vienna sausage, hmm. I could live on that.

00:41:14

SR: You could do without the shrimp?

00:41:17

GT: I'm allergic to it.

00:41:21

CT: He eats it and he's allergic to it.

00:41:22

GT: I'll eat it and I'll hurt bad the next day.

00:41:24

SR: In what way?

00:41:25

GT: Iodine.

00:41:26

CT: The iodine in it. He's allergic to iodine.

00:41:27

SR: And what--what's your symptom?

00:41:31

GT: I don't know; I swell up. I swell up. Like when I went to take an MRI, they gave me a shot of iodine, and then they rushed in with a tray of needles like this. I--I looked like a bullfrog.

00:41:44

CT: Yeah, I mean that fast—fast, fast, fast. Never knew—

00:41:48

GT: I was like that. [*Gasping*] I was suffocating and never knew it.

00:41:50

CT: And all his life he ate shrimp, but then shrimp hurts him. If he eats—and he still eats it.

00:41:56

SR: You had some today at lunch.

00:41:57

CT: He still eats it. It don't matter.

00:41:56

GT: Yeah, I had a couple.

00:41:58

CT: He'll still eat it.

00:41:59

GT: I'm hurting on the sides and all that.

00:42:01

CT: He'll hurt two days later.

00:42:01

GT: My ribs hurt. I feel like I'm—at night I can't hardly catch my breath because I'm swollen inside.

00:42:08

CT: Because all shrimp has iodine, every shrimp. You know how some of them—I don't know if you've ever tasted the ones with iodine. I don't like it.

00:42:14

GT: Any crustacean has iodine.

00:42:16

CT: But it has—it all has iodine.

00:42:16

GT: Not as much as others, some. But like, even crawfish. Any crustacean has an iodine.

00:42:24

CT: And the weirdest thing about the iodine, the year of the spill or whatever; or no, after--the year after—well, this year, 2011, and the August season 2010, I hardly—. And I smell the iodine in a shrimp. I hardly had any shrimp that had the iodine smell. That was weird because in the west a lot of the shrimp smell the iodine. You know, I used to put it on the truck because I don't like to sell it here because a lot of people, local people and stuff, complain if any shrimp smells. And I could smell the iodine. When it's coming off of that belt, I can smell it, you know, and since the oil spill—. And I keep asking people, "What causes the iodine in shrimp?" Don't know; nobody knows why—why some shrimp has iodine and why some doesn't, that it smells that smell, that iodine. And nobody knows; nobody can answer the question—why?

00:43:22

SR: Somebody told me that the offshore shrimp, brown, have more iodine.

00:43:29

CT: Yeah, yeah.

00:43:31

GT: Yeah, deepwater.

00:43:32

CT: Yeah, deepwater.

00:43:33

GT: All your deepwater shrimp.

00:43:34

CT: Yeah, but in the lakes and all, the big lakes of this side, it's mostly—it was iodine. And then this year—last year after the oil spill—this year I don't smell no iodine smell.

00:43:47

GT: No iodine smell, and it used to be a strong iodine smell.

00:43:49

CT: I can't--I can't get over it, you know.

00:43:51

GT: Oh, you'll smell it. You'll smell the iodine.

00:43:53

CT: It's not.

00:43:54

GT: Texas is the worst.

00:43:55

CT: That I noticed, you know.

00:43:57

SR: Today, the boats that are coming in today—what kind of shrimp do they have, and where do they come from?

00:44:02

CT: What kind of what?

00:44:03

SR: Shrimp?

00:44:04

GT: White.

00:44:04

CT: It's white shrimp right now. This is the white shrimp season.

00:44:08

SR: Do you have a preference? I guess you're saying that you don't really—

00:44:12

CT: Between the brown shrimp and the May season and the white? I eat a lot of the white, the big shrimp [*Laughs*]—.

00:44:20

GT: If you can what?

00:44:21

CT: Which is the difference?

00:44:22

SR: If you have a preference?

00:44:23

CT: The brown shrimp, the Brazil shrimp, which is the May season, it's more of a firmer shrimp when you're cooking it, you know. Like for gumbos and something, they'll stay together better. The white shrimp—

00:44:32

GT: The white offshore shrimp—

00:44:32

CT: —will be a soft shrimp.

00:44:35

SR: What shrimp make you swell more?

00:44:37

GT: The offshore shrimp make me swell more.

00:44:38

CT: Oh, I don't eat that at all. I won't eat the—

00:44:40

GT: I'm allergic to crab, shrimp, crawfish, and everything like that. I eat it, though.

