Andy Gibson Interview

Interviewed by Don Davis

Don: Now, please go ahead.

Andy: All right. First question you want to know is?

Don: The history of this company.

Andy: This company was started originally back in the early 1920s as dried shrimp where they had boats, actually they cast netted them or they caught them by sein and they actually dried them on platforms over the marsh out in the marshy areas. My great grandfather started with buying some of those shrimp and then at that point in time those shrimp were dried, put in barrels, very much intense labor. Sun dried and put in sacks and beat back and forth and knocked the shells off, and that shrimp was actually exported to the Asian markets.

Andy: After that, my grandfather started in the business at a very young age. His father had passed and then he continued it. At one point in time he got into the canning, which was the new technology at that time and that would have been probably early 60s. He started in the canning. They can shrimp and oysters.

Andy: Then in probably in the late 50s he started, by the late 60s, is when they started having issues where the imported product coming in was costing them less than the actual can was costing them and they lost the dried shrimp markets. Many of the big dry shrimp plants fell out around that time.

Andy: From there they went into the newest technology at the time, which was the block frozen product. They started peeling the shrimp that they were peeling for the cans and putting them in a five pound frozen block form for distribution. At that point in time, the only source of shrimp domestically was local, whether it's East Coast, West Coast, or the Gulf Coast there was not a global farm-raised market. At that point in time they started distributing the product.

Andy: At that point in time customers that wanted it, because it was seasonal, would come in and do the buying at the dock with them. They'd come in with the lines of credit or the money and buy the product. Most of what they packed then went to customers. After the season, whatever they continued to pack, they were holding for themselves and started marketing. The business very much grew and bloomed at that time, which would have been very late 60s, 70s, into the 80s.

Don: Let's go back for a moment to the shrimp drying business. What was your company called that time?

Andy: That was before my time. I don't know that I have that name. I know that the original company under my grandfather was started as Tidelands, it had an S, and then throughout the years the

S has been dropped and then we had to put it back because the original corporation papers were Tidelands. When they first sold overseas, I don't know that there was legitimately a company name or just a, "This is our lot on this boat. On this barrel."

Don: Now do you remember stories? How did that barrel get from Dulac to let's say Shanghai?

Andy: That was before my time. I really wouldn't know that. That's something that was lost before me.

Don: Your family, for a while, was in the canning business?

Andy: Yes.

Don: Where did they get their cans? Do you know?

Andy: Again, that was before me, but the cans were bought, the cans were made in this country. I remember as a young kid being with my grandfather in his office, which is a big plant, a lot of employees, a lot of mechanical parts at that time it was something pretty amazing. Now it's fairly obsolete, but at the time it was really something pretty neat. Cans come in, they'd spin all over the building. They'd come in on different trolleys going through the packing line, then the cooling chamber, and then to labeling, and then storage. A lot of times they would put the product in the can hot, almost pasteurized or warm and they would do a cooling process. From there it would come out of drying process. They'd label it and it'd go in inventory. It was canned so it'd have shelf stability.

Andy: At that point, Tom, I'm not sure where the cans came from but they were U.S. I remember being in the office of my grandfather when he started talking about the fact that we have a big problem. The imported stuff is coming in cheaper than we can buy the cans to put this stuff in. We're back to the same situation now where the product coming in is cheaper than we buy from the boats. Those numbers are, depending on the size, whether it's head on or headless, and the size whether it's 10/15, or 50/60, some of these prices are two or more dollars per pound cheaper than we're paying the boats and we're paying them $2.00 cheaper than what they got 10 years ago. It has a very strong negative impact on the country, on our industry, and the cost.

Andy: When we take money out of that fisherman's pocket, he can do less. He has less guys working. They make less. They move on to other things. We're having a big exodus out of our industry because of the imports coming in at gross amounts. We are five, six, seven, 5% of the market, whichever one you want to go and say for the sake of math, we were 10% of the market, which I know we're not.

Andy: That's 90% coming in overseas and we are now fighting importers that are fighting for market share, so the numbers are so low we've been lost in the mix. We're trying to find a placement of product, but it's very difficult because we're so far outside of what they have created a cheap market. They've created this cheap market where we're not competing with them, in my opinion, they're just trying to get U.S. dollars in their economy. They'll drop the price to get a U.S. dollar in because it's almost money manipulation or money laundering in my opinion.

Andy: The fact that the stuff coming in is so cheap, we can't even buy from the boats at that price. We have to package, labor, distribute, cold storage fees, trucking fees. We can't cover these costs.

Don: Let's go back for a moment. Keep that thought. Do you have any labels from when your grandfather was canning?

Andy: I do have them. They're probably at the other location.

Don: Okay. That's a good way for us to document where these buildings were. We've been told that we can consider a cannery like a shrimp shed. It was the nexus of the community. Community hung out there.

Andy: Correct.

Don: Is that true?

Andy: Yes.

Don: When you talked about your grandfather, and I realize it's before your time, there had to be a lot of people working. How many employees, seasonal? Rough number.

Andy: The companies were organized differently the. He had the plant workers. He had the distribution guys that moved the products, a lot of product, back then they trucked. Then, also, a lot of the boats were company owned at the time. A lot the boats were built by the guys that worked for the company to build the boats. You basically had a boat yard and supply shop for the boats. Then the hands that worked inside, then maintenance of the crew, and then distribution. At one time there was well over a hundred employees in this one building, because you had at one time 13 or 14 company boats for shrimp, and then there was oyster boats. Then you had the deckhands, that's at least three per person, three per boat. Then you had the un-loaders and then the guys that hauled the product, the guys that reloaded the boats with ice and fuel. It was a pretty big operation at the time.

Don: Now at that time, shrimp were measured in barrels?

Andy: Correct.

Don: Or baskets, and a basket was 70 lbs. What I was told by your friend Lance is the boats don't have scales.

Andy: The original unloading of it, there was no scales. That's where the barrel measurement came up. There was a barrel and in that barrel they put 105 lbs. I think it two measurements to the barrel, so the barrel was 210. That's how the original formulas of the head on, how you headed it, what you came out with, and the original counts. The mathematics of accounts had to do with the 210 lbs. I keep saying it. You take 210 lbs. at this price, but you get this amount of gross dollar divided by the 136.7% yield would give you the final. If you took that shrimp and head it and paid so much money, what did we give you in return? That was based on the measurement. There's two large tubs, roughly 105 lbs. each that dumped into a barrel

measurement, which was 210. Before it was a level container, because there was no scales originally.

Don: That's a very -

Andy: Very stark.

Don: That's interesting because we think of scales in the 21st century. Yet your family goes back to the 1920s, so you're almost a hundred years. Same family.

Andy: Fourth generation. There's a fifth one somewhat working in the industry. I don't know if he'll stay. We're not really pushing him to stay. We're pushing him to do outside things because we're concerned about the survival of the industry. If you do something else and it goes well, great. If not, and we're still around, you want to come back, great. I just hate to put him in here, and then 10 years say, "Okay, this didn't work out and you've got to do something else later." We're trying to have him do something different, but he does have a small amount of business that he's been doing in his own [inaudible 00:09:40].

Don: I recall when I was here earlier, you mentioned that you used to get off the school bus here.

Andy: Yes. The old building, which we have a picture of in the other room, I would come to work with dad in the morning, get on the bus here, get off the bus here. We had a bunk bed in the office, which I pretty much stayed in there. Sometimes when they'd go home, I'd stay. Do homework in there. Then he ended up putting a shower, when that building burned in 1976 and he added this one, he ended up putting a shower here. Once we had the shower here, sometimes I would stay here all week.

Don: It's fair to say you grew up in the business.

Andy: In the building, yeah.

Don: Not many of us can say that.

Andy: No.

Don: When your grandfather was building boats, they were wooden boats?

Andy: They were wooden boats. A lot of them were the old first luggers as they called them. Some of them were only 25 to 27 foot long. Of course back then the cabin was built over the engine and they had windows that slid up instead of down. They slid up and down, they didn't open sideways and they were pretty much open for ventilation and they closed them for wintertime warmth. They were both a little similar to the oyster boats that had the engine underneath the cabin, but the oyster boats had a little bit higher sides. If they loaded them low, and water came over the deck it still wouldn't flood the hull. Some of the old picture shows some of the oyster boats pretty low. Shrimp was never that amount of weight.

Don: Have you ever heard the word Floridien or Floridiane?

Andy: I've heard of it, but I can't tell you a lot about it.

Don: Well, a Floridien is a boat that's ... throughout Louisiana ... The wheelhouse, the cabin, is in the front of the boat, whereas, as a Biloxi it's at the back of the boat, and those were wooden hulls.

Andy: Right.

Don: Do you recall any wooden boat builders on Grand Caillou Bayou?

Andy: Our family was boat builders. We have cousins and uncles that are, the L'Orange and Lerain family that built boats on this site. It was a community effort when you wanted boat built, you came and helped the boat builder If you laid the keel, you built the boat. Family got involved with kids in the lodge. Everybody was involved with building that boat at that time. Most of the boats that we remember. Would have been the Biloxi. They were back or aft cabins.

Don: What kind of motors did they put in them, before diesel, if you have heard.

Andy: That was before my time. That's one I don't know.

Don: What kind of motors did they have in them today?

Andy: The boats we're talking about now pretty much are not in the industry. A lot of those boats have left. Some of them have been taken out and restored. On some of the other bayous, some of them have been sanded and fiberglassed over, made very nice old antique boats. All the woodwork inside, which you don't see on modern boats. A lot of those wood boats in the 25 to 30 foot had been replaced with the fiberglass skiffs.

Andy: Some of the fiber glass skiffs now may have 500 to 700 horsepower on there. They've got serious horsepower, diesel engines. Some of the bigger boats may be fiberglass or steel in the 50 to 65 foot. Then above that, majority there's some fiberglass and the Desco [built in St. Augustine, Florida] hulls, but most of the bigger boats are steel and they may go up to, some of them 104/105, but those are boats that are offshore. The whole fishery has changed.

Andy: The inside fishery. There's only one or two of those boats around that I know of, but I don't think they're in the fishing anymore. I think they've been restored just as somebody's weekend lugger or something.

Don: That's a fascinating point because you built a boat. It was a neighborhood community effort. Have you ever heard of a Fairbank's Morris Motor?

Andy: Yes.

Don: Have you ever heard of a Chrysler Marine?

Andy: Yes.

Don: Okay.

Andy: Those were before my time, but I'm sure that's some of the motors that were in there.

Don: Exactly. We now have a motor. Outside you have a photograph or picture and I'd like to talk about later, but there are two shrimp boats. They're both rigged differently. You described those riggings to me at one time but quite frankly I can't remember.

Andy: Those would have been the Captain Jack, Captain Andy. Okay. Those were built in 68/69. They were built 1669 one was named after my cousin Jack Murphy. One was named after me, Andy Gibson. Titled Andrew, but it was always called Andy. Those were the two first steel hulls, I believe, built at Allied Shipyard. They're built on the same model as an offshore boat of Aransas. Had a rounded back end and then they incorporated the style of a boat off the East coast, which was a Folsom bow. A combination in architecture of those boats, where the cabin was built forward and high, working area to the back and low. The original boats were double rigged, so they had short outriggers on a bigger boat. When we were probably 12 to 15 was the advent of when they went to the new technology at that time, which was pulling the four rigs, which incorporated a dummy door, a wedge type metal with a skid, but it's heavy.

Andy: At that time it may have been 400 to 500 pounds now. So these guys have 800/900 pound skids. What it is, is instead of the original door working with at this mainline cable two bridles each to a door which attached to the nets. This was in between, where you'd have three bridles come off the main line, one to the dummy door two the outside nets and then the doors would attach to the nets and it would spread because you used the bigger door to spread the net so you can set up covering a 35 foot bottom. They could go to two 35s to each side and cover 70 feet on the bottom. It was a way of increasing the production. The outriggers had to be made longer to keep the nets from getting together under the boat.

Don: You mentioned Aransas, is that port Aransas?

Andy: Port Aransas.

Don: If there had been a connection between the fishing industry say, Terrebonne Parish with Texas.

Andy: Louisiana has always managed for inside fishery, more smaller shrimp because of the canning plants and the peeling operations at that time. Originally they were hand peeled, but then as the technology came out with the peeling machines, then it became more mechanical. They could do more volume in a short period of time, but they've kind of geared up towards a smaller peeler.

Andy: Texas got away from that way back in the 70s, they started weeding out of that. They had, before us, started with the larger boats for offshore. I don't think, if you look at the maps, they didn't have quite the estuary we had, had a shorter fishing area inside and a lot of those guys ... The towns are located much closer, like in Port Lavaca, you're looking at the Gulf. These areas here, we had 20 miles pad, 20 miles of marsh between us and the islands. The different estuary's, they fish differently. When my grandfather wanted to go off shore, headway a lot to Galveston and toward Port Aransas and we decided to build the two boats for the grandsons, he wanted to build boats that were capable of fishing offshore because of the advent of shutting down the canning plant and the peeling stuff that he was doing.

Andy: He was shutting down that operation also. He had boats that were fishing into the new territory, which had been the offshore fishing.

Don: Where did all of the equipment from the cannery go? Was it just salvaged?

Andy: For the most part it was salvaged. There was quite a few plants, as one decided to quit, others would buy, just like today when one plant shuts down, we buy equipment that may work for us for pennies on the dollar because business is tough and it's replacement. New is expensive, so it was pretty well liquidated. Whatever was modern and adequate at the time was liquidated. The other stuff pretty much ended up being scrapped out. That building is now something else. It's a different type of business now.

Don: A name that I've seen is Laitram. Is that where you go to buy a peeling machine?

Andy: Yeah. Laitram took the technology, the story goes that it had to do with the peeling of the shrimp by hand that someone stepped on a shrimp. One of the Lapeyre the time, I think, stepped on the shrimp was on the back edge and it pushed the shrimp out of his shell. He figured if there was a way to pinch that shell in the back and loosen it to get the shrimp out. They started working in the canning plants. Some of the original work was done in the Bouquet canning plant with my grandfather. They worked on some of the machines that became more mechanical peeling instead of hand peeling. They since went on in a lot more technology and developments and they're still a pretty strong company today in the peeling. They're very big in the global.

Andy: As far as I know, out of the U S they're the largest. I know they send a lot of equipment overseas.

Don: I have talked with, I believe it's Lapeyre or Laperriere?

Andy: As far as I know it's Lapeyre.

Don: All right. Lapeyre I believe it's his granddaughter. I was curious and very nice. Very nice lady. She sent me a list of the states where the peeling machines are located. I don't need the names and the companies. It is a wide distribution. It is an impressive distribution.

Don: We have the advent of technology. The boats are getting better. You mentioned to me that buyers would come dockside to buy right off the boats almost, is that right?

Andy: The buyers, at the time, they didn't have the means to process the product. As today, most of them don't get into that part. What they knew was they needed the production and if they were in or near Chicago, Boston, New York, and they needed the production for the warm water Gulf shrimp, what they would pretty much do is when the seasons were on, they'd call contact plants. My father was one, Lance's family. They would come down and when you first opened up through the season, these guys came down with their briefcase of money or the bank accounts, wired funds, and they would sometimes stay live with you, stay in the homes with you, the kids did.

Andy: They'd stay in the local area and then as the shrimp was coming in, they would get what they needed and if this guy needed his inventory for ... it was seasonal. There was no import production. If he knew he needed this much shrimp to get through to August for the summer trade and he needed $100,000 worth of shrimp and it was this many pounds, this many that. They came with their money and they basically paid us to pack the product. We'd pack it, they'd take it immediately. We didn't have to have the lines and lines of credit.

Andy: Then they would try to get what they needed out in May. The may season for June, July, August. Then when August came, we'd have new production. At the end of August they tried to get through to the May inventory. Those guys pretty much came through and bought the product from us.

Andy: The business was basically based on the fact that we had something people wanted and they'd come down and get it at that event. As we continued to process and production got better with technology and effort and the industry started to boom and more boats got into it, we ended up at that point in time, probably having where we started getting a line of credit. We'd pack for these guys and then we would pack some shrimp and hold it on the side to cover the incidentals or to keep working because we finally had a business that was flooring.

Andy: You also had the guys that came in, some of the bigger companies that came in small originally, but saw that shrimp was profitable. I think they'd buy and resell it. They became what we called the speculators. They'd come in and they'd give you a price. It was usually lower than what we were paying. A lot of times they'd try to get the price down, but they would buy massive amounts of shrimp. Then they would sit on it and they'd make the money. It ended up being where the processing level, you have to have the line of credit, you got to pay the power. Keep the employees on year round. All those expenses would eat you up and kept you from really prospering and growing. It was the quick turnover of money that kept you here.

Andy: Then as we saw what those guys were doing, we tried to be part of that game also, where we developed our own customers and then later in time, a lot of those guys, when we started inventorying product, they would stop coming down and buying everything they needed two times a year. At that point in time they became customers that we began to ship to. Then at that time, we were able to adjust what we did buying, to where we could have a more stable price then. A lot of times we could have a more regular customer base where we sent them monthly, as a trucking back then, because trucking got where it could get it to those guys.

Don: That's a key point. I just got through spending time at Chauvin Hardware. They have records from the 1920s and 1930s. One of the things that I found was a Western Union telegram ordering dried shrimp. Of course the reason for that is that the telephone did not arrive in this part of the world until the 1950s. Electricity, in some areas, didn't arrive until the 1950s. You are working in the 30s with packaged goods in which you are sending out Western Union telegrams or mail and then you have to get a truck.

Don: There was legislation passed that allowed you folks to have your own trucks as long as it said fish on it, still today. You bypassed some of the Interstate Commerce Commission's guidelines because you're your own trucker. Bertoul Cheramie, he had a whole fleet of trucks. The point is you produced in Dulac. I'm always interested in how it got to New York.

Andy: Originally the actual unloading docks were actually a homeowner because we didn't have sufficient roads and we didn't have the power. As the technology came down and the actual gravel road came down, and my grandfather on the other side was very instrumental. He was actually in the meat packaging, but he was instrumental in helping bring the road down. He and my great grandfather, they were able to work together in trying to break the power down. Eventually the phone, which was the party line at one time, but when that development came down and they owned this property here, which was basically farm ground, then they started doing more of the work here, as far as the unloading.

Andy: That way the boats didn't have to go all the way to town. Originally they had to go up to Terrebonne, to go all the way in. Then one grandfather, the meat packing guy, was also on one of the boards that ended up building the Houma Nav. Then from the Houma Nav, they could get up to town quicker, but it's still another day and a half trip with a small lugger boat. They'd go from where we are here, all the way to town, unload and come back.

Andy: They started unloading here. We had sufficient gravel road where they could haul the shrimp to town that way.

Don: An important thing, I think I'd like for you to at least comment about it. I know you didn't grow up in this time period, but with your great grandfather going back to the twenties, where did they get fuel?

Andy: That's one I'd have to look up. If I told you I wouldn't have facts on it, so I hate to.

Don: It's okay. It's the kind of thing that when you think about it, we go to a standalone station and I imagine there are 50 gallon drums, brought some way down here, that allowed you to have fuel close to where you needed it and then put it on a boat. It's a question we've asked everybody. We're starting to get it figured out. We talked about supply chain in the 21st century. You're talking about supply chain in the early 20th century, which is much different and yet you survived.

Andy: That may be one to talk to Mr. Raymond about, because he'd be pushing the 80 year mark so he's going to have better information with technology then. I know that originally the ice plant was in town. The one we have here is a second location when they started loading here.

Andy: The boats had to go up there and ice and fuel and then go out. The advent of putting it down here, it would save that boat an entire day to get here, and an entire day to get back. It ended up saving, the boats didn't have to run as far and the boats were able to get in and out more often and have less fuel time running and less time on the product. The truck could unload here and could drive up. They unload all day, drive up at nighttime. Was working in the morning.

Don: You mentioned that you had a fleet of boats. Do you remember stories about the ice boats?

Andy: These were all ice boats back then, even the steel hulls were ice boats originally. Some of the original trucks that we hauled in, even when I was a young kid, there was no refrigeration on them.

Andy: They would go to town, offload the catch, the shrimp they unloaded during the day. They would load the ice there, bring them back. We'd shove the ice into ... We had two trucks at the time, one truck could go up, drop off the product, come back with ice. The next day we'd load the other truck. Lot of times it was bought back then. There was one boat was weighed and just dumped and spread out. Ice layered in the truck and that truck would go to town off load, load up with ice, and come back. We did not have the ice plant down here originally.

Don: Interesting. Do you ever remember flags on the boats?

Andy: The flags I remember was related to catch. On the bigger boats, whenever they hit the hundred mark, the hundred boxes or 10,000 pound catch, they'd fly the flag. That was a big deal.

Don: You just iterated a term I need you to define. You used the term "box".

Andy: Box is very a wide used term in this industry. Depends on what portion of industry you're in or what part of it is with the boxes. The box, basically, in what we do is considered the hundred pound measure. If a boat goes out, if he's catching head on or headless, either way. They measure by box. He'll come in and say okay, they got away from the barrel measurement and they went to the box, which was originally 105 pound gross weight. That gave you five pounds of water weight.

Andy: It was narrowed down to the net weight of a hundred pounds. When the boats would come in, they'd show the dock guy, "I got 2 boxes last night," for a small bay boat, or if I was out several days, "I got 20 boxes." Some of the bigger boats would go out and they may come in with a hundred boxes. That would be a hundred pound measure. A hundred times a hundred you get 10,000 pounds mark. In the plants, we still use that where we work, so many boxes today, that's the hundred pound mark. When we're selling, a lot of times we get into the ... it's ten, five pound boxes in a master case. That wording flips but in the boat unloading and the boat processing part, a box is a hundred pound measure.

Don: On the boat, how do you measure a hundred pounds to the box?

Andy: They developed baskets at that time. Old wire metal baskets and they knew what weight they put in them. They'd shake them level. It was 65 pounds and they'd shake them, depending on what they were. I've seen some of them where they tied strings on them, where this was 50 pounds. It would depend on what they did at the time, but they would pretty much go by today's measure. A crowned over basket is 70 pounds. Level basket is 60 pounds. Three inches into the basket is 50 pounds. They go by when they're heading the shrimp, or working them head on, they use those baskets as the measurement.

Don: Now these are metal baskets?

Andy: Today it's plastic. Originally was a bar metal galvanized basket.

Don: Where would a shrimper by the baskets?

Andy: Those baskets usually came in through the supplies source. Go back to it, back then, the boats were pretty much owned or tied into a company, so that company had a hardware store, a fuel dock. This one actually had a grocery store and that shop. Everything was done through the boats back to the community. If you had a boat, you're going to build, the boat was built here, outfitted at the hardware store. Got fueled at the fuel dock. Bought the groceries for his first trip, came back and unloaded at the dock.

Don: Truly the shrimp shed was, other than the church, the heartbeat of the community?

Andy: Pretty much because a lot of them tied into the local store, so it was pretty much the happening place. This one even changed where it even had the mail after a while.

Don: I remember you pointing that out and that's why I thought that perhaps in this store there's at least one *bourré* game going on every now and then.

Andy: That was before my time also. I know at the warehouse there was some games going. They were more poker.

Don: Let's fast forward, late 1990s up to today. How has the industry changed?

Andy: Back in the late eighties we began to have concerns, strong concerns, about the pond raised shrimp being produced, in the 80s. The early eighties is when it started coming up where there was some ponds became to be what we were aware of the ponds. A lot of the investments were tax breaks or different things that came out of a government push to help these third world countries compete and feed themselves. At that time, it started showing up where there were pond raising shrimp, which a lot of the guys shrimping didn't quite understand how it could be, or "How can this be done because we've always worked with mother nature a renewable resource?" That was in the early to mid-eighties, it started coming on where there's a concern. By the late eighties, some the guys, my dad was one, did go to Washington and say, "Look, this import thing's going to be a problem."

Andy: Washington was basically like, "Man, there's no way they compete with you."

Andy: "They did it with the cans. When they produce cans cheaper, they give you a canned finished product on the shelf cheaper than we can buy the cans for and put us out of business. We're concerned about this happening. We've been fighting that for a long time. We've asked for country of origin labeling and Corpus. We don't want to short anybody. We understand new technology, understand global trade, but at some point in time they are going to be so efficient because of funding going into their programs, the amount of land they have, the resources they have and the lack of cost they have that this is going to be a very tough thing to deal with."

Andy: That was, I believe, '88 the first time they went. Now you get into, if we have Noah's numbers at 320 million people eating four pounds of shrimp, that comes out to 1.28 billion pounds. Last year alone, in 2018, from 1988 to 2018, now they've come in with almost 1.6 billion pounds of shrimp, which is almost a half a billion pounds, 500 million pounds, over what our consumption is.

Andy: There's no market left for us to compete in. It's very difficult because of several factors. One, too much supply has suppressed price, but our costs are high. Our boats in the regulation are high. You can't work these guys on these boats and not give them a paycheck. They've got to be able to make something. There's got to be some incentive for them to leave home, go do this physical work and come back.

Andy: We're losing that incentive because prices are down. They're getting paid less. We're losing our fishermen. we're losing market share tremendously. In my opinion, we're not even fighting importers anymore. My opinion now is that they're fighting so hard for market share because these free trade agreements that do not work. They're just flooding the market and they're fighting each other for that sale. Prices now are probably $2 cheaper than what we're paying the boats, which are $2 cheaper than we paid them two years ago. Take that much money out of any industry, something begins to break. There's less maintenance going on. We're losing qualified fisherman. We have old guys getting out. Boats are being sold overseas.

Andy: As we lose the production and effort it's less for us to work. We have to compete with cheaper imports. We have to try to do more pounds on less profit margin of which we can't do more pounds cause we're losing the effort. It's kind of like we're trapped in a slow death.

Don: I've read somewhere about chemical use or steroid use ...

Andy: The antibiotic use in the ponds, anywhere whether you raised cattle or rabbits or chickens, you put too many in a tight quarters, something's going to get sick and it spreads. Antibiotic use is used very common and pond raised lots of creatures in a small area ... anytime you're using this have to do, you put too many animals in one place, kids in kindergarten, you got to vaccinate or everybody in a room gets sick.

Andy: They're using a lot of antibiotics and stuff that are proven in tests to cause cancer or other problems in lab test. Those are basically forbidden, can't use chemicals. We're testing less than, I think it's a 100% increase. We're at almost 2% now. It was less than one percent, now we're less than 2% of the product coming in. A lot of these banned chemicals, they've not allowed them to go into the EU and not allow him to go into Canada. They're coming here and we're openly telling the world we test less than 2% and if we do test it, we're just going to say "You can't bring it in." It's not destroyed. It's not really sent back. Sometimes it's put back on the boat and just does what we call "Port Shopping," the boat goes up to the next port, dumps this container off. There's a 98% or better chance it's not going to be checked. It gets back through the system.

Andy: They're sending a lot of stuff here they wouldn't send other places. Thus all of these countries are sending what they can and because we're not doing the job that we should do, it's protection of our people. These things, they're proven to be bad and they're banned. The banned on paper, but we're not doing enough to enforce them.

Don: Who are the countries providing most of the pond raised shrimp?

Andy: Right now India is number one, Vietnam, Thailand, Ecuador, are some of the others in the leaders. There's some coming from Brazil. Brazil, Peru, Honduras. There's shrimp coming out of Mexico. There's shrimp coming out of almost all of the Asian countries.

Don: Nicaragua?

Andy: Nicaragua, Honduras. Nicaragua, I haven't heard much about them lately. They may not be doing much. Honduras still does some, there's not a lot in the smaller countries, smaller coasts, but all that adds up to this number where we're taking in more product than what we consume.

Andy: We end up with a surplus. This was the first year in 2018/19 winter change over to spring, that we did not see market appreciation. The one thing about the market appreciation, it gets a bad rap because a lot of people think, "Oh well you buy all this shrimp. You stick in the freezer and you make a dollar a pound." The problem is you work all year long, not making much because you're turning over because you have this line of credit. You're stressing. Customers are slower to pay. You got to pay more upfront. All your stuff has to be paid forward. We pay when the product comes. We sell on terms, so we stress those lines of credit. You try to pack up as much as you can in inventory for the winter at a lot of plants, not all, but I'm a plant like us, so that you have something to sell all winter long.

Andy: With that market appreciation, it can go up 10 cents in a month and go up 20, it may go 30 or 40 50 cents, depending on what's on the market. Now with the advent of as much import shrimp, it has flatlined. Whatever, we're selling October 31st, we're still selling on March 31st. Without the market appreciation, inventory becomes a total expense, it's not ball bearings in a warehouse. You have to keep them insured. You have to keep them at zero degrees. You have one case and it's got to be zero degrees, got one pound, it's got to be zero degrees.

Andy: We've got refrigeration costs. We've got insurance costs. Interest on the money that you're borrowing and that flat line, everything that you held in the freezer becomes an expense. You're almost better off flipping it for the 15/20 cents now then try to hold it. The problem is with our customers, if we don't have it 12 months a year and the importers do, we lose the customer. When they buy something that, doesn't have to be good or better, it just has to be acceptable at a lower price and we're shoved out the door.

Don: How many pounds can you keep frozen? If it's not proprietary.

Andy: It depends. Everybody's different. It's going to correlate with, it's not the size of your building, you go to coastal, it's your line of credit. Again, it's whether you work headless, dried shrimp, or whether you work sealed shrimp. Dried shrimp ends up being a ten to one. If you have one pound of shrimp in, by the time you get a pound of dried out you're $10 before expenses, so it's tough. It still has to be refrigerated because of the environment we live in. We have high humidity, warm weather, terrible situation for a protein to sit out there and be exposed to. It'll mildew and mold. It has to be kept refrigerated. Frozen product has to be kept at zero or below or it can sour, to can go bad.

Andy: Peeled shrimp, it's a 55 to 56/57% whatever that number is. I'm not in the peeled business, but if you take in one pound you're going to get, 56/57% out. When you have one pound of peeled, you've got at least almost two pounds in it, plus costs and labor. How much you can hold really has to do on your line of credit. We usually hold 500,000 to 600,000 pounds. Last year we didn't have 250,000. This year, we hope we can have some because the production is not there. Effort is down. With the advent of mother nature this year and the fresh water, our production is down. It's at least off a third, maybe more than that. It's hard to tell because it can spring back. We can have a real good month to make up for the year, but as of right now, we're probably well over a third off, not quite at 50%, but damn close.

Andy: It depends on what we get in production. Some big companies may have several million pounds that they keep, depending on their line of credit. The problem is most guys talked to last year, 2018/2019, in fact, all I've talked to, since the first time, they haven't seen the market appreciation, which means every pound you held was a cost. If you held it and got the same price, you could in October and you held it for five to six months, you got to rethink this program.

Andy: If our costs are higher, we have to pay less. How do we pay less and keep our fishermen work? How do you get more when the imports are already $2 cheaper? A lot of guys had some conversations this morning. Some of the boats were ticked off. They just don't understand they think they should get a premium for domestic shrimp and I believe they should get a premium for domestic shrimp.

Andy: The problem is the imports baseline is $2 cheaper than us. These low prices, are opinion on today's market and that does not sit well with an industry that's struggling.

Don: What's the future? Based on your experience and you deal with the people, all the debt, all the time.

Andy: Okay. We had this conversation the today. I was in town and we had the conversation with a couple of guys I ran into, because people ask us all the time, "Hey, we know it's down. Oil fields down in the area was throwing shrimp. What's the future of it?" We tell them, "We used to think we had 10 years. Now, we hope for 10 years. Now we're three to five." We have older guys getting out. We're losing boats, we're losing processors. The guys that are remaining in, are going to be the big guys that pull up. We've got a couple of guys that are thinking, "Hey, we're bigger. We just need to wait this out and we're going to be the leaders in the industry." They may be, but they leave out one massively important step in the formula. It's the fisherman. Doesn't matter how big you are, if you don't have the fishermen to feed that monster machine, you're not going to make it.

Don: I talked to a fellow yesterday, he owns a shipyard and planning on buying a truck. They used to build a lot of, they just called them fishing vessels. His words, "We haven't built one in a long, long time." He has a couple of steel boats. I think in the family there's steel boats, but they have a niche market in the seafood restaurants at Mobile, so they pretty much can sell nearly everything. Not everybody has this niche. That is a concern. Yet there is on in this wall, a very nice display talking about the count. Explain the count to me.

Andy: I'm not exactly sure when the count started, but I'm sure it had to do with marketing of the shrimp way back. I'm sure it had to do with the fact that inside fishing versus outside fishing, that you had different sizes. In the marketing of shrimp, the bigger the shrimp, the more we paid for the shrimp. The smaller, the less we pay. You have counts to read them out. It starts at a U10, which is under ten to the pound. It should be, if you do a five-pound count, it can be nine and one/92/93 or 94 but it's supposed to be just under that ten. When you have a U12, which is only two sizes difference, but on the size of a shrimp, that's actually large. Then we go into 10/15. Then it breaks down usually by fives for a while it goes 10/15 15/20, 21/25, 26/30, 31/35, 36/40, then it breaks into tens because the shrimp are small, and that count is how many shrimp per pound.

Andy: If it's under 10 it's less than 10 shrimp make one pound. If it's a 40/50, it's somewhere between the 40 and 50. We usually try to hold it at the end. If you hold it on the front end, the fisherman feels like, "Hey, if you had some bigger shrimp, you could take it out." We try to hold it to the lower end. We try to hold it to the 48 count on a 40/50. We try to keep it uniform so the shrimp are the same size. We do a grading process. That's separates the shrimp by size and by count. Then they're sold that way.

Don: You have a machine that grades?

Andy: We have a Sort-Right grader. It still has manual knobs. There's some new technology coming out that's all computerized. It's still in the development stages. We've actually went to a plant and seen how some of it works. It's very impressive, but awful expensive. We're not ready to make that move when our stuff's paid for and we're concerned with three to five years.

Don: Yeah, when you pack shrimp in five-pound boxes, are there humans helping you?

Andy: Yes. What we do is, for the advent of the shrimp our fishermen go out and get bait shrimp. Our fishermen go out and make catch shrimp. They pick up the nets, dump them on deck. They are going to go through that catch. There's a certain amount of shrimp and certain amount of by-catch. It can be rocks off the bottom. It can be a piece of wood. It can be wreckage of something that got misplaced or something they picked up. They sort it out and they go through the shrimp. They either put them in the baskets, weaved baskets, either put them in the basket head on or headless. Most of our guys head them.

Andy: As they pick them up. They pinch the heads off. It's a process pretty awesome to see when a guy knows what he's doing, how fast they go through it. When they pick the shrimp up, the head just flies off. They pinch it and they're fast and they head them and put them in a basket. From the basket, it's washed with the seawater. The sea pocket[?] as it's called, it comes up and it's washed through to get the water and sand. When you pinch a shrimps head off, you're going to have some of his fat and his guts. Rinse it off. They usually, we have them, you rinse the basket off. Then you take a second basket and you run the hose hard in it and you pour the basket while you're shaking it into that basket. Then we do a thorough second dump, so they're basically washed three times.

Andy: Then they're put into the sack, which either could be the crawfish sack or the onion type side. It's a plastic sack with a draw string. It depends on the boat. Some guys put the 30 pounds but

70 pounds, some even put more than that. We try to keep it around 55/60 pounds. Too little, shrimp roll back and forth after they're frozen tales break off. You lose value in the shrimp because the tail's not there. Too much in there, the outside freezes, smashes the inside, we have a not as pretty looking shrimp. We try to work with the boats and that's an ongoing process. Once they sack them, they put them in a brine tank, which is on the back deck of the boat, normally. Could be a different place, but most places it's on the back deck just behind the winch, or if it's in front right around the hole of if it's in the back of the boat.

Andy: It's a prime tank could be anywhere from four to five feet long, four to five feet high, seven to 12 foot long. Depending on the size boat. We use salt water, which we usually use either at the dock, freshwater or offshore. If they change that, they use open sea water, which is what the shrimp are coming out of. They pour a lot of salt in. They try to get it so salty, that they get it down to minus four to five degrees without it freezing.

Andy: It has plates and an agitator. The agitator causes the water to be pulled through the plate, recirculated in the big tank and it just keeps the water circulating. When they're out there, they're supposed to be 24/7. Some guys turn them off, some guys don't. That tank, they can do 10,000 pounds in it before they have to change it.

Andy: May have to freshen it a little bit. There's a way to check with a hydrometer, it has enough salt and temperature. You don't want it to ice up because then you've got to thaw those. By doing that you're taking a headed shrimp or head on shrimp at that stage, and you put them in this sack and you dump this sack into that water.

Don: Into the brine tank.

Andy: Into the brine tank. What happens is that sack is very porous, so it's basically a mesh around the shrimp so the water can circulate through there and it'd be no different than you standing in a cold blast room. Or if you jump into water that's zero degrees. It removes heat exceptionally fast. As long as they are able to keep up with the production and keep that tank to certain temperature, they freeze it individually because it doesn't stick. They freeze it, which is where the term comes from, IQF, individually quick frozen. From there those sacks, they just stay in there 15/20 minutes. We'd like to see them 30 or see them more if the tank's right.

Andy: From there we pick them up and they usually hold them up, hang them over the tank for just a couple of minutes, let it drip out. Then we put them into the hole. The old ice hole now is usually a freezer hole and it's got the old plate freezers. Similar, very different, but similar to the ice cream trucks where they didn't have refrigeration blowing. It's just got cold plates that have Freon run through. It just forms a cold mass with the thought process of "hot air rises, cold air sinks." As it cools and it sinks hot air rises, the top gets re-cooled. It's not a circulating fan because that would cause dehydration.

Andy: The sacks are usually put in the alleyway and they may be set on their side or stood up and that way they tend to drip. There are pallets down there. They drip through before. They'll drip to the side onto the floor and then they're drying. We call it drying it up. As they're dripping and we've frozen, but they're frozen in liquids. Now they're sitting in this cold air and this cold air, we'd like to try to see it kept at zero, maybe a couple degrees below, not more than eight or

nine above. That way the shrimp finishes freezing if it's not frozen, hopefully it is, but it dries that sack up and it lets it drip.

Andy: From there they stack them in the bins. As they dry up they get quite stiff because they're frozen. When it's done properly and you don't have a lot of leakage, or they're drained properly, once you take them out within a few minutes, the sack becomes pliable. You can untie the sack and pour them out. We pour them out into a vat. When we pour them out into this vat, say a tightened bin or that type of plastic vat. Some use stainless. We pour them out into those and then we add water to them. That way we are thawing them out underwater.

Andy: We'd like to see the boats make 25 to 35 days maximum. Some do make 45 to 50 days, but the problem is, you take that shrimp out and put it in your regular commercial refrigeration. When you have the big refrigeration fans blowing and you go through defrost processes, you end up moving air across the product, which removes moisture. When you go to defrost, you heat it up, so the brine, which is just the thin, