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Florida Fishing Captains Oral History Project  
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**Terry Lee Howard (TH):** Okay, we're recording now. I'm here today with Albert Quatraro. He is from Sebastian, Florida, a captain, a commercial kingfish captain, and we are in Vero Beach at—

**Albert Michael Quatraro (AQ):** The Original Mama Mia's Italian Kitchen.

TH: Okay.

AQ: Downtown.

TH: Downtown Vero Beach. And my first question for you, Albert—

AQ: They make their own pasta here, by the way.

TH: Albert, do I have your permission to use this interview for publications, books, articles, et cetera?

AQ: Most definitely.

TH: Second, please state your full name.

AQ: Albert M. Quatraro.

TH: Okay and could you spell that please for the—

AQ: Q-u-a-t-r-a-r-o.

TH: Okay. And Albert, A-l-b-e-r-t, I assume.

AQ: Yes.

TH: Okay. Do I have your permission to archive this interview at the University of South Florida Tampa Library digital archives?

AQ: Yes.

TH: Okay. When and where were you born?

AQ: I was born in Brooklyn, New York. Sheepshead Bay, 1959.

TH: Okay. I think I have a picture of you—

AQ: Yes.

TH: With your stepfather—

AQ: Yes, Tommy McHale was my stepdad—

TH: Okay. And he fished—did you start fishing there?

AQ: Oh yeah. Yes.

TH: Okay.

AQ: My first—

TH: Give me a brief biography of yourself. Include your first experience boating, fishing, commercial, and/or charter.

AQ: Okay, right there on that dock when I was, like, seven, Tommy had me jigging up tinker mackerel for him and keeping them in a live well—

TH: Tinker mackerel—

AQ: Yeah, like baby Boston mackerel. They ran there just like the mullet do here, you know, but down in the water column more, and we were catching one, he was making a homemade sabiki rigs<sup>1</sup> and—his own, you know, with hooks—and he'd leave me there jigging them up and we were keeping them in a live well.

TH: This is right at Sheepshead Bay.

AQ: Right in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, New York, in New York within the New York City limits.

TH: Okay.

AQ: Yeah, the water was nice, you could—pretty clear—and there was a lot going on there, you know, other bait fish and stuff, killies and—

TH: What are killies?

AQ: They're little bitty, like, minnows, you know. They kept them alive, but then there was spearing also, and the spearing were really tiny.<sup>2</sup> They kept them—those would be dead and they kept them in, like, Chinese rice containers you see at a Chinese restaurant. And they would sell those as dead bait. You know, it was little boat rental stations.

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<sup>1</sup> A sabiki rig is used for catching baitfish using a single line with a heavy weight.

<sup>2</sup> Spearing (*Menidia menidia*) are also known as Atlantic silverside.

TH: And you sold—did you sell bait?

AQ: No, I didn't. I just, I kind of—Tommy would let me catch him some bait, and then the guys at the boatyard—I wanted a job, I was all serious about getting myself a job, as a busboy at a restaurant, and they said, “Well, we'll give you a job, you can just help out tying up these boats here, and we'll pay you a pizza if you help us out.” So that's where I got my first experiences fishing.

TH: Okay, with your—your step—Tommy McHale is who we're talking about.

AQ: That's right, he wound up raising me. My real dad, he was a mechanic and he commercial fished on the side. And him and Tommy were actually friends at one time.

TH: Tommy McHale, just for the record has a chapter in my first book, *Great Kingfish Captains of Fort Pierce, Florida, Tell Their Stories*. He's a legend among early fishermen—fishermen and commercial fishermen in Florida.

AQ: Both in Florida and also in New York and in New York City.

TH: Tell me a little about—you know—so did you fish with him? In New York?

AQ: Well, just—just around the dock there and, you know, he took me out to try bass fishing in Raritan Bay. But we were—it was tough times. The winters were so bad, us kids were sick a lot—the flu—and it was just, it was hard times. And they just, they wanted to come to Florida. My mom had been here when she was a kid, and they just wanted to find a better place where they could fish year-round and a better climate.

So as soon as possible, we did just that. We moved down here with a 16-foot—one of those—Tommy had one of the plywood skiffs<sup>3</sup> from there, from that boat rental station, and he painted it gray. They were beautiful boats. They were like a modified Chapelle sharpie<sup>4</sup> with a—they modified them with V-bottom<sup>5</sup>, and the boats still had oar locks and oars and all plywood painted with enamel. And we put it on a trailer and came here with fishing poles, and that's how he started his career. And we've kept it going all these years

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<sup>3</sup> A skiff is a shallow, flat-bottomed open boat.

<sup>4</sup> A sharpie is a hard-chined sailboat with a flat bottom and shallow draft.

<sup>5</sup> A V-bottom is a boat in which the contours of the hull come into a straight line.

from the '60s into 2018 now, the family tradition of making a living just pulling fish by hand, you know, no nets.

TH: Okay. So describe—you once told me when you first came to Florida you were, you went to South Beach in Fort Pierce at the jetty and they were catching fish and—

AQ: Oh yeah—

TH: You were with Tommy McHale and your—what happened?

AQ: Well, originally, we really didn't know where to go, and we got a tip to go to Port Salerno, which we did. And we were up in Manatee Pocket, living in a little cottage, and most of the fishermen there were all net fishermen and kind of cliquish. Tommy got a job at the fish house, and things just weren't working out very well with him making a living with his rod and reel.

But he got a hot tip to drive on up to Fort Pierce and take a look there—that there was a couple of hook-and-line fisheries going on up there with king mackerel boats and other things happening. So we drove up the A1A, and we got to the south jetty in Fort Pierce, and the seagulls were going crazy, fish were busting all over the place—

TH: Now this was at the south jetty—

AQ: The south jetty.

TH: You can walk out on the jetty.

AQ: Yeah, on the south jetty. Yes. Sure could. It was paved, you could get out there. There was a lot of people reeling in the bluefish. Tommy got busy right away catching them. We had a couple wooden fish crates in the trunk, and we just started filling up the crates. And us kids were running all around the jetty, seeing people were catching more than they could keep, and they were just laying all over the rocks. And we asked people if we could have their bluefish, and we were taking them too. And we loaded up the car and we went to Charlie Lowe's Fish House, and he took them. He bought the fish from us, and he was very friendly.

TH: Well, Charlie Lowe's Fish House—was it on the causeway in South Beach?

AQ: Yes, it was.

TH: Okay. This is a while back. Later on, it was at north bridge.

AQ: Right it was east of the—then it was east of the south bridge, right on the inlet on the north—

TH: The causeway—

AQ: Yeah, on the causeway, basically. By the—you know, just west of the Coast Guard station, Chuck's Steakhouse.

TH: And he bought your fish?

AQ: He bought them. He was happy to get them. It was, it was a very rough—the ocean was really rough at the time, and the net boats weren't getting into the ocean to catch them, and then the tide is too strong in the inlet for them to get them. So he was happy to get the bluefish. So it worked out well, and that was their first day pay commercial fishing. It was like 1967. Yes. And from there, other things happened.

TH: Did you move to Fort Pierce after that?

AQ: Oh yes. Yes. ABC Trailer Park on 25th Street. It wasn't even paved then. It was a four-lane road—unpaved four-lane road.

TH: And that's where you first lived?

AQ: Yes.

TH: Now you say "we"—did you have some brothers with you?

AQ: Yes, two brothers. My older brother, Harry—he works at the museum there in Fort Pierce, on the causeway. So he's affiliated with that, and my older brother—I mean my younger brother, Mike, he did marine salvage towing. He started TowBoatUS up in Sebastian, so—

TH: He's still doing that?

AQ: No, he had to give it up—it's just too—he did it for like 20 years, you know. We've done plenty of marine salvaging there.

TH: Okay, so why—you talk about why and when and how you moved to Florida. What species of fish did you first target—well, how did you get into kingfishing?

AQ: Well, my parents evolved into king mackerel fishing because that was a better thing to do, so they got the big boat—

TH: Describe king mackerel fishing.

AQ: Well, it is a traditional fishery of all trolling with handmade tackle. Basically, it's sport fishing on a commercial scale, with two or three lines, colorful spoons or feathers or sea witches, tailed with a piece of bait. Basically sport fishing on a commercial scale, like I said.

TH: Well, you don't use fishing poles?

AQ: No poles, all hand line. Heavy monofilament, and maybe a wire leader here and there, inboard boats mainly.<sup>6</sup> That fishery's evolving into trailerable boats now with outboards. But anyways, I was always interested in maybe doing that. As I was a kid, it was a dream to grow up and do that for a living, but the fishery suffered some tremendous pressure in the late '70s or mid-'70s with the airplane-assisted roller rigs with their runaround gill nets, so it took such a big decline that the fishery was in shambles at one point when I was becoming of age to even consider doing it.

So, naturally, wanting to make a living, I just did other things, working in restaurants and stuff, basically so I could surf during the day. But as I was working in the restaurant business, I had moved up to Sebastian to work at a friend's place, Hurricane Harbor,

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<sup>6</sup> A monofilament fishing line is a single strand of one material.

which is on the river there by the commercial dock that the state purchased recently, at that property. But those years, the clamming was really good, and it really exploded into a tremendous shellfish or clamming industry there, along with the oysters, so I got heavily involved in that and dug clams.

Now, if I was going to tell you my clamming stories, some of them, you would think I was lying to you. I tell people I can't tell you my clam stories because you're going to think I'm lying. That river in Brevard County at one time had 15 hundred licensed clambers. There were days with a thousand guys on the river there, you know, spread out from Sebastian to Titusville.

TH: Using clam rakes?

AQ: Mainly clam raking at that period, you know, it would evolve into different stages. The last of it was with hookah rigs, people diving, but at one point, the sets just kept coming.<sup>7</sup> One year in a given spot you could maybe do 2,000 clams, you're dragging the rake every day. The next season in the same place, you're doing 4,000. The next year you're doing 8,000. This is crews of 15 guys hitting the same spot day in and day out, that's how the clamming was.

TH: It grew that fast?

AQ: They grew that fast, I mean a clam—if you pull a big one out, three little ones grow in its place. If you didn't take the big one out of the way, it would get big along with a couple others and the little ones would never survive. That's how clams—so man, in an essence, with harvesting clams is just helping the beds produce magnitudes of clams. It's the water quality that dictates the clams being there in the first place, and then the reproduction of them. There was spoil shoals—in that same area, there's big sand bars, but they're man-made and they were dredged to do the channel—

TH: To do the intracoastal waterway?

AQ: To do the intracoastal. And the spoil shoals are like of a gritty, really nice ocean-type of a bottom, very porous and gritty. Well, the set hit them shoals, the set of clams, I mean, the clams set on them shoals, just as they did in the deep water, they set everywhere. But the deep water is either a hard sand bottom or a mucky bottom, you know. The shoals were gritty, like shelly grit, like you see in the ocean and the surf—

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<sup>7</sup> "Hookah" refers to a basic form of surface-supplied diving using a compressor and hose.

TH: The beach.

AQ: —so these sets of clams hit those shoals like, it's hard to explain. I mean, fingernail-size clams by the millions, by the millions. You would pick up the bottom, and it was just pure fingernail-size clams, thumbnail. So we, wanting to dig them and harvest them, started raking through the clams, trying to get ones that were big enough, which we were doing. And we have racks that sift the different sizes out, so falling through our racks are now clams maybe the size of a quarter, that are falling through our racks, to the point where the sandbars are just—you're clamming through a pure bottom of clams, to dig your clams. And that's how it was, and we worked that set for a decade there.

TH: So, what happened to the clams?

AQ: Well, eventually, they got big enough to be harvest size, you know, little by little, they got big enough. So, I mean, we would work areas the size of an acre of bottom, let's say, a crew of five guys, day in and day out, and you might have your best day three months from your first day out on that spot. It was just mind-boggling, and what happened was the clams kept getting big enough to be legal size, and then they stop reproducing as the years went on. And meanwhile, while we were digging those clams at that time, and there were hundreds of clambers in a five-mile stretch there, hundreds, not to mention clambers up further in Titusville that you wouldn't see and stuff.

But while we were doing that, there was a crabbing fleet of—there must have been 50 to 100 boats of crabbers. There was thousands upon thousands of crab traps, and I mean, the product that was coming out of that river day in and day out—one time, one morning I remember, and I remember this vaguely, I've told it to people, at the 528 Causeway, Indian River, by the barge canal, we were clamming in the deep water, long-raking. And there's a good current there, and there's a crab trap sitting there.

So we're doing pretty good with the clams, working the tide, we probably had like two and a half—25 feet of handle on our clam rakes, we're in the boats, we're doing good, and there's the crab traps. And here comes this crabber. He pulls up the trap, and I mean, it is just packed with crabs. He's shaking it, shaking it, shaking it. All these big, beautiful blue crabs. Threw the trap back in, off he goes.

We just keep digging clams, digging clams. Later that afternoon, here comes the same guy, pulls up to the same trap, pulls it in, it is just packed with blue crabs. Shaking it, shaking it, shaking it. Dumps it out, off he goes. I mean, this stuff went on all the time. Then, this is the point I'm going to make, the clams did get bigger. They weren't

resetting. The larvae that swims in the water column wasn't making it no more, and towards the end of the set, we were digging bigger product and less of it as the decline happened, to the point where we were hitting all the off spots, to the point where now we were getting overboard in shallow water.

And forget the rake—they weren't thick enough for that anymore. The last clamming I did up in Cocoa, to this day, was barefooted in the sand bottom in about chest-high water with a mask and a snorkel, just scooting around barefooted, getting what was left. But as we were throwing them in the basket—we were bringing them down to Grant to put them on a lease, because we were digging in the restricted waters there. We had a permit to dig in the restricted waters. But as we were digging them, you could see them gapping open in the basket. They were weak, the set was getting weak and it was dying—

TH: The set is—

AQ: When I say “set,” I’m referring to—that’s what they call—an era maybe, an episode of clamming, they would call it “that set,” “the set of 1990,” “the set of '80,” whatever, you know. “There’s a good set in the Carolinas.” So that’s what I’m referring to when I say “set.” But those clams got weak, and they started dying, and the point—well, I’ll tell you first what we did with the clams. We were bringing them down and dumping them on the lease, and when it was time to pull them up off the lease to sell them, half of them had died, so we only got half of them back.

But I still cleared like 200 bucks a day for every day I put in, but that set, had it never been dug, had one clam had never been dug out of that river, there would still be no clams there today. Because every one of them would have grown up and died anyways—and that’s what a clam is on this earth to do in the long run. They’re sediment for the earth, they grow up and they die, and that shell becomes part of the earth.

TH: So, what do you suppose—why did they quit regrowing?

AQ: Water quality. Basically—

TH: Now this is still part of the lagoon—

AQ: Right.

TH: And this is in the area from Cocoa Beach to—

AQ: South to Sebastian and north to Titusville up through the Mosquito Lagoon and stuff.

TH: And the water quality is—

TH: Well, you know it's kind of like a special magic when it all comes together, and they spawn and everything goes just right and you get this incredible set of clams. But let's say the magic doesn't happen, you know, there should be some clams all the time. But over the years, things have fallen apart to the point where I really don't know what's happening up there. Every now and then you'll hear tidbits of something, but there's not an industry anymore to speak of.

TH: Tidbits of somebody finding some clams—

AQ: Yeah, a couple of clams. You'll hear about—somebody found a couple little ones. They just don't seem to catch on and make it.

TH: So, the water quality is the one thing, the one factor that—

AQ: That's the biggest factor, right. Man's harvesting them is minute, a minute factor to it.

TH: Now there's fewer and smaller inlets to the north: the Sebastian inlet, and what's north of that?

AQ: Port Canaveral, you know, and it's got a lock on it, so—

TH: Is there another inlet in there somewhere?

AQ: Ponce Inlet is the next one up.

TH: From Sebastian.

AQ: And actually, yeah, water that comes in Ponce Inlet comes down in the Mosquito Lagoon, so on big northerners that pushes through the Haulover Canal and will come pushing down through Titusville.

TH: So, you have three egresses to the ocean, and that makes it a lagoon because that tidewater comes in and goes out—flushes.

AQ: Sure. Yeah, that's why it's truly a lagoon and not a river. But they like to keep the word "river" in there—Indian River lagoon. We all grew up calling it a river, but in later years it was proven that it's actually a lagoon, but anyways—

TH: It's the freshwater you think that is coming off the land into the lagoon? Or—

AQ: Right, you know that's all part of it. I think that fresh water—I know all those years of really good clamming there were times when there was a lot of fresh water, and I think it's good, you have to have some of it. People say, "Oh no, it's the fresh water in the runoff," but it's what's in that runoff is the culprit and then too much runoff, municipalities and stuff. It's finally taken its toll. I mean, the grass flats and everything in our area held up beautiful for years. I mean, it was like carpet.

TH: Grass flats are important for all sea life.

AQ: Oh sure, I mean the beautiful grass flats—everyone loves it, knows about it, and, I mean, the state, they've got to change their way of thinking with stuff. I mean, they'll give somebody a dock permit to build a dock, but they'll insist that they put turbidity barriers around each pole and stuff. I mean, forget it, that doesn't help a doggone thing. I mean, there's tremendous amounts of turbidity that can happen, that ain't going to affect—oh, it stops the sunlight from getting to the bottom. Forget it. Just quit dumping junk in there, period. Kicking some sand around ain't going to hurt nothing ever. Anyways, if you want to move on, I'll tell you—when clamming was on its way out, hook-and-line king mackerel fishing was on its way back in.

TH: Okay, now let's go back to the nets. The airplanes and circle nets—did you fish with, say, your stepfather, Tommy McHale, before the nets came into—

AQ: Yeah, well, I had enough experience hand-line kingfishing with Tommy that eventually when—okay, here is the direction I was going. Clamming was on a decline, it

was time for me to move into something else. And all those years I kept involved politically with king mackerel fishing through the net boat episode, because I wanted to do the right thing, thinking one day I might get involved in it. I wrote letters, went to meetings, tried to do my best to speak up for the hand-line fishery and to abolish runaround gill nets, airplanes.

Which—what happened was, the runaround gill nets would only fish in the wintertime when the fish would bunch up in bunches and the airplane would help them set their nets on the bunch of fish. So the summer fishery wasn't targeted, and you know, I've talked to Pete Barile, the scientist, and I've shared this knowledge with him. And you know, there's a different stock of fish here in the summer, whether it's a residential stock, or what—it's Atlantic stock, but they don't really migrate away from here, they're here.

So Tommy and only a handful of other guys, in those years, when the winters got so bad, they were still able to catch pretty good fish in the summer. I mean, they were catching them at times in the winter, but they were able to keep it going in the summer with their fishing tactics. They were a little ahead of their time with stuff, their bait and stuff. So they kept it going. But what occurred that got me interested in it was the regulations on the net boats, and I don't mean small-time, one-man-operated net boats.

I'm all in favor for them, I always was, in fact, that's why I became a registered voter, to vote against the net ban. They just happened to get pulled into the whole thing because of the high-seas drift net that wound up occurring when they wiped out the winter stocks of fish, those big roller rigs had to come up with something to do in the summertime, and what they came up with was pretty detrimental, the drift net.<sup>8</sup>

TH: So, first, before the drift nets, these circle nets targeted these huge schools of kingfish that had been there for years.

AQ: Yes.

TH: And you're saying that they pretty much decimated the big schools?

AQ: Well, they put a hurt on them, there's no doubt about it. They started with the Spanish mackerel, and they had Spanish mackerel nets on their boats. And there was, the OFF, the Organized Fishermen of Florida, was actually a hand-line organization at one time, and there were meetings there and the net-boat operators—there was a gentlemen's agreement that they wouldn't set the king mackerel.

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<sup>8</sup> A large net held vertically by nets that floats at the top and drifts with the tide.

TH: They wouldn't target the king mackerel.

AQ: They wouldn't target them. Yes, we don't want to bring that word in again. Anyway, they wouldn't target them, so they—but they hurt their mackerel to the point where, they needed to target the king mackerel. So their word was no good. But they targeted the king mackerel with their Spanish mackerel nets, and it was a devastation because the fish weren't getting killed and they were just hitting the bottom dead. So they put a big hurt on the king mackerel fishing and the winter stocks, and when they got done with the winter stocks, they figured out a way to target the summer stocks, and that was a high-seas drift net.

TH: They were how long?

AQ: I really don't know. I've heard stories—miles long and stuff.

TH: They were miles long.

AQ: They were black webbing and they—

TH: Set them at night.

AQ: Yeah, they were black webbing because they couldn't use mono. They used nylon because mono would just pile up in such a massive pile, they couldn't carry it, so it was black nylon, old-fashioned stuff that piled up really good. Yeah, you would see school buses with the roofs cut off just to carry a net. So they were at it for several years, it was a pretty big fleet, and they just put—the drift net doesn't discriminate. I mean anything that's swimming into it is getting either tangled or—I mean it wasn't good.

Big fish, you name it. So, anyways, we fought to get restrictions put on them and finally abolish them all together. That occurred, and when that occurred, and when the clamming was done with, it was kind of crazy, really. Because the fish didn't bounce back that quick, but that first summer without the drift nets, the king mackerel were jumping and there were some catches starting to go on, and it was like, okay.

I actually went to New York to dig clams. One of the Long Island clammers had come down, a very good friend of mine, Russ Meyer, who was an interesting guy. He brought me up to New York, and I did pretty well up there, so I saved enough to come back here and buy a king mackerel boat in Fort Pierce.

TH: So basically, the nets put a really bad hurt on the big schools of kingfish, the circle nets. And when they were, I think, outlawed, then long drift nets came into play.

AQ: Exactly. Aboard the same boats.

TH: Yeah. And they would sweep down the waterfront and capture anything in their path, and that was for a couple years. Now, the general public, the boating public, and recreational fishermen, as I understand it, got the first constitutional amendment passed to outlaw all net fishing in Florida waters. Is that correct?

AQ: I believe it is.

TH: Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

AQ: Well, the only thing I can elaborate—yeah, that's what occurred. I forget what year it was, the net ban.

TH: Nineteen-ninety-four, I think.

AQ: Right, and it was actually a guy from *Florida Sportsman*, I don't know the gentleman's name, Tommy knew him. He would come down and talk to Tommy, and their feathers were ruffled. I mean, I know—

TH: This is the recreational fisher—

AQ: Yeah, one of the things that really got them started was the purse seining of the bait, you know, the bait fish.<sup>9</sup> And then also the drift-net fishing, but they weren't too concerned with the small net boats. I mean, they were, but we weren't at all. I mean, they were not our problem, and we knew that, and we were all for them guys. But the guy

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<sup>9</sup> Purse seining is a harvesting method that uses a large net to encompass whole schools of fish. Once a school is encircled, the bottom of the net is closed up and the fish are hauled in.

heading up the net ban, they figured that the only way to do it was to get them all in one shot.

TH: All nets—

AQ: Yeah, just all nets. It was no separating them. Which was a mistake, a large mistake, because restrictions had been put in on the small net boats that can—I'm trying to find the word—but they can target a certain species, they can be selective. And the real fishermen aboard a small net boat using the proper mesh size, like those guys would use a large mesh size when they caught their mackerel so they would only get the big mackerel. They did the same with the mullet. They knew how to catch the pompano, the right ones, not the little ones, and they knew what they were looking at. The state had them down to two shots a net, short soak times, 20 minutes, you know. So they were real fishermen, and they were providing a beautiful service for fresh seafood on a daily basis into the markets.

TH: So essentially, well-regulated small nets could—

AQ: Still be in business.

TH: Yeah, could still be in business and you could still have a sustainable amount of fish by proper regulations. Same thing with kingfish today, as you'll get into in just a minute.

AQ: Right. The same thing with all of it, and it all really—well, with the proper management, the rest of it boils down to Mother Nature, right? But Mother Nature's got to be healthy. It's the water quality. It's water quality. But I want to touch—you know, Mother Nature dealt us a serious blow to the king mackerel fishing here about a decade ago with the cold water upwellings, what occurred there.<sup>10</sup> They got so severe that they thought the fish were overfished, but it was—we can get onto that subject.

TH: Well, then—also about 10 years ago, the Gulf oil spill. Did that have an effect on the fish?

AQ: You know, we think it did. It moved them in different ways. That was occurring with environmental things, impacts, the fish, right, water quality. Now, moving out of the lagoon and into the ocean, water quality seems to move the fish. Things get okay for a little while, the fish are there, and boom, they move, because of the water quality. A good example of this—

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<sup>10</sup> An upwelling is an oceanographic phenomenon that involves wind-driven motion of cooler dense water toward the surface, replacing the warm and nutrient-depleted surface water.

TH: Temperature and quality.

AQ: Temperature is a tremendous thing, but also water quality. And I'll give you a beautiful example of this. Spring fishing. April runoff to Sebastian. Okay. One particular April—and every April is fairly very good—one particular April the fishing was excellent. I mean, you can't imagine the fish, and the fleet is tremendous, and people are spread out for miles. Nobody's on top of each other, and everybody's catching fish, and they were marking, too. I mean, it was just day in and day out—

TH: Approximately what year?

AQ: You know, I just, I want to say, I'm not good with the years. A decade ago from now, '08, '09, '10, somewhere in there. And even since then. But I might have noticed this on more than one occasion. Back in the old days when the stocks were healthy and the fishing was good, a typical April run would last a few weeks into April, right? But when the majority of the fish leave, which they do, and it seems like it can be overnight, what occurs is, each and every day after that you can go there and catch some fish. Maybe you're not getting 75 anymore, but every day you can go there and catch a dozen fish or 20 fish, you know. There are stragglers, and maybe the residential fishes are staying there.

But I have seen it now where the April run is happening—and this is an example, going back to this particular time, but I've seen it happen more than once, that bam, overnight, they're gone. And I mean gone, where you don't catch a one of them. You'll be like “What happened here?” And then you'll talk to somebody that was anchored up, and they tell you, “Man, the water changed.” They're getting slime on their anchor line, some kind of weird algae bloom moved in—

TH: All right, and you were talking about April fishing, and then all of a sudden, the fish would disappear—

AQ: Well, that's normal. They migrate, they do, you know. I really feel like they should tag the fish. They used to tag the winter fish in the middle of winter, but really to answer some questions, I think the tagging program should be reinstated. I mean, they can use the ear bones to find out if it's a Gulf fish or Atlantic fish, but we really don't know the movements of the fish. Everybody's got their own theory. You know, in April they definitely move north up the coast, but the next big run really occurs down off of Jupiter, south Florida, with the spawning stocks.

So, do they loop back out into deep water and migrate back south? Part of the fish probably go up—we don't know. They definitely migrate up the coast and vanish up that way. Anyways, what we started, what I noticed was that when the fish left in April, they do migrate north of here. They leave this area, but after they leave, normally, you can catch some fish, straggler fish.

But what I've noticed in some past several years is there are times when overnight the water quality changes, and I mean, there is not a fish to be caught then. You might go offshore and catch the tail end of them. So fish are being moved around—this is kind of a repeat, I think we were already here, but by environmental stuff. Different algae blooms —

TH: Yeah, you said they would get the stuff on their lines, the bottom fishermen, fishermen fishing for grouper, and they got slime on their lines, and that's from what?

AQ: I don't really know.

TH: What do you suspect?

AQ: Something that's not supposed to be there, some sort of a bloom in the water. We will see it on our sea witches at times—rare anymore, we're using a synthetic material now, it's plasticky, so the hair that sticks to that more than nylon hair, but—

TH: Slime in the water. We don't know where it comes from.

AQ: Right. You know they have a bigger problem with that south of here, in south Florida more. You know, we have had some good water. This last summer, we had plenty of good water. One of the biggest effects on our fishing in the summer—anyways, the fish have rebounded. The stocks of fish from the net episode that we're talking about in the '70s, and all—

TH: And '80s and early '90s.

AQ: —and '80s, the king mackerel stock have rebounded phenomenally. They are back. But they get moved around, is what occurs. They move to places where we don't know where they're at. And one of the things that has moved them around and pushed them out

of here in the summer—this don't happen in the winter—is the cold water upwellings. Well, you think, why is the cold water there in the summer? Shouldn't it be there in the winter?

Well, the cold water comes out of the bottom of the ocean, it's an upwelling, and I know scientists are looking at it, and the studies have been made. "Oh, it's the west wind that brings it to the surface." Well, yeah, the west wind does bring it to the surface, but the big question is, why does it get shoved up on the continental shelf to begin with? Now, it's always been a normal event, but for decades that we knew about—

TH: When you say "normal," you mean natural event—

AQ: Natural event, yeah. It would occur every summer, you know, normally in July, but it was short-lived. It was short-lived and spotty also. Wasn't everywhere. And if the fish—you know, when it first would show up, it would push the bait fish to the surface or something, or whatever, the fish would come to the top and you'd catch them anyways. And it would hit just a certain area, and you go up the road 10 miles or whatever, there would be no cold water, so the fishing would be good.

And as the water quality improved—anyways, it would only last a few weeks, you might get a little touch of it again, and it would go away. But it was some years past, I'm thinking seven, eight years ago, five, six years ago, those, around 2000, '03. No, wait, 2010–2012, 2013, '14, '15—those years, the cold-water upwelling was so widespread that it actually occurred all the way from Jupiter through the Carolinas. The whole continental shelf was cold. And it wasn't short-lived. It was not short-lived, either.

It was—there was no fish, to the point where people thought kingfish were overfished and they were going to close the fishery. And I went to a meeting, I said, "Well, we're not catching anything anymore. No barracudas, no remoras, you don't get anything." Anyways, it was a horrible thing to live through. Since then it has gone away, it tapered off, and as it tapered off, we saw improvements.

And what happened was the fish got pushed so far away, they didn't know to come back. Like they—when it was short-lived and spotty, it would go away and boom, the fish were back. But those couple, three summers or whatever it was, things had gotten really bad. I want to just add this: When I first started really zeroing in on it and figuring this thing out, you know, we fish with a metal planer that goes down 40 feet or however deep you want to put it, and the surface water is looking absolutely beautiful, it's blue, you know, you think everything's good.

Now that surface water in the summer should be 81, 82 degrees, 82 and a half degrees. The fish have roe in them. They want warm water when they have roe in them. But you're pulling up your planer, and that thing's coming up like an ice cube—this isn't right, you know. It is not right. So you're fishing and you're going, "Well, what the heck's going on here?" Then, finally, what happens is that cold water upwelling will show itself. That cold water will come to the surface, it'll take that 82-degree water, and it'll knock it down to 77 degrees, and it'll turn it army green.

And then you'll look at the water and you'll go, "Oh wow, look at that." And it'll show itself somewhere on the coast. You'll be riding out, and you're looking at the Indian River, and you get out in the middle of the ocean, and it still looks like the river. And you just start scratching your head. And that occurred on such a large scale a few years back, so that's a good question mark for anybody listening to this, scientists, whoever.

Anyways, the west wind that brings it to the surface, that's all it does. It doesn't, that's not what shoves it up on top of the continental shelf to begin with. What shoves it up on top of the continental shelf—and you're gonna get this from Bruce Alcock, we've compared notes about it, no one knows more about this coast than he does—is a hard north tide will get that, will suck that water out of the deep and shove it up on top of the continental shelf. And this last summer, 2018—

TH: A hard north tide in the Gulf Stream?

AQ: Yeah, inside of the Gulf Stream. A hard north tide, you know. That's what he observed. Now this summer a few times, we saw some cold water with the south tide, but I think it was just shoving it back from where it had come from. This summer, the cold water was again, once again, short-lived and spotty, and with the king mackerel stocks, a rebounded stock, we actually had a very good summer in 2018 here. Good catches, once again.

TH: Good news. Well, the one thing that I've noticed, and I want your take on this, you know, before we leave this subject, is—I talked to Billy Baird last week. And he's fished here—he was, he's almost 80 years old—for a long time. He remembers the times when they went out and they would catch 5,000 pounds. There's a couple days, and one off Sebastian he told me about, his biggest day with his brother. He said all the boats were catching fish as fast as they could, on short lines, very short lines. And we're talking about the cable to the paravane, and then like 40 feet behind the paravane, and he said even the fish were so thick, they were marking black on the old paper recorders throughout the entire circle.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A paravane is a device towed behind a boat in order to attach a cable, also known as a water kite.

AQ: Right.

TH: And even to the point where if you just dragged a—if you're hanging a spoon over the side there, they would attack it.

AQ: I've seen it. It still happens.

TH: Does it still happen like that?

AQ: The only difference now is, why no one is catching 5,000 pounds, is when that occurs, is we're on a 75-head limit. Yes.

TH: So there's a good and bad of that. You're not catching as many fish, but the price stays higher?

AQ: Well, you're not filling your quota. We only have a million-pound quota here in the wintertime, so a fleet of over a hundred boats, I mean, that quota would only last a few weeks. If everything got right and those fish were there and biting like they do, and they do still do exactly what Billy's talking about, it still does occur. To this—I mean, I could explain a few episodes, not a problem, it still happens. But you know, you catch 75 in an hour so, and you're done. That's the difference now. You're not staying there from sunup to sundown catching 5,000 pounds.

TH: So the fish will always be there, with this kind of fishing, is what you're saying.

AQ: Oh yeah. The way the stocks—now the stock is managed properly, the stocks are there. They've increased the quotas. They gave the Gulf 500 extra thousand pounds to catch. They gave us more fish. The stocks are definitely there. The biggest thing now besides Mother Nature now, Mother Nature with the cold-water upwelling, is that man—is that occurrence due to man and ice caps melting, whatever, who knows? There's more cold water hitting the bottom of the ocean from ice caps melting—I really don't know because I don't play that close attention, but those factors have the biggest effect on it. The fishery is being managed properly now, completely.

TH: Do they still—

AQ: Except for the—and I gotta add this—

TH: The Keys.

AQ: Yes, we're on the same page. That is totally a crime, what's going on in the Keys. You have five or six or how many of them there are there, grandfathered in with their runaround gill-net boats, still doing the same exact thing.<sup>12</sup> I mean, here you got laws in effect, they'll take some hook-and-liner here that went four fish over his limit, and make a big deal out of it and give the guy a ticket and confiscate his fish, when these guys are still down there in the Keys with their airplane and their runaround gill net, and they got fallout. Those gill nets have fallout, unless they're purse seining them. They got fallout, and they're killing fish that are going to the bottom, they always go over their quota. It just—I mean, it ain't right. You want to—go ahead.

TH: I've always understood that they catch the entire school of fish. If they—if a school comes through and they set them, they decimate that school of fish, and that particular school of fish will have to rebound somewhere, take a long time.

AQ: Right. Well, but they don't put the whole school of fish in the boat. That's the problem. It's called the fallout, and you know everybody has really forgotten it, but there was a whole study done about the fallout. If somebody could look into that and bring that study back up—the fallout of the runaround gill net, it's large. The numbers are large. Yeah, they're setting the fish with a gill net. They are just setting it in a circle. Purse seining was against the law, so they got around that law by using a gill net. In a purse seine, you close at the top, so they closed the net—no, excuse me, purse seine they close at the bottom.

And then the fish are pursed out of the net with a dip net, but these guys figured it out that they could take a gill net and run it around the fish and purse seine it at the top. And the gill net that they use has black webbing or some kind of dark webbing and then clear mono in the middle, and they spook the fish into the clear mono, which is a gill net. And it, you know, only certain—if a big fish hits it, if it's a certain mesh size, it kills the big fish.

Whatever, but those guys, that's not right what's going on down there. Anyways, that's another subject. If you just want to move on, I think we've touched base on—somebody could look into that, you know, somebody that's compassionate about the proper management of the fishery. That's one thing that's going on. Those guys were actually

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<sup>12</sup> A gill-net boat has a net that encircles large schools of fish.

grandfathered in, and when they passed away, those permits were no longer supposed to be—

TH: In existence.

AQ: Right, or valid for that type of fishery. But I heard that they've worked on—they actually, this was a slap in the face, but when they split us out of the Gulf quota recently when we went to all Atlantic stock, they actually got 200,000 more pounds of fish to catch, on that runaround gill-net quota. What a slap in the face. But they have actually, I've heard they are somehow manipulating or working at preserving those—their stronghold on that fishery there.

TH: Okay. An old-time fisherman from Fort Pierce—George Kaul, you've heard of George.

AQ: Right.

TH: He used to say that every EE Zone—can you tell me what an EE Zone is?<sup>13</sup>

AQ: Economical zone, economic zone or something. I don't really know.

TH: I forget the term.

AQ: I got a busy life, you know.

TH: But he said that every one of them, they have different quotas up and down the coast and around the different coasts, but he said if every one of them would go like we do here, 75 fish in the winter—

AQ: I don't agree with that—

TH: Fifty fish in the summer, there would always be a sustainable supply of kingfish.

AQ: Oh sure. There, you know I don't agree with it. Seventy-five head is a low number, it works for us here, we don't have to go as far, but that—

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<sup>13</sup> Exclusive economic zone.

TH: Places like Louisiana where you have to go further.

AQ: I'll tell you right here right now, George is wrong about that. This fishery can handle way more than 75 head. I mean, that's a small limit for us. We've made it work for ourselves, in fact we go to 50 head in November, which we want to increase that to 75, we want to go to maybe 75 year-round here. We were thinking about going to a poundage thing. Danny's got a good point, really, and you know it makes sense of maybe 500 pounds a day.

This way if you get on smaller fish instead of coming in with 300, let's say you go a long ways, you can come in with 500, and then the guys that are getting on these big 20 pounders and stuff, instead of catching 75, they're catching their 500 pounds. Danny also brought up another point: maybe make it 500 pounds or 75 head, whatever comes first. That sort of was making sense. But, you know, it complicates things, but anyways—

TH: There's all kinds of juggling that we could do—

AQ: Yeah. Things are actually pretty good the way they are. You might want to fine tune it a little bit more, but the fishery is in good shape, very good shape. It boils down to the environmental factors. That's gonna move them around different ways. Weather is another big factor, why sometimes fish don't get produced, you know, we get horrible weather. The other thing with this fleet, and this, you could wrap—

TH: By horrible weather, there's days when it blows so much that nobody can get out and really fish.

AQ: Sure. And then the quota doesn't get filled. If you get a bad winter and you're not filling the quota, which occurs here, there's winters we don't fill the quota, and—but this is all understood now. Pete Barile has made, brought that awareness up, they come up with the terminology for it. I forget what it is, but they've got that figured out. What was the other thing? Another thing with this fleet that can be considered with production is, you know, especially on this side all the good fishermen from here leave this coast to go to the Gulf. And then production here is down.

We're going to have a hard time filling the quota, and then they think, well, the fish aren't there. Well, it's the effort's not there. And another thing, and this goes back, the point with timeshares is, people—also with the production of king mackerel, the

fishermen themselves are aging, and it is a strenuous way to produce fish. I mean, so the effort might not be there, as these guys get older like myself.

So, what you're going to see in the fishery that you wouldn't have seen if they had gone to timeshares and cut a hundred guys out of this, and that was my—originally when we were fighting the roller rigs, we said that this thing, this fishery can sustain a lot of families. This is one of our things. The king mackerel fishery can sustain a lot of families. And there's a few net boats that are going to wreck it for everybody. But when they decided to go, they wanted to push timeshares on us, it was the same thing then.

TH: Describe timeshares.

AQ: Not timeshares. It's catch shares, excuse me. Catch shares. The government—yeah, they were really trying to push them on us. It's a socialistic thing. They do it in Europe. And I mean, maybe it would have been good for a few of us. But we—not being a hypocrite, I wasn't thinking, Well, it's all about me and my timeshare.

There were young guys getting in the fishery at the time, friends and family, and the guy's sons, people's—and it just wasn't the right thing. And you know, right now, looking back at it all, it's a good thing it didn't go that way. We're all getting older, you know, these guys are making a living, and we're feeding people, that's the bottom line. This country's gotta produce food for its people.

TH: Okay. I think we've covered environmental man-made factors that you see as the greatest threat to sustainable fish populations. Fishing methods changed during your time—still pretty much the same trolling and sea witches. Have any large commercial fishing corporations or operations impacted your fishery?

AQ: No.

TH: I don't think they have in the east coast, anyway. Maybe some of the grouper fishing on the west coast.

AQ: But still, that's pretty small-time. You know, all of it, we don't have those—the foreigners have never come in and did any dragging, nothing like that. So no, not like New England, no.

*Track 1 ends; track 2 begins.*

TH: I'm going to begin with—discuss, describe, detail major weather occurrences you've experienced on the water, on the ocean. Storms, lightning, high wind, seas, waterspouts—have at it.

AQ: You know, yeah, I could tell you about the night I got something in my wheel, a rope, and that stopped me dead. And it was rough that day and all, but if you want to hear a really good story—I won't tell you the whole—I'll touch base. I got to swim overnight in a hurricane. I mean—

TH: That was when you were coming across the Gulf of Mexico?

AQ: Right. We can tie this into commercial fishing just in a vague way, but I mean, I don't know how to make a long story short. But—

TH: I know the story you're talking about.

AQ: I can touch on it—

TH: You can just tell the story.

AQ: A good friend of mine—he was actually a king mackerel fisherman at one time. His name is Kevin Moss.

TH: You want to give his name, tell the whole story?

AQ: Yeah, his last name is Barney. Kevin Barney. Him and I, we survived a hurricane at sea, even though his classic little boat did not. It was a Mexican shark-fishing boat. He got it on the Pacific coast of Mexico. I was compelled to write the story because Kevin has got such an interesting, interesting life. But while I'm going to tell you his story, I might as well tell you mine too, because it's pretty interesting also. But his is off the chain. I mean, his old man struck out Joe DiMaggio in the World Series, and with bases loaded, in 1947. They came down to Vero here for spring training in 1960. He was still involved with the league.

TH: His father.

AQ: His father. He had one of the fastest fastballs ever. But he was injured and he lost his fastball, but he was still involved with the league. He became a box office announcer for the Baltimore Orioles, Rex Barney. Anyways, they were in Vero. Rex was having a little too much fun. Kevin's mother found out about it. She's a gifted musician, and so is Kevin. Anyways, I can make it a tremendous story, you're just going to have to read the book. I'm going to publish it this year, I hope, if we don't go through another hurricane.

But—by the way, Michael is out there today, Hurricane Michael. Kevin's mother took him to Acapulco, Mexico, in 1960. She got on a freighter, and she landed in Vera Cruz, and they went across the mountains into Acapulco. She opened a piano bar, and Kevin was raised there in Acapulco. She was playing music for, like, John Wayne and Tarzan, [Johnny] Weissmuller, and anyways, Kevin grew up there. Spoke to him today. He's still there. He's still down there. He's living with the Purépecha Indians in the mountains there now.

TH: Spell that or say that again.

AQ: Purépecha. He says they've never been conquered by the Spaniards. He said the Mexican government doesn't go on their land up there, but he went up into that area for the instruments, to Paracho. But anyways, years later, Kevin decided he wanted to get into sailing and come back here eventually—well, this was an afterthought. But he went to the fish co-op. He went looking for a boat, and you know they all have the cayucos—the panga boats, you see them in Latin America, the high bow. You guys listening will recognize the boats, the pangas with the outboard on the back.

He went to the fish co-op, and he found some boat hulls there, and they were a lot bigger than the normal panga. They were inboards. Anyways, we discovered all those boats were actually designed in Japan. And Japan gave them to Mexico in a World Bank project. That's why, like, overnight everybody had a panga. They went from dugout canoes to shiny pangas overnight in the '70s in Mexico.

Anyways, Kevin did get this big cayuco, a 28-footer. And he rigged it—he got his mast in the mountains, and he rigged it with sail, and he started his journey in Zihuatanejo, where *The Shawshank Redemption* ends on the beach there, he started his journey. He sailed up and down the coast. He dove for lobsters and stuff and sold them. He's a commercial fisherman, he was then. And then he got—he was getting bored. He says, “You know what, I want to go on a trip. I think I'm going to go through the Panama

Canal and go up to Florida.” His mother had moved back here. You know, he’s a grown man now. He’s twentysomething—

TH: Approximately what year?

AQ: Eighty-two. So anyways, I knew the family, and Kevin sailed to the south part of Mexico to the bay at Tehuantepec, and there is a railway that goes across there. And at the turn of the century, let’s see, before the Panama Canal opened, our government was actually going to try to do a canal there. They didn’t want all their baskets in one—they looked in to doing a canal there, probably the Panama Canal was difficult, this one would have been more difficult. But anyways, they were looking at it.

TH: You said Nicaragua?

AQ: They are doing one in Nicaragua now.

TH: Well, they were looking at Nicaragua—

AQ: Also. Yeah. So anyways, Kevin put the boat on the train and rode in the boat on the train with a train hobo across the mountains with another guy from—

TH: In Mexico—

AQ: In Mexico. And he relaunched in Yucatan. And his parents—I happened to be at his parents’ house in Wabasso Beach, and he phoned. And he’s like, “Well, Alberto, I got you on the phone here, look, what are you doing? You want to come down to Yucatan and help me sail the boat across the Gulf? It’ll be a good shakedown cruise for you,” because I was rebuilding a boat at the time. And I said, “Yeah, I’ll come down there.”

Well, I did just that. I flew down with his parents and I met him in Progreso, which, by the way, a lot of sharks that are caught here are being shipped to Progreso now, little coastal sharks. Anyways, we sailed the coast of Yucatan. It was the first of June, and this was in ’82. No cell phones, we didn’t have a VHF radio.<sup>14</sup> We were in a desolate area, no weather report.

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<sup>14</sup> Very high frequency radios use the range between 156 and 174 MHz and are standard equipment for boaters.

But the wind had switched. There's a hard trade wind there, coming out of the east northeast, and as June comes along, it might shift more to the south, and that's what we were waiting for. And the wind did switch. It flopped and went into the south, and we were like, well, this is our cue, we're going to go. We started sailing across the Gulf, and everything was beautiful.

TH: On your way to Florida?

AQ: Yeah. His boat, *The Camukla*, was just incredible. It sailed like Joshua Slocum's *Spray*.<sup>15</sup> It self-steered itself. It didn't need autopilot. It was just fantastic. What he did with the boat is just incredible. We wrote about the sailing history of Mexico and the different fisheries there. We learned a lot writing the book. A lot, a lot. We put it in the book. So anyways, the grand finale is the weather deteriorated on us after a couple days out—

TH: How many days a trip is it?

AQ: We would have made it in three, four days. Something like that. It's 300 miles or whatever, 350 miles, I think it was, to the Dry Tortugas. But I saw one evening, I was at the wheel, at the tiller, rather. You know, just standing watch. Keep an eye on the compass. Everything's beautiful. We've been cruising. The conditions were good. We actually were becalmed that morning, but we had a little wind and we're cruising along, and it got—it started darkening in the sky.

And off the bow, I mean, there was a bad squall, right, but I mean, there was a giant waterspout. I mean serious, serious. Not, you know, your little fluffy waterspout. I mean a tornado. And there are tornados on the ocean. People call them waterspouts, but there can be a tornado too. They get pretty hefty. That's what this was. I alerted Kevin. He came up and took a bearing, and we changed course and got around it, and then it just came on.

The weather started coming on and coming on and coming on. And we started logging down better progress, and by that night we were in 15-, 18-foot seas, cracking, breaking, blowing. All the next day, same deal. The next day, out of a cloud, came the hurricane hover plane, dropped out of the cloud right down on top of us. We were like, Whoa, what is he doing here?

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<sup>15</sup> Joshua Slocum (1844–1909) was the first person to sail solo around the world.

TH: You were in the eye?

AQ: No, we weren't in the eye, we were in the storm. It was heavy duty, man. But we kept it together. The boat sailed really well. We did a lot of bailing. It didn't have a self-bailing cockpit, so we bailed our butts off. Those plunging, cracking six-foot chunks of white water on top of a 15-, 18-foot wave. I mean, one after another. We surfed it and anyways—

TH: Did you stay in a certain course or—

AQ: Yeah, we tried our best. Yeah, we did. We kept the compass course. Oh yeah.

TH: Stay into the wind—

AQ: We kept—we reefed the sails way down, and the boat was handling fairly well. But our best course was knocked down to like 30 degrees, so we weren't pointing at the Keys anymore. That was the best we could do, was 30. But when a big sea hits you, a lot of times you are sailing, you know, northeast—we were blown off course quite a bit.

Anyways, as the day progressed, we maintained. Kevin—we didn't have VHF, he had a AM/FM radio, and he picked up a Cuban station, and then he picked up Miami, and he came up out of the cabin. He says, "You know, this is a named storm. It's Hurricane Alberto." He looked at me with a perplexed look.

TH: Alberto.

AQ: It was almost like it was my fault. He left me, like, dumbfounded there. And then we couldn't figure out exactly what we should be doing at that point, because it was forecast to increase to a category two. They were evacuating south Florida. It was already bad. We were in bad stuff already.

TH: I missed—where did you get this? You had a radio?

AQ: Yeah, like a ghetto blaster. The tuning knob had broken, so we had to open it up, but we had ahold of the thread in there, and he could tune it with the two strings sticking out of the side. And he speaks fluent Spanish, so he was listening to Cuba and getting Miami,

so we were getting the gist of what was happening, and they were pumping it up—propaganda, too, at that point. But it was—I've researched the storm. It was forecast to go—come in at a one or two into south Florida. They were already evacuating. So with this going on, we were like, what are we going to do in that?

We decided to go ahead and make up some sea anchors out of suitcases. It's what we had. We had a bunch of a rope. We figured, look, we'll get her bow into it, we'll get everything lashed down, and we'll just bail. Keep her bow into it, and just bail. We were on the northeast quadrant of the storm. We were already in the thick of it. But we thought that it's going to get worse, so we better get prepared. So we put out the sea anchors, and she did. She snatched bow into it just fine. Tethered right into it.

We hung there on the sea anchor. I mean, the sea was enormous. I'd been on the tiller for—we had been battling a storm all the last day, all night, all that night and all that day. So I just rested my head—I said, "Kevin, I just gotta lay my head right here for a second." And I just set it down like a kid putting his head on the desk at school. I mean, I didn't have my head down for 50 seconds and he yells, "Watch out!" And I stood up, and we were on the top of a rogue wave that was coming out of the opposite—not totally, but coming from a different—

TH: How long a boat was this?

AQ: Like a 28-footer.

TH: Not that long.

AQ: No, it wasn't a big boat. But a boat doesn't have to be big to be seaworthy. Anyways, it wasn't ready for capsizing. It didn't have—it wasn't a blue-water boat. It didn't have a self-bailing cockpit. So I stood up and just got—the boat got—I got launched. The boat got turned turtle so fast on top of that, with that plunging white water at the top of that sea. It threw me. The boat just catapulted me, like, I was shot out of a cannon right down the face of the wave. Just like splash into the blue water. This like—here we are. He—I came up and there was no sign of him, but he popped up, there he was.

TH: Knocked him out of the boat too.

AQ: Oh yeah. He wound up under the boat. He wound up under the boat, hitting his head and stuff, but he came popping out of there. He was all right. He was getting his breath

and blowing water and everything, and the two of us swam up on the keel, the boat looked like, here's the red keel pointed at the sky.<sup>16</sup> We turned—he started barking out orders, just let's get—"Alberto, let's get up here and grab the keel, you know what I'm talking about!"

We just stood up on the boat and grabbed the keel and leaned back, and she came right over. Just like she is supposed to, really. It's a sailboat. But without the self-bailing cockpit, the water just slurped—we just watched the boat just fill up with water, and she sank right to her bow. We spent two or three hours diving stuff off of it. Just incredible stuff. I mean, just incredible. You're going to have to read the book. I've got a manuscript. I've been working on it for years. I've put my heart and soul into it.

TH: So the boat now is in the storm, and it's just the air in the bow holding the bow up?

AQ: Exactly.

TH: And you're diving in to get what stuff? Life jackets?

AQ: Yeah, you know, Tommy McHale, my stepdad, he gave me this—he was reluctant about me going. He says, "You're nuts. What are you doing going to the Gulf? Don't expect no one to—some freighter to help you or anything." I mean, like, the wisdom he had. He knew. He just knew. He was like, "What?" So he gave us this giant life preserver, but it was stuck up in the bow. We could feel it, but we couldn't get it. We had the little bare-minimum required life jackets. The marine patrol would write you a big ticket if you don't have it. We had them, but they were about useless, just rode up on our neck. We got whatever we could—

TH: Was the sea still high?

AQ: Oh yeah. It was still raging.

TH: Did you tie yourself to anything?

AQ: We had a big—the only rope we—we only got ahold of a few pieces of rope line. We had the anchor line, and it was—we got ahold of a nylon anchor line. It was long and just—no knife. The knife got lost. We tied stuff together, whatever we could. Kevin started diving down into the hold where the motors were—at one time where the motor was. It was like a fish hold, and he was getting the five-gallon water jugs of water out,

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<sup>16</sup> The keel is the flat blade sticking into the water from a sailboat's bottom.

and we were just lashing stuff together as best we could. At one point, the EPIRB floated off, and I had to swim after it.<sup>17</sup> So I described that in the book, swimming back to him, who's holding on the boat—

TH: Was the EPIRB working?

AQ: It was flashing when I swam up to it, but they were in their infancies back then. It was just kind of a rinky-dink EPIRB. So I swam back to Kevin, and the boat sank at dark. When it went down, it was right at dark. It just—it was the creepiest thing, man. The black darkness of the ocean just came up all around us, and that boat—I couldn't even look at the boat sinking. I couldn't watch it go down. I just had to look the other way and just get my mind on what we're going to do next.

TH: So you have life jackets and a few floating objects?

AQ: Yeah. The life jackets, we couldn't wear them. They just floated up around your neck—they were just a pain in the neck. I put one between my legs now and then. I put it over on the bamboo. The only reason we made it, and this, I mean—this is definitely the truth. The only reason, period, we made it [is] we were both big wave surfers. I'd surfed in Puerto Rico. Kevin grew up in Mexico surfing. We're surfers, so being under the water was—every wave that went by, we had to go under and hold our breath. You'd just hear the white water rolling past, and then you'd go up and catch your breath.

We were like two sea turtles for hours, all, from 3:30 in the afternoon that whole afternoon, the whole—all night, the whole night. But the hurricane did the craziest thing in the world. I got the—from the Air Force reconnaissance plane, I got a hand-drawn track of the storm. It made a loop right around us. And this is completely unheard of, of hurricanes, a major hurricane to be in the Gulf of Mexico and not make landfall. It wound up dissipating right on top of us. Never went anywhere. They already recorded wind gusts in Key West of 75 knots.

TH: So the winds dropped out?

AQ: During the course of the night. We couldn't believe it. We were just—I was astonished, I'm like, what's going on here? We thought we were really—we didn't know what we were in for.

TH: So now you're floating in a normal—

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<sup>17</sup> EPIRB stands for emergency position-indicating radio beacon.

AQ: You know, well, normal—it dropped down to eight feet. There was still little sporadic—things were getting better.

TH: But you're still stuck in the middle of the ocean with nothing.

AQ: It was still a long night. It became very interesting. You're going to have to read the book. What occurred, it's astonishing. And then, we've got to move on, but the next morning we found ourselves—we found what was left of our stuff glowing in the crystal-clear Gulf Stream water. We tried to drink some fresh water out of one of the jugs, and it was hard lifting it up, and we finally got a swallow out of it, but it was already tainted. It was tainted already for some reason, why we got hold of the wrong jugs, what—we were kind of beat up.

And also, the wind started coming on again. It's like, daylight was coming on, the sun was getting up there a little bit, and the breeze was kicking in, and we were just getting shoved around and holding our breath and doing the whole deal again. And I looked, and I thought I saw a sailboat. I said, "Kevin, I think I see a sail." And we'd look and I'd look and we wouldn't see anything. And then a little while later, "Yeah, yeah, there it is. I see a glimpse of a sail." And what it looked like to me was a hard-pressed sailboat flat on the horizon making way. And then it would disappear, we'd disappear, you know, we're like two coconuts behind the whitecaps. We'd come up on a wave and catch a better glimpse of it.

Like, huh, yeah, it's something down there for sure. And then we'd come up on the wave, and I'd look and there's this giant white cross. I mean it looked like, we're in church, brother. Here's this white cross looking right at us. And I'm like, "What are we looking at?" And we went down behind the wave again, and we're gone, it's gone, everybody's gone. And we popped up on the top of the sea, and it popped up on top of the sea. And it just rose up right there: the giant bow of a supertanker, the green bow of a supertanker. Like, pointed right at us, but on an angle that it wouldn't run us over. Just right—

TH: In front of you.

AQ: We just—Kevin was charged up into next week, man. "Alberto, grab that stick!" We got the life preserver, the little life preserver, tied it to the end of the stick. "Let's get this up here!" We just started waving and waving and waving and waving. "Keep it up there! Keep that stick up there!" Waving and waving. The ship just went past—right past us. Kept cranking along. We thought we had seen a little guy running up a ladder like,

“What’s going on?” It’s getting quite a ways away. I mean, we’re like, what is happening?

And I’m yelling, “I’ll mow your grass for a year if you come back and get us.” People hated mowing grass back then. Anyways, finally we see a puff of smoke. We see a puff of smoke and he turned and he did this giant—there’s a protocol or whatever—Williamson turn.<sup>18</sup> He goes the opposite direction, comes back on the same track. Here comes the green ship past us again, and uh—Tom Hanks, if you’re listening, you stole our scene in that movie *Castaway*, because we had this happen with a green ship.

They pulled upwind of us, pulled over, and the rope ladder started falling down. It was a Japanese supertanker run by the Koreans. I’m actually working on that part of the book now, trying to wrap it up, and some things occurred on there that—we are lucky they turned it around. Thank God, and anyways, that’s one of my stories on the ocean, and I have others. That’s the big one, though.

Well, there’s another one that occurred that involves someone’s life aboard a tilefishing boat, that I don’t know—here, right now is the right time to tell that story, actually. It was an accident, kind of unexplainable, the whole thing. A good friend, way back when, on a flat, calm ocean—I mean, that’s the thing with the ocean. A well-found yacht with the complete experienced crew, the best equipment in the world, can go out in that ocean and die on the way across it.

Here comes the next guy along in a canoe, and he’ll row right across it. You just don’t know when the ocean is going to slip up and take someone. It’s a mysterious place, it just really is, I mean. The time that—when Kim Miller, he passed away on that ocean that night. He drowned, and we never seen him again. It was a flat, calm ocean—just completely flat, calm.

TH: Start from the beginning.

AQ: There was a gentleman called Aubrey, and he had a big number-one hull, a 40-some-foot long-line boat, and he was long-lining tilefish out in the deep water.

TH: How deep?

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<sup>18</sup> A maneuver used to bring a ship or boat under power back to a point it previously passed through.

AQ: I'm not sure, I'm not sure where they fished. Six, seven hundred foot or something. Flat bottom. They will set pieces of the line in shallow water, too, to catch grouper. They were doing that too back then. It was—it's a tricky fishery.

TH: Were you fishing with them?

AQ: I thought my real dad was building a big boat, and I was going to fish it when we got it completed. *The Amigo* was the name of the boat. This is my real father. He moved here when he retired. A beautiful boat, a big J. C.—

TH: J. C.?

AQ: Yeah, Butchy had one—it's some kind of core hull, just a real nice New England boat. So I thought if I got the experience long-lining, that maybe we would do that with his boat we were building. So I signed on, so to speak, as a deckhand aboard this tilefishing boat. I was a little—with the way the kingfishing was as I was growing up, I only went part-time here and there. So I was a little green when I was getting on that tilefishing boat, you know what I'm saying?

I was young, I mean. Anyways, it was tricky business, and Aubrey, he really pushed hard. I mean, he ran that line out. The first experience I had was—I cut bait the whole way out, that was a job and stuff. Everything was pretty good on the boat. We'd get to the ground, it's time to set the line in that deep water, and Aubrey hands me a pile of long-line snaps, like, you know, "Here's a snap!" He throws the line in. Okay. "Start snapping it on. And look, if you get hooked, just jump behind the gunwale, don't go overboard, if you get hooked." And he's telling me this, I mean, this is like the first lesson in long-lining.

"Right here, right now, on the spot, we're doing it, let's go, here we go now. The line's going out, and we got to be fast. We got to get these snaps on here right here, right now. Let's go, go, go, go, go, go! Here they are, and if you get hooked, don't go overboard with it, jump behind the gunwale, let the hook rip out of you!" I'm like, "Okay. Alright, yeah, alright!" I got all these snaps in my hand, and I'm like—you're trying to put them on this cable, it's a freaking galvanized cable shooting out of the back of the boat fast, you know. Click, click, click, now, now, now, one after the other, and it's like, if you miss, you're screwing up.

And I'm like, "What the hell? Are you kidding me?" And I dealt with it, I tried and I did it. Whatever. We got through it somehow, and it wasn't easy. So we made a trip. He goes

to me, “It’s time for another trip.” He says, “Look, I think we’ll bring Kim on this trip.” And this is kind of tough in a way. He’s going, “You know, Kim will be able to maybe explain to you better, it’ll just—everything will go smoother.”

TH: He’s an experienced crewman.

AQ: Yeah, he knew he was a friend of mine, whatever. Maybe Kim was—Kim had been around, maybe it was time for him to do a trip too, and he was like, “You come along, and we’re going to get this right.” And Kim couldn’t always be there, you know. Kim had a family. So we did, we went fishing, and I mean, it was nice and the fishing was good. We wound up going up into shallow water and setting for grouper. And I mean, we did very well, and Aubrey was on cloud nine.

We were catching these yellowfin grouper. I mean, I had never even seen them before. They were gorgeous. And they were big, and it was successful. Beautiful. And it was time to anchor up, and we anchored up. And you anchor up out there in that Gulf Stream—I guess we were in the Gulf Stream, because when that anchor came tight, it’s like the whole world is going past you. The ocean’s just raging, it’s just running right past you. It’s like wow.

Cooked dinner, I mean, Aubrey’s a chef too, I mean, he makes pot roast and stuff with the coffee grounds. We had dinner. Everything couldn’t be any better. Took showers. Kim was on cloud nine, everybody was happy, not a problem, told some stories. I remember Kim had a brand-new pair of white boxer shorts on. I was going to sleep in the wheelhouse on the quarter berth. Those guys went below to go to sleep. I got on the quarter berth.<sup>19</sup> It was so flat calm. No problem going to sleep whatsoever. I dozed right off and was sleeping.

Little while later, whenever it was, I don’t know if it was an hour, two hours, 15 minutes, whatever it was, it was—I was sleeping. I got a feeling it was an hour or so, a couple hours. Not sure, though. I hear “Albert! Albert!” I’m dreaming you know. “Albert! Albert!” So now I’m just dreaming this big boat’s out there pulling up to us and somebody is yelling “Albert.” I keep hearing it. “Albert!” I’m like—I open my eyes, and I sat up, and I’m like what—and I hear “Albert!” And I’m like, “Shit, somebody’s calling my name back there!”

And I ran to the back deck, and I look off the stern of the boat, and there’s Kim, swimming! Thirty feet away, 40 feet away or whatever, like, there’s his face, there’s Kim. He’s like, “Throw me a line!” I’m like, “Yeah, okay, yes!” And I run up, I know there’s a chunk of nylon up there by the wheelhouse, and I grab it pretty damn quick, I

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<sup>19</sup> A berth is a bed on a boat consisting of a single bunk tucked under the cockpit.

mean fast. And I said, you know what, here's the life ring. I'm just going to whoop that in the line and throw it right out to him. And I threw that thing—no, it was the poly ball, it was a poly ball there—and I said—

TH: A poly ball is the—

AQ: A big orange ball. Float ball. I said, you know what, I'll grab that, whip it around this line, and toss it right to him. And I did. I flung that thing out there, and it landed right there next to him. And here's his face, and here's that poly ball.

TH: You say "here." Just right next to one another?

AQ: Right next to one another. You know what it was? The nylon rope wasn't long enough or anything. So I just kind of flung him all that stuff, and I said, "Kim! Wait right there, we'll be right there!" And I ran up yelling for Aubrey. "Aubrey, Aubrey, Aubrey! Kim fell off the boat, he's off the back of the boat!" And Aubrey, I mean, he just jumped up, and he grabbed—"Where is he?!" I said, "He's off the back of the boat!"

He jumped up, and he looked in the back and grabbed a knife. He ran—he fired that motor up, ran to the front of the boat, chopped the anchor rope. We backed down on the poly ball, which wasn't far. Backed right down on it, picked the ball up, and no sign of Kim. Never seen him again. It was just—I started screaming at the top of my lungs. I was, like, yelling for Kim. Yeah. What a mystery. Why he was off the back of that boat, man, why? And listen to this. Why in a million years would you not yell for help—"Help!" People recognize that, you know.

TH: He didn't have a line out—a safety line out.

AQ: No, that would be a nice thing.

TH: I never anchor up out there—

AQ: Without it. Perfect idea.

TH: Anything with something to float, even a life jacket on the back. Even in the river, when I take the kids out swimming, we put one out.

AQ: Perfect idea. I think about this on the kingfish boat, and they got a thing now that you can wear on your belt that will shut the diesel down. I need to look into that and get ahold of one of them.

TH: Yeah, you need both.

AQ: Yeah.

TH: Wow, that's a sad story.

AQ: It is. I never really, I have told—

TH: Now I want to cry thinking about it.

AQ: Yeah, it's sad.

TH: Holy cow.

AQ: He's got a couple sons. They know of the story and stuff, and why? Why, why did it have to occur like that, you know? But besides that one, and that was so long ago, I mean, in recent years, Danny Kane, I mean, fatigue is the worst enemy out there. It's hurt more people than anything, and a guy you're going to interview soon, Danny Kane, he's doing amberjack fishing, one-man crew.

I mean, that's intense. To work that hard on the ocean by yourself is pretty intense. And he was coming in one evening after a two-, three-day trip, by himself, offshore here, on his 30-foot Stapleton. He did a no-no: he ate before he got to the inlet. He said [that is] something that he's never—that particular area, maybe he eats offshore, but when he's steaming in after a long day or whatever, he usually waits before he eats. And he wound up breaking his rule, and he ate. And after he ate—

TH: Why not eat?

AQ: Because it makes you sleepy. It can make you sleepy. It put him out, and he fell asleep two, three miles north of the Sebastian Inlet.

TH: He had it on autopilot?

AQ: Autopilot, and he woke up, and he was on the beach, on the surf. My phone rang. I was home in Grant. I live on the water there. My phone rang once or twice, and I looked at it. I was asleep on the couch. I looked at my phone, it said “Danny Kane,” and I got some water or whatever, and me and my wife went upstairs. And as we’re going upstairs, I’m like, the phone rang with Danny’s name, I mean, that ain’t right. Something ain’t right. So I called him, and he said, “Albert, I’m standing on the beach.” And I went, “Oh man.”

And then the fun began. We got anchors together, ropes, got on the phone, started lining up some people, and we drove over. Got the fish off the boat and just went to work. Took us until that afternoon to get it off. You know, there’s two others like that that I was involved in. A. J. Turner, a young man, he was actually—I was trying to do a TV show like *Deadliest Catch*, and he was one of the cast, and he wound up—I was anchored off of Daytona that night, you know. It was a long day, him and I both went up there that day —

TH: Kingfishing?

AQ: Yeah. Fished till dark, and he decided he was going to go in. He’d been to Louisiana running a boat on his own and stuff, and I really felt that he had it under control. When he left, I did talk to him on the radio some. I threw the anchor, was going to sleep, you know, and like I said, I really felt that he had it under control. Here we go again, I wound up—I’m asleep on the boat, I start hearing my name, “Albert! Albert!” And I’m like, “What’s going on A. J.?” And he’s like, “Man, I’m on the beach—I’m in the surf.” And I’m like, “Oh man.”

And so I pulled up the anchor and started trying to coordinate with him, trying to get the particulars, orchestrate to him what to do. At that point, I had spent a lot of time in the marine salvage business with my brother in between fishing. Anyways, his dad started hearing about it, Jimmy Turner, he’s a legend. Fantastic fisherman. He—so guys at the fish house were waking up, and I was running in from the party grounds, which is like 20 miles. And the weather was bad. It had gotten rough. A big norther hit—

TH: Northeast of the Sebastian Inlet.

AQ: We're up at Ponce Inlet. Daytona. That area. And there's a big tide up there, pretty good tide, and A. J., if anything, with some experience, he might have been able to back it out of there. But he—a couple waves slammed across the stern and immediately filled in the V-berth in the cabin of the boat. And the way this boat was, it had a low bow, and the front of the boat was bulkheaded off. All the water went into the bow, and there was no pump up there, so it wasn't getting to the pumps in the motor compartment.

It was just—things were—anyways, he was stuck. He was stuck there. I forget how exactly he got off the boat. His father demanded he got off the boat, and into the beach. I can't remember if Sea Tow got him off of there, or if he swam in, or exactly what. I got into the boat and started trying to figure out how close I could get, how much rope I had. You know, we wanted to help get the boat out of there—

TH: So you anchored out—

AQ: No, I didn't anchor. I kept easing in, underwaying the *Zora*, I had the *Zora*, and I didn't want to get in trouble. Plus, it was pretty rough, you know, really rough. Black night, very black night. I knew how much—you know, I'm trying to figure out if I could pull off—what I could pull off. If somebody could get on with me, put my wetsuit on, how much rope we got, just how are we going to do this?

And we're looking at it, and maybe we better call Sea Tow, and then Sea Tow showed up, and he started hem-hawing around. We're like, "Look, buddy, give us your rope! Give us your rope! We can do it! The boat's right there." And he's hem-hawing around, and the boat's starting to look pretty bad, and we're going back and forth, and hours are going by. And then daylight started coming on, and we're like, man, guys are starting to come out fishing. Like Denny, different people, and, "Yeah, I got a wetsuit," Denny says.

TH: Denny—

AQ: Galespi. And I go, "Yeah, the boat is still good. We can get it right now." So we started coordinating with the fishermen what to do, and Jack Araby(??) was going to do something, and I was going to get the wetsuit on, and Denny was getting the wetsuit on, and someone was going to take the wheel of the *Zora*. We were going to hank a few pieces of rope together, and we're going to do it. We're on it.

And it's getting light and we can see everything, and then all of a sudden, the tide came in and the boat actually started floating off. And she floated off, and she pointed into the wind, and she went around like off on the other tack or something. And the boat, you know, the high side was to the surf, the high side of the boat, and something changed. She started floating off, and that was it. A wave cracked in—the blow—it was over. The boat just all of a sudden, the wrong wave, just—it was done.

TH: Went over sideways, flipped over.

AQ: It didn't flip over, but it just—it was gone, we weren't going to pull it off and bail it out no more. The gunwales had been above the water still where it was, but not anymore. The wrong couple waves hit it, and the tide came up and—we're a half-hour late at getting on board. And then what happened was Sea Tow—you know, they don't want to put themselves in jeopardy, but they backed out of the deal, and they figured, well, they'd just get the boat when it goes on the beach and make it a beach salvage.

We're trying to rescue the guy's boat before the motor went underwater, you know, and that afternoon that's what happened. We wound up on the beach, salvaging it, just like we did Danny's boat. A big crane came down, though, and this one, the beach up there's big and hard and stuff. But if you want to hear—did you ever hear Chef Ronny's story? What happened to Steve Lowe's old boat? You must have got bits and pieces of that one. That news ever make it down to Fort Pierce?

TH: There's a couple stories from Sebastian. There's one of a fellow sinking 20 miles offshore, and the light on his life jacket—

AQ: Yeah, that's Curty Hammer, that story—

TH: Al Tyrrell—

AQ: Danny knows that one really good.

TH: Al Tyrrell told me that story, and he didn't go back, and I thought that was a pretty—the guy was just darn lucky.

AQ: Jerry Harrison saved him. You know what—

TH: Well, what happened? From what you know?

AQ: Well, you know, maybe—you ever think about interviewing Jerry?

TH: Sure.

AQ: Jerry would be great. But Jerry has got some experience. I mean, so Jerry would be good. Maybe we should—anyways, that—I don't know if the rudder port broke out, something broke out fast, and the boat took water on quick and all of a sudden he was sinking. He had been out at Pelican Flats, you know 23, 24 miles northeast of Sebastian Inlet. He was on his way in, he was like at the Pines coming across that area. Maybe—

TH: Which is 15 miles—

AQ: I don't know why he was at the Pines. He angled off, and for some reason he was off course from the inlet. I don't know why. Maybe he was looking at the—checking it out on his way in or whatever, he was up in that area, if I got it right. He just all of a sudden was going down. He was able to get on the radio and tell Jerry where he was, and that was about it. And Jerry had the LORAN number, so Jerry ran up there and the boat sank immediately—<sup>20</sup>

TH: It was in the dark.

AQ: Yep. Curty was there with the light, a good light on his life jacket. It took Jerry a little while to see it, but he finally spotted him, got him on board. Never called the Coast Guard or anything. Nope. But anyways, the last beach salvage I was on pertaining to a kingfish boat was Steve Lowe's beautiful old boat. Had this guy, we call him Chef Ronny, Ron Skelly, who used to be Iron Man, he was so tough.

He \_\_\_\_ (??) fished in an open boat. He wasn't fishing for about a year, but he got back into it. He'd been going through some personal problems or whatever. He was back on scene, and we call him "Chef Ronny," he's always cooking everybody something to eat. So you'd be in the middle of the ocean, here comes Chef, and you'd get a beautiful scallop dinner or something, I mean primo food. He's always cooking. So that summer he's all revved up, cooking, drinking like a fish. Well, his wife and him were having some troubles.

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<sup>20</sup> LORAN was a form of electronic navigation before GPS that used different radio signals to identify the location of ships on an electronic grid.

So he had a plan. She was going to be at the Sebastian Beach Inn, and he had a plan. He was going to go up there by boat, and he had a big banner made: "I love Cheryl." So he tied it between the outriggers. It's got these big, massive outriggers with stabilizers. He had to have somebody help him because he has a bum leg. So he tied it—had it tied up there. I'm up at Pelican that day, and the fishing was fairly good. I was doing good, and here comes Ronny out the inlet, talking about going up and seeing Cheryl. He had his banner on the boat. He had it all planned. He had a whole New York strip—whole for the butcher to cut, had his New York strip, gonna go up there, cut strip steaks, cook them, and float them into people on the beach. God.

So I'm hearing this, and I'm like, "Okay." I wasn't picking it up really good, but Mason was talking to him. And the weather was kind of crummy, you know. There were some squalls around and stuff, and it was an onshore wind. "Okay, what are you going to do Ronny? Okay." I'm trolling in, and I'm picking fish on the way in, and I'm having a good old time, you know. Figure I might as well catch some more fish, troll, I had it on autopilot, picking the fish here and there, it's kind of overcast, you know, just blue, blue water. Heading for the inlet on a fast troll.

And now Ronny's on there on the radio saying that he's in the surf and the boat won't crank. And I'm like, "Ronny, what are you doing, man? Get that thing cranked up and get out of there." You know. "What's going on? Man, get it out of there. Don't get stuck in there." Evidently, he had troubles with his anchor. It shut the motor off, and one didn't set, and he had this giant Danforth.

He was trying to get it out from down in the hatch or something, get it up on the gunwale, get it overboard. Meanwhile, the boat's getting slammed by waves. Why his motor didn't crank, who the heck knows. And he's on the radio with us, and we're like, "What? Don't let it happen, man." Can't do it. So I went charging into there from offshore, pulled up to him, squashed into the beach, boat up on the beach, surf slamming into it.

TH: Your boat or his?

AQ: His boat. I got in there as close as I could, and I had the cell phone talking to his son, talking to him, talking to Sea Tow, the same episode, all you know, just one of these deals. I was piecing a rope together. That rope had salvaged other boats—hurricanes, we had lots of troubles in hurricanes with the boats in the river. We had successes there getting them—I tied some ropes out, his son came out, swam it into his bow, and I put the *Zora* in the corner, trying to get him turned around off of there. No good. Wasn't happening. I did it till about dark until I couldn't—I could only put so much on the rope. It was going to break or something.

TH: Pull your stern out—

AQ: I pulled a bunch of boats off the beach already—the rope was getting old. That’s a big mistake. You should have 500-foot shot of one-inch poly down below. I mean, if you’re ever going to be a good Samaritan and really help somebody, that’s what you need. You ain’t—you can’t do anything with an anchor rope, you’ll get killed, you know, if that breaks. You need poly rope. Five hundred feet of it. Anyways, Ronny’s boat—Sea Tow turned it down—wouldn’t touch it. Too much work. Wasn’t going to happen. They weren’t—they were barely capable of pulling it off, and my brother being in the marine salvage business, we got him on the phone, and we all went to work at it. And he orchestrated the deal, him and I. We—

TH: You pulled it off?

AQ: Yeah, we pulled—it took us until late that afternoon to get it off. What an episode that was. I rented two—went to Home Depot—we were just piecing stuff together. I got all these big Danforth anchors for Mike.<sup>21</sup> Rope, the big tow rope, went on to Eddie—with Eddie Silva, on the *Dixie*, Randal Richman’s boat. They went out there. Just stuff. I showed—I went to Home Depot and rented two big pumps, gas pumps. We went down to the beach, got the pumps on the roof of his boat, got them latched on. I swam an anchor out just to get the bow in it. They showed up, put the rope on the bow, started pumping it out, and it was victory at sea right on the beach. A whole episode. I think we filmed a lot of it.

The rudder port was broke out of the bottom. It was—you know, everyone’s working their ass off doing different things. We used spray foam to spray foam holes shut. Stuff foam—you know, mattress foam, we ripped his mattress up and got the good foam out, little by little, bolt cutters, cutting stuff out of the way. Got the canopy off the boat, the generator. And I said, “This boat ain’t going nowhere until we get that hatch open and check out the rudder port. We got to see what’s going on with the rudder, it’s already screwed itself into the bottom.” Anyways, we finally got that hatch open, the rudder was broke out, so there was a gaping hole there.

TH: Water coming up—

AQ: We gotta take care of that one. You know what eventually—we’d get that stuff full of shit and then boom, it’d get knocked out of there. We’d get it stuffed full, boom it get knocked out of there. Stuffing. Working our asses off. Finally, I had to go over—on the

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<sup>21</sup> A Danforth is a traditional steel anchor with strong holding power.

beach, it was a trough or whatever, enough water to get under there. I said, “Okay. I get under here. Just grab my feet, let me do my thing, and when I shake my feet, pull me out from under there.” So that’s how we finally got it.

TH: So did you put a plug in it?

AQ: Just big chunks of foam up from the bottom. Got them to hang enough and then around in the top, whatever, in the inside, and finally the pumps caught up with it, and we dried it out. And they—big 36-footer out there with the rope, finally, she crawled off the beach.

TH: I’ll know who to call if I run aground.

AQ: That could have been in the—that one should have been on the evening news. I mean, what a story with Ronny, with his wife and everything. I got photos of it.

TH: Tell me this. Did his marriage survive?

AQ: It—it worked. His plan worked. They got back together. For how long, I don’t know.

TH: We’re down to just some final stories, about fishing in general, a few more stories.

AQ: If you want to touch on a fun story, number 23—I just want. When I think of a colorful or fun fisherman, do you remember Doug King aboard *The Scooter*?

TH: I know the boat.

AQ: Yeah. Well, Doug was one of my best friends. He had a lot of fun on the ocean. But he was a fiddle player, a good fiddle player. And he was a rum drinker. And he was one of the best king mackerel fishermen, just because of sheer determination.

TH: And his name again?

AQ: Doug King. You know, he was one—he traveled, he chased the fish.

TH: And when you say “travel,” be specific.

AQ: Just up and down the coast, between Daytona and Boynton. He could live on the boat when he was traveling, which I’ve done the same. I didn’t—we didn’t talk about that. That’s where I fish, too, between Daytona and Palm Beach, but less and less, mainly just off of Sebastian now. Anyways, Doug, for fun—that guy would play his fiddle all night long and then, like, recruit somebody at the bar to run the boat, and he would just point, get it out the inlet and on course and get back out there. I mean, he wouldn’t miss a day. I mean not a day. Just fun stuff like that. One time in Jupiter, he was—the fishing was really slow. So some of the guys rafted off together, taking a lunch break—

TH: Rafting off tied together offshore—one person would anchor—

AQ: Yeah, somebody would anchor and another boat would tie off the back of them and the other boat, and they’d all jump on together and have lunch and shoot the shit or whatever. So here’s Doug, he’s still trolling, and he gets up near him, and he puts a fish in the boat. And he trolls around again, and here he is catching another one. And they’re all over there scratching—and he’s putting another fish in the boat. And every time they look, he’s throwing a fish in the boat. Well, what he’s doing—he’s got a dead fish on the line, and he keeps running the same fish overboard, and when he goes back around, he makes—you know. Just kind of stuff like that.

TH: So they think he’s nailing the fish.

AQ: Yeah. But he’s colorful as heck, I mean, there was a lot of times—I mean, you talk about rough-weather fishermen. I mean, just, it did not matter. Four to six, 15 to 20? Good. No one else will be out there. You know. At one point, I was doing that too, because I was with him and had the sea wind. Young and just—we did it. That’s—we used to fish that all the time. Not a problem. Now it’s a problem. We don’t do it anymore. But anyways, Doug was very colorful, good fun fisherman. He’s long gone, fiddle player, I—there’s definitely some young guys that are, I’m sure, colorful, but he’s one of the few that was a good musician.

Anyway, that’s probably enough on the fun stories. But I want to say something pertaining to fishermen and the fishing industry in general and us. You know, the fishermen are like the real thing, they’re the people of the coast. They’ve been here the longest. They’re doing a great service with providing sustainable food for the people. I mean, you can’t get anything better. There’s no chemicals, there’s just—it’s just pure

protein. But there—it upsets me that we're looked down upon in a way. Where did that first—why did that first occur?

And you know, maybe it's a stereotype of a thing that's hung on our collar, or whatever, but the fishermen are hardworking people. They're trying to do the right thing. They're not out there to mess up the ocean or—they're environmentalists. They see the problems. They're hardworking guys, and they're paying their property taxes, and you know what, they're paying off their mortgages, but they're doing it year in and year out, you know. They're not getting laid off. When the economy's down, they're still doing the same thing as when the economy was up. They're here to stay, and hats off to anybody that looks up to the fishermen, and thank you.

TH: Everybody loves to eat fish, but people don't like fishermen. Commercial fishermen.

AQ: Yeah, right.

TH: It seems to be a—

AQ: But you know, they do in other countries. I heard in New Zealand the fishermen are treated like rock stars.

TH: Tell me this. This is one question that I've asked this for years, and I've fished for years. Where do the kingfish go? I mean, when you sell them at the market—

AQ: Oh.

TH: Where do they go? I mean I've never seen—people tell me this. They've never seen them in a restaurant, kingfish on a menu in a restaurant. Where do the kingfish go?

AQ: We serve some here, they're—New York's a big buyer. Canada loves them.

TH: I heard they go to the Fulton Fish Market in New York.

AQ: Yeah, sure, but there's other markets. We don't hear about—oh, from there. Okay. When they go to the Fulton Fish Market—I mean, there's 9,000 little bitty retail fish

markets in New York City. Brooklyn, all over. So they're all going like that. And they go to also—I ran into a guy one time—they go to flea markets up there. A guy will drive to the Fulton Market and get a certain size fish, and he'll go to the flea market to sell them. They like a certain size because they can—things have changed with the price. But back then they'd just take, you know this is a \$20 fish.

TH: Kingfish?

AQ: Kingfish. Yes. Kingfish is highly sought after. It really is. The people—in the Caribbean, it's like their favorite fish, right? So now you've got millions of Caribbean people living in America, so they're—definitely highly sought after.

TH: I've been told it's Puerto Rican populations, Caribbean populations in New York City.

AQ: Oh yeah. And in Canada, and California.

TH: But I don't know for a fact.

AQ: Oh, it's a fact. I mean, and plus there's a certain amount of them getting sold locally. Really, right now, with the Gulf getting more fish—and I'm telling these young guys—one of the things that we need to work on is the market. Politically, there's always going to be stuff to be addressed, it seems like, you know, decisions. Mason knows more about that than I do. We went 10 years with no political stuff at all, but the last five years there's been a bunch of stuff, and we've been working on it. I've gotten—had to been involved with a few of my opinions is all, really. But anyways, the market. It would be great to see some local stuff happening. Orlando, just whatever, we need to distribute.

TH: It would be great to see it on menus in Florida restaurants.

AQ: Yeah. Well, we had it here at this restaurant, my daughter, and people loved it.

TH: What restaurant are we at?

AQ: Mama Mia's Original Italian Kitchen. Downtown Vero Beach.

TH: Okay.

AQ: Yeah.

TH: All right. Thank you.

AQ: You're welcome.

TH: And it's been a pleasure.

AQ: Yeah. Thank you, Terry.

*End of interview.*