00:44:49

SR: Well, can you, Mr. Terrebonne, tell me about—. We have a customer, but I'd like to hear about what you cooked for lunch today, but we can--we can pause for a second.

00:45:02

I want to ask you about—Mr. Terrebonne—about what you made for lunch today. I know you were just talking about it with a customer who came in, but could you tell me what it's called, in French and in English?

00:45:13

GT: I guess in English it would be a spaghetti étouffée.

00:45:20

CT: How your daddy used to call it though.

00:45:21

GT: Huh, my daddy?

00:45:27

CT: Yeah. [*Laughs*] [Interviewer's note: George and Carol converse in French for a moment.]

00:45:27

GT: "Spaghetti made out of bicycle spokes." He said if you boil them long enough, they get soft. You know, the bicycle—

00:45:32

CT: That's what his daddy called them all the time. Boy, and he can cook that too.

00:45:38

GT: Whoa, my daddy could cook that. Wow.

00:45:40

CT: That was good.

00:45:42

GT: Well, it's like everything else. You see, me, I got my special dishes that I cook. But she's just a good all-around general cook, you know. [*Laughs*] She can cook anything. But it's called spaghetti étouffée. The difference in that is that down here, Cajuns down here, they don't heat up a can of Ragu and pour it over the spaghetti. They cook the—if that sauce don't cook for at least two to three hours—and that's a short time—the sauce ain't worth a damn. You've got to cook that four and five hours, a good sauce.

00:46:12

CT: That's what a lot of people in South Louisiana—

00:46:17

GT: Four and five—

00:46:17

CT: —cooks—. I notice people from a lot of Louisiana, they cook for three--three hours, a sauce or anything, and other people in other states, you're going to fix something and it's going to take 15 minutes to fix it. Not down here.

00:46:31

GT: That's right. You'll die of heartburn, too. But a good--a good sauce, the first thing you do is, like I said, you use the onion, bell pepper—that's the holy grail of Cajun cooking.

00:46:41

CT: Yeah.

00:46:43

GT: You--you smother whatever meats you got in the onion and bell pepper. You smother that, brown it before you even start anything. Then, if you got to make a roux or make a spaghetti sauce, whatever you got to make, then you put that in there and cook. Then you cook that another two or three hours. And then the difference in that—we put our spaghetti in the sauce and cook the spaghetti in the sauce.

00:47:06

SR: You mean the dried noodles?

00:47:08

GT: Put the dried noodles in the sauce, but we add water to the sauce, you know, and it thickens up. Well look, we're going to Yogi Bear Park—

00:47:14

CT: So we wonder why people are big down here? All the starch in the pot. You don't get rid of the starch by boiling it, you know. *[Laughs]* You got it all in there.

00:47:23

GT: That's right. One time we were going to Yogi Bear. We used to go camping at Yogi Bear, and we'd bought all kind of seafood to make a--seafood to make a--we were going to have a

seafood platter. And the people come around and tell us, “Hey, they’re going to have a gumbo cook-off.” We had oysters. We had shrimp. We had smoked sausage. We had—“Man,” Carol says. Look, me and her went 50/50. She told me exactly how--what to do, and I sat there and stirred, but it was her recipe. She’d tell me, “Okay, George, put in the onions. Start smothering your onions, and do this.” So we cooked a gumbo. Huh, the trophy is at the house. *[Laughs]*

00:48:04

SR: Where was that? Where is the Yogi Bear—?

00:48:06

GT: At Yogi Bear Park in Roberts, Louisiana. Near Hammond and all. Well, the trophy is at the house. She won first place.

00:48:15

SR: And your spaghetti today—so, you started with onions and bell pepper, and then tell me about what meats you used.

00:48:20

GT: Uh, let me see. Today I used—I usually use salt meat, but today I used ham and--and smoked sausage, and I added my shrimp in. Sometimes I wait for my shrimp; sometimes I don’t. But I smothered all that with the onion first. And then after the onion was good and brown and the stuff was kind of brown a little bit, I added in my tomato sauce. And then you cook that for another two or three hours, the tomato sauce. And right about 15 minutes before it’s done, you

drop in them oysters, because you don't want to cook them oysters too long. An oyster, all you got to do is heat it up a little bit. No, not heat it up; just, you got to cook it 10--15 minutes, that's all.

00:49:03

SR: At what point do you add the spaghetti?

00:49:06

GT: When you think your sauce is done there, the first thing you got to do to your sauce, is you got to cook that sauce and you watch the little bubbles. You put it on low and you watch it poof, poof, poof. The bubbles all—they're all popping to the top. Of course, if you don't put a top, it's going to fly on you too. But when it stops—almost stops—bubbling, there's no more water in there. It's dehydrated—all the water came out, and it's almost stuck to the bottom of the pot. It's going to start sticking a little bit, and a good Cajun [*Phone Rings*] sauce is no good unless that spaghetti starts to stick to the bottom of that pot. [*Laughs*] There you can start adding a little bit of water and cooking that sauce longer. But I wait for that sauce to stick first. I don't put no water until that sauce sticks to the bottom of the pot. And that changes the flavor of that sauce 100-percent.

00:50:00

And I used to use all kinds of fancy stuff, and now I just use tomato paste and Rotel.
That's it.

00:50:07

SR: And what gives it that little heat? Is it the sausage and the Rotel?

00:50:09

GT: The Rotel and the sausage, yeah. And if you want to add a little bit, you add a little bit to it. You can put a little bit of cayenne or whatever you want, whatever you like. I like—I don't want to say the name of the brand. I don't want to advertise, you know.

00:50:22

SR: What kind of sausage did you use—that was some special sausage?

00:50:26

GT: It was jalapeno and cheese smoked sausage. Well, actually, it's a friend of mine from where I got a camper in Northern Louisiana. It's Hatton's sausage. And he's--he's one of them deer processors, you know. But I find it to be a good sausage, good smoked sausage.

00:50:46

SR: Did you learn how to make that dish from your father?

00:50:49

GT: Yes, I did. Oh yeah, my daddy is the one—that was the best. Man, that was—he was the champion at making that, just like my baby is the champion at making a gumbo.

00:51:02

SR: What was your father's name?

00:51:04

GT: George. George, Sr. I didn't know that. A lot of people told me after my father passed away. They said, "Did you change your name to Senior?" I said, "No." In some places they change. They become Senior instead of the Junior. Remember when somebody asked me that?

00:51:22

CT: I don't know.

00:51:24

GT: I never heard of that neither. Now, why he called himself that, I think that's an English name. I think it's after King George or something. I don't know what they called him.

00:51:34

SR: Do you cook lunch here every day for the staff?

00:51:36

GT: No, no. I cook a lot of days, but I don't cook lunch every day. Every now and then I'll cook something--something good like that. Sometimes I'll make a--go get French bread and—. Tell you what my grandkids like: They like that luncheon meat, that good cholesterol stuff. Take luncheon meat and we grill it on the barbeque pit. And again, I cut it about maybe an eighth or a

quarter of an inch thick, and we grill it until it's almost black. And with French bread, that's their favorite sandwich in the whole world.

00:52:08

SR: By “lunch meat,” do you mean like bologna?

00:52:09

GT: Luncheon meat. No, it's called “luncheon meat.”

00:52:12

CT: It's called “luncheon meat.” I think that's only down here also, luncheon meat.

00:52:16

GT: I don't know.

00:52:16

CT: I don't know.

00:52:16

GT: It might not be nowhere else. I think it's called “luncheon loaf.”

00:52:21

CT: They got ham, they got chopped ham, but then this is called “luncheon meat.” *[Laughs]*

00:52:28

GT: I thought everybody knew luncheon meat.

00:52:29

CT: No, uh-uh.

00:52:30

GT: We call it “luncheon meat,” but it’s “luncheon loaf,” I think it’s called, luncheon meat.

00:52:35

SR: Did you cook the smothered spaghetti out here, outside?

00:52:39

GT: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

00:52:40

SR: All of it?

00:52:40

GT: Yeah, yeah, I love to cook outside. Even at our camp in North Louisiana, we have an outside kitchen. When we go up there, all the neighbors, boom, they all—they come right to the camp. They know when George is there.

00:52:55

CT: Uh-hm.

00:52:55

GT: When George and Carol is there. We got one neighbor, I shouldn't say his name, but he's a dear friend, Rodney. Of course he's probably never going to see this interview, okay. He gets a check.

00:53:11

CT: He cuts our grass.

00:53:12

GT: He cuts our grass. I give him a little bit of—I'll bring him some shrimp. Well, he gets a check. He's--he gets a check. His daddy helps him out all the time. His daddy builds—it's his daddy's camp. He built the camp. He goes fishing every day, okay. He's got a girlfriend that visits him twice a week to make him happy, you know. She works 365 days a year, and he supposedly is crazy. He don't work; he fishes every day. **[Laughs]** And he's the crazy one. I told Carol, I said, "What ain't right with this picture?"

00:53:53

SR: He's got a good life.

00:53:55

GT: I tell Carol sometimes, she's over here all the time. I see guys; I work—except for before I got all screwed up and all that, I used to work every single day just like that. I see guys that I grow(ed) up with that don't have a job, never had a job; they show up with all kinds of friends. "Where y'all going?" "Oh, we're going to spend a couple of nights on the beach and party and drink beer and barbeque and--." I say, "Carol, something is wrong with this picture. They never worked. They're over here, they're buying shrimp and ice and beer and all to go party and we can't go do that," you know. [*Laughs*] Something ain't right somewhere.

00:54:32

SR: Yeah, what is going on with that?

00:54:34

GT: I don't know.

00:54:37

SR: It is really, really hard work, and you're here 12 hours a day pretty much. What--do you have a retirement plan?

00:54:46

GT: Yeah, yeah, it's called Smart Funeral Home. What is it called?

00:54:52

CT: I don't know. *[Laughs]*

00:54:54

GT: Yeah, it's called a \$6,000 thing we got to pay our coffin. She came one day and told me, said, "George, you want to go see your second home?" I said, "Second home? What the hell is that?" She bought us a mausoleum. *[Laughs]* I said, "Hell no. I don't want to go see that." A retirement plan, no.

00:55:12

CT: That's our retirement plan. *[Laughs]*

00:55:13

GT: That's our retirement plan.

00:55:14

SR: You don't see an end to your work?

00:55:18

GT: No.

00:55:20

CT: No.

00:55:21

SR: You don't seem that—you're smiling as you say that, so I guess you must like coming to work every day.

00:55:27

CT: Yeah, yeah.

00:55:30

GT: I'd love it if she'd take off and go to the camp with me, but that's not her thing. That's not what she likes. So that's why now after so many years, if I decide I want to go, I'll go. Because I know she's not going to take off and go with me, **[Laughs]** and she just kicks me and says, "Go ahead, go. Hey, hey get out, get out of here, get out, go." If the grandkids—she let's—see, that's my job. I got a hard job now. If the grandkids want to go to the camp, well, she makes me go with them, and you know--and I got to go fix the thing.

00:56:00

SR: Well, what do you do at the camp?

00:56:04

GT: I drink wine and I cook.

00:56:07

SR: And--and your grandkids hunt?

00:56:11

GT: They get caught hunting. They--they break laws.

00:56:19

CT: *[Laughs]*

00:56:19

GT: Cause me and Carol to pay things that we don't have to pay. Yeah, yeah, they hunt.

00:56:26

SR: What do they hunt up there?

00:56:27

GT: There's duck, deer, just--just about everything. We're not squirrel people. We don't eat squirrel down here, so *[Laughs]* they got squirrel up there. But over there--over here, we eat coot—it's called poule d'eau. We eat poule d'eau over here. And that reminds me to tell you to the story about the poule d'eau. I've come to—it's called "poule d'eau," and that means water chicken.

00:56:51

Well, over there in North Louisiana, they don't hunt--they don't eat poule d'eau; it's coot. They say, "Get rid of them damn coots." But it still costs \$500 if you chase them and shoot

them out of a boat without shutting off the motor. It still costs \$500 to do that. I know because my grandkids did it, you see.

00:57:09

SR: Oh, they're not allowed to hunt that up there?

00:57:13

GT: No, they're not allowed to chase them with a boat.

00:57:14

CT: They didn't turn off the engine.

00:57:16

GT: And the--and they're not allowed to shoot ducks when the season is closed either.

00:57:21

CT: They did that. [*Laughs*]

00:57:25

GT: So—

00:57:26

CT: So the Wildlife and Fisheries watches that camp. [*Laughs*]

00:57:28

SR: Where is the camp?

00:57:30

GT: It's about 40 minutes south of Monroe this side. But them coot, it's called a poule d'eau. Back in the old days, the Catholic Church—it's not followed very much now, but a lot of people still—you don't eat meat on Friday okay, the Catholic Church. So some--some uptown citizens of the Catholic Church decided he don't want to eat seafood no more on Friday. He wants to eat duck. So a poule d'eau, the legs on a poule d'eau has little bitty bones just like the--the bones in a fish. The legs of a--of a coot, it's full of little bones. You can't eat the meat over the leg because you'll choke on one of them little bones.

00:58:20

So he got the priest to declare this a "water chicken," which is in the seafood family, so he could eat it on Friday. Yeah.

00:58:32

CT: A water chicken, but a chicken you can't eat on Friday.

00:58:33

GT: No, but this is a water chicken. [*Phone Rings*] It's in the fish family.

00:58:38

SR: Does it taste like fish?

00:58:39

GT: No, it tastes like duck.

00:58:41

CT: No, it's duck. It's duck.

00:58:43

GT: *[Laughs]* So that's a poule d'eau. A Catholic can eat a poule d'eau on Friday. Or, down here they can. I don't know about anywhere else. Maybe--maybe what's-his-name in New Orleans don't eat them, but we eat them. We eat them over here.

00:58:57

SR: I wanted to ask you: You mentioned a little while ago, before you "got screwed up," you said that you used to work 24/7 as well.

00:59:06

GT: We used to open over here--we used to open over here 24 hours a day. And many--many of times when we first opened up our place over here, we would meet ourselves coming and going. We--we--one time after about two days, Carol was watching me by the scale and I'd look at the weight—that's when we had manual scales and all. I'd go look at the weight on the scale. I'd

turn around with a pencil and I'd forget what the hell I was doing. I'd turn around and look at it again, go back, and after about five times she said, "George, go take a nap." *[Laughs]*

00:59:45

And then I come over here in the office, and she looks like she's [inaudible]. She's trying to figure out the--the bill of lading for the truck and can't figure it out. She said, "George, I don't know what the hell this is," you know. "Carol, go take a nap." That's how much we used to work over here. And we had a crew at night and a crew during the daytime, but me and her would stay almost 24 hours.

01:00:05

SR: If you had that now, would you have boats coming in 24 hours or not?

01:00:11

GT: It's not the same anymore. No.

01:00:12

CT: No, it's not as many fishing.

01:00:14

GT: It's not—fishermen--fishermen have changed over the years. I guess we did, too. We have too. I can't say nothing. We changed too. But it's not like the old days when you had loyalty. You had loyalty in the business, you know. But today everybody goes for the nickel, and I don't care who you are. You know, except—

01:00:44

SR: Well if they go--if they go for the nickel, do you mean that they go to a dock that pays more, or they—?

01:00:49

GT: You can't blame them. You can't blame anybody, for a nickel. A nickel is a lot of money in this business. Plenty, plenty of money in this business. One year we bought 3,000,000 pounds. A nickel is what? \$150,000 on 3,000,000 pounds. Or, is it? Yeah, it's \$50-grand per—yeah, \$50-grand per million, yeah. So a fisherman, at the end of the year if he sits there and looks, if he's got a trip and this other dock, say, is paying a dime more, okay, and he's got 1,000 pounds, 10 boxes—that's \$100. And that goes a lot towards his profit—I mean his--his expenses. You know, which, that's why you can't—. Because the profit--the overhead is almost greater than the profit is right now, and--and he's looking at a lot of money. You know, that's why he has to go for that nickel. So--so we can't say nothing.

01:01:56

CT: We had a lot of trouble with the Vietnamese docks. They'll work on 10-cents.

01:02:01

GT: Yeah, they'll work on nothing.

01:02:03

CT: And that's—you're working on 10-cents, you're not making no money.

01:02:07

SR: What does that mean, you're working on 10-cents?

01:02:10

CT: To put—

01:02:10

GT: Per pound.

01:02:12

CT: —the shrimp on the truck, you know.

01:02:14

GT: See, we put the shrimp on the truck for 15 to 20-cents a pound—profit that we're making. So it costs us a dime to work a shrimp, so if we're making 20-cents we're making a dime. We're not making 20-cents. And every year the--the cost on that dime goes up. You know, and the Vietnamese, they'll work on a dime. So I had one of them ask me, "Mr. George"—remember Victor when he first started?

01:02:37

CT: Yeah, yeah.

01:02:39

GT: “Mr. George”—he started in business against us, and if we—it don’t matter what we paid, he’d go down in a hurry to try to get the fishermen to go sell to him. One day he called us up; he said, “Mr. George, how you make money on shrimp?” Because he wasn’t making no money. I said, “Victor,” I said. “It’s--it’s a well-kept secret among us shrimp buyers.” I said, “Man, it’s one of them deals.” I said, “If I tell you that I’d have to kill you”—you know, if you find out what the secret was. “Oh please,” he said. “I won’t tell nobody.” “Okay,” I said. “Sell it for higher than you buy it for.” “Oh, okay. Thank you.” **[Laughs]** That’s the secret.

01:03:33

SR: So you’ve seen a lot of changes—. **[Someone walks into the office.]** I’ll pause. I wanted to ask you—well, I guess we were just talking about changes in the business, and we should wrap up here soon. You’ve given me a lot of time, but—. You were just--we were just talking about the Vietnamese shrimpers. Were--were there a lot of Vietnamese shrimping when you first got into the business?

01:04:02

GT: No, no, no. We brought in—we didn’t bring in; the guy we worked for bought from the first Vietnamese shrimper that came down on this bayou. He bought from the first Vietnamese that came down. **[Phone Rings]** And that’s when they really worked. But now they got Americanized. **[Laughs]** You know, they used to work like the people down here used to work at one time, as--as a family unit. Now the younger ones—I guess it’s because of the drugs and stuff

like that—they got away from the family unit. They're not working no more as a family unit. So that's their downfall.

01:04:39

Just like the Mexicans. The Mexicans, the first ones that came down here were the working force, really workers. Now you got all your rejects and all coming in the country, you know, so now it's not the same anymore. But shit, if it wouldn't be for them there'd be no workforce in the United States because nobody wants to work. We don't have one white guy or one black guy or one local guy come over here and want to work.

01:05:14

SR: You mean work on the dock, not as a shrimper?

01:05:16

GT: Work on the dock.

01:05:18

CT: Our grandkids come on the weekend.

01:05:18

GT: Our grandkids do, but nobody else wants that job. One lady, I told her straight out, I said—at Rosa's Café, she said, "I can't," she said. "Because of them, my kid can't find a job." I said, "Well, tell him," I said. "I need some people." "Oh yeah, but he don't want to do that kind of work." "Oh," I said. "Well, let's--let's get this shit straight again." Let's get this straight.

01:05:37

SR: The--the people working on your dock right now—you have a couple guys. Where are they from?

01:05:41

GT: Honduras. They're--they're one step above the Mexicans as far as—I'm serious—as far as myself, that's what I think. I have nothing against one kind of people, but I find they're better--better people. They--they don't have all the rejects and all yet that come over. The ones that came over from Honduras is actually the ones that want to work. And I know it--it—some of them, some of them is illegal. Some of them got to be illegal that's coming and working and that--that's got to be a hard thing to do, for a man to leave his country and his family and his wife behind and come and have to work. And you know, every day they face—a lot of people don't like them up the road. You know, but that's really got to be hard on a man, to--to do something like that.

01:06:35

And like I said, if they were to get rid of the--the Mexicans, there would be no workforce in the United States. You know, because nobody else wants to do it. Well, *now* they want to do this kind of job because it's all--it's all automatic. But when we used to first start doing it, that was nothing automatic—100-pound boxes, boom, boom. Hey, she was up many a nights at midnight stacking man-to-man, me on the one side and her on the other side, stacking 100-pound boxes. And my little niece, Amy, and my daughter. My daughter--my daughter stacked like any man that they got around here, you know just.

01:07:14

One night she had some little girls come and sleep over, and evidently the two little--two girls had the same boyfriend. Man, all of a sudden I looked from my bed, I opened my eyes, there's a little girl standing on top of me. "Mister, Mister, Mister"—she couldn't remember my name. "Mister, Mister, some little girl wants to kill Tina outside. The girls had stayed up, you know, and they had fought and everything else. Well, some girl came to meet her and wanted to beat her up. I go outside, yeah, Tina had her by the head—[*Gestures*]. I said, "Yeah, but I don't think she's hurting Tina none. Man, Tina, let her go." [*Laughs*]

01:07:49

SR: Does your daughter work in the business now?

01:07:51

CT: Uh-hm, yeah.

01:07:52

GT: Yeah. She's the only one really dependable enough to come and run—

01:07:57

CT: Takes my place whenever.

01:07:59

SR: She takes your place?

01:08:01

GT: She's the only other one that can do this job right here. [*Emphasis Added*]

01:08:04

SR: And what is--what is this job that you're pointing at? I'm wondering about, like—

01:08:08

GT: That's everything. That's how come she gets migraines at night. She's on the phone with seven different people at the same time—the buyer. You got to make the trawler happy, the buyer happy, run the computer over here, and if you're short one man she'll go out there and shovel ice just like any man around here. And my daughter is the same way—tough, tough women. Good women.

01:08:35

SR: You chose well.

01:08:38

GT: Ah, I picked them good. "You will follow me." [**Joking tone of voice.**]

01:08:41

SR: You've--you also have to stop when you have customers come in, so I wanted to ask you: What percentage of what you buy do you sell retail, versus what you sell to the processing plants?

01:08:55

CT: Uh—

01:08:59

GT: Well, right now it's a bigger percent, but when we get a lot of shrimp in it's a little percent.

01:09:03

CT: Yeah, yeah.

01:09:03

GT: When it was a trailer a day, it was a very little percent. But now, when you're only getting 30 boxes a day and you're selling 10 boxes right here, it's one-third.

01:09:13

CT: Uh-hm, yeah.

01:09:14

GT: You know, but when you got a trailer a day—

01:09:16

CT: Trailer loads, it might be five-percent.

01:09:18

GT: It might be two-percent or five-percent.

01:09:20

CT: Something like that, yeah.

01:09:22

GT: That's what's hard.

01:09:26

SR: So what—so, I saw one man coming in to get 10 pounds today to make an éouffée, and there were some other men from Baton Rouge that took an ice chest home. Is it kind of that-- those kinds of amounts that you sell retail?

01:09:39

CT: And oil field rig workers, you know, on the crew changes, they'll stop and get shrimp in the morning mostly. And then you have people on Grand Isle come by, so—.

01:09:55

SR: I have just a couple more questions. I could talk to you all day, but you are too busy for that. I wanted to ask about BP, and I--I learned before we started the recording that y'all didn't work for BP at all. But I know that the--the oil spill affected you profoundly. Are you still—?

01:10:13

GT: Very profoundly—profoundly or whatever hell the word means. [*Laughs*] It profound(ed) us to death. It makes us go from—. [*Interruption*]

01:10:29

SR: So we were talking about BP and how profoundly it affected your business and everyone around here. Are you eligible for compensation?

01:10:40

CT: Yeah. Yeah, oh yeah.

01:10:41

GT: Yeah, every--every 30 days BP comes back, and they want some new information. They've been new informationing us now for a year and a half. It's always, "Sir," but that's just an excuse to extend the thing. That's just an excuse to--to—that's why I lost confidence in the federal government. I lost confidence in everybody. The federal government is working for BP, and there ain't no demonstrator going to change that. It's like I said before, it reminds me of the hippies of the--of the '60s.

01:11:12

CT: A lot of us docks and stuff have a private adjustor, an adjustor doing the stuff for us. And finally he called, left a message on my phone that we'll know at the end of this month the final offer, the final payment or whatever they're going to offer. They haven't offered anybody. I mean, just like the three-month thing, we haven't gotten anything for the three months. Each three months at a loss—nothing.

01:11:42

GT: Yeah, they were supposed to pay us all three-month payments, and they never did it. But they're advertising all up North that they're taking care of the people. Just--just like the—

01:11:53

CT: Last year I sold 117,000 pounds less the retail than 2010--than the 2009. That's just the retail.

01:12:05

GT: And they're saying, "How did it affect you?" Let me see, you had 100 boats that worked for us that y'all hired to--for the cleanup. So that left us with no fishermen. How did it affect us, you know?

01:12:16

CT: Yeah, and the fishermen that did stay and work, they caught good. In the August season they caught good, the August season, but that was shrimp from the mamas or whatever that was before the oil spill for last year.

01:12:36

GT: Yeah, that was the crop from before.

01:12:42

SR: Well, like a lot of people, you're just in a holding pattern.

01:12:44

GT: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, but—

01:12:49

CT: Yeah.

01:12:51

GT: The big man is going to work it out. *[Laughs]*

01:12:52

SR: Well, you do seem very positive.

01:12:53

GT: We--we still got confidence in him. She don't have it today. She usually wears a rosary. She collects rosaries. And she don't go to bed without saying her rosary at night. And according to the fishermen, we have no heart, the buyer.

01:13:24

SR: Oh, my final question for you, Mr. Terrebonne, is what—you're obviously not going anywhere. You like this business enough to stay in it. What--what's your favorite part of your business here, of working the business? You're pointing at your wife?

01:13:43

GT: Yeah, that's my favorite part. I guess I have some love for it. **[Laughs]** I tell everybody I never did like it. I got into the business because that's what she wanted. But I guess if I would have disliked it enough, I would have left. So, but it's a business like any other business. I've got a bunch of good fishermen that I consider friends that it really makes your day when--when you can unload them. Every now and then you got this one that stops—it's not no certain person that throws your day off. You know, that's the only thing. **[Laughs]** And now that I'm older, that part is getting to me more. That's why Carol don't want me—"George, George, George, keep your mouth shut, George," because I don't keep my mouth shut no more.

01:14:34

Okay, the other day I had a guy stop for retail and he was there—"Argh, argh, argh." I said, "You, you're too stupid to buy shrimp. Get out of my place. You're just too stupid to buy shrimp. Get out." And then Carol: "George, you're going to run off all my business." I get thrown out at least four times a week, but she loves me anyway, yeah.

01:14:55

But no, I tell Carol trawling was my first love. And this is the next thing to trawling. It--it--everybody thinks we're multi-millionaires, but we're not. We had a few dollars saved before this BP thing, but we saved—we spent it. The business wasn't there, and it takes money to support three or four families. You just can't support three or four families, and plus, Carol is one that believes in putting back into the place. See, just like that line of equipment—that's \$100,000 right there. You know, yeah, it don't take much. A new ice machine here, a new ice machine there in Leeville, and whether they buy shrimp or not, we still got to pay them workers, you know.

01:15:42

So, but the business has been good for us over the years. It--it's like, I know my daddy told--always told me, "Look, you take care of your business it's going to take care of you." And thank God, Carol takes care of the business [*Laughs*] because she does it better than I. But what I love most about it is her. It's still her, you know. I have no regrets.

01:16:09

SR: Well, I think that that's a really great place to wrap this up. It's a very sweet sentiment.

01:16:14

GT: I love her. What do you want me to tell you? [*Laughs*]

01:16:19

SR: I like it. Thank you.

01:16:20

GT: Oh no, thank you, young lady. I love talking about that every now and then.

01:16:24

SR: Well, I love hearing about it and I really appreciate you taking the—

01:16:28

GT: A tear goes to my eye every now and then when I start. I can't talk like that for long. I love our kids. I fuss and everything else. Carol--well Carol: Whoa, man, hey, you don't start talking about her son or her grandson or nothing like that in front of my wife; especially me. Whoa, she'll turn on me. **[Laughs]** That's how much Carol does--loves them kids. She loves them kids and she loves this business. She actually loves it over here. And it's not the money. Don't get me wrong, the money is good, but it's the kind of business where you always have to be robbing Peter to pay Paul. She has to manipulate everything around all the time. But it--that's my fault. Carol was raised in a family where they had their little checks every week. So much went here, so much went there; Saturday--Saturday and Sunday they'd go to the camp. Her daddy would make this much money to spend this much money. Carol got used to living my kind of life where, hey, in the summertime it's steaks and Cadillac(s), but you ain't got time to spend it. In the wintertime it's back to pork and beans and Vienna sausages. You know, when she first married, when we first had the shed, the first thing Carol said is, "George, the--the note is due on the shed." [I said,] "Pay it." She likes me because I'm simple. She says, "I don't have no money." Well, I said, "Don't pay it." But, she says, "It's due." Well, I said, "Pay it." I said,

“Wait a minute, Carol.” So I knew the--the manager at the bank, Sydney. Well, he passed away since then.

01:18:07

I called Sydney and I said, “Sydney, you want a shrimp shed?” “Hell no,” he says. I said, “Tell that to Carol,” **[Laughs]** I said. And you learn how to go talk to people. I used to go--we used to go to a bank, you know, with both our hands like that **[Gestures]** and, “Excuse me, I’d like to borrow \$10,000 for a line of credit.” “Well, Mr. Terrebonne, they meet at--at the end of the month. They’re going to have the board meeting and you fill out all these papers and--and we’re going to decide—.” You know, [we were] scared. A change of attitude does everything for somebody in this life.

01:18:45

So now I do all the—you can ask Carol. Carol, she don’t have the—I guess enough nerve or whatever to—. “George, we’re going to need some money from the bank.” I say, “Okay.” I just go to the bank and I say, “Hey, look, by this afternoon I need a \$50,000 line of credit, okay.” “Well, Mr. Terrebonne—Mr. Terrebonne?” “What?” I said, “I’m sure South Lafourche is going to let me have it.” “Well, George, he said we’re going to put the money in your account right now. Can you stop by and sign the papers?” “Yeah, that’s no problem.” It--it’s all **[Laughs]**—but--but when we first started, “Excuse me—.” You know, you learn to change after a few years. So that’s what my job is. **[Laughs]**

01:19:30

SR: The confidence end.

01:19:31

GT: I guess. [*Laughs*] I guess, and boy, if they would only know. [*Laughs*] But no, like I said, it's been a good—it's provided us with a good life. But of course we don't have--we don't get to get away like most people do. It's always here. And my job—I'm away a lot, but it's Carol that sends me away. "George, go with the grandkids and go get the camp ready for the grandkids." Okay, I come back. Okay, "George, go make a food platter for Wade. [*Laughs*]

01:20:07

SR: Right, we took--we took lunch to your son today at the other dock.

01:20:11

GT: Uh-huh, love my son. Love my daughter. Love my grandkids, but don't tell them that. Okay, that's it.

01:20:21

SR: Thank you.

01:20:21

GT: No, thank you, young lady.

01:20:23

[End Seafood Shed Interview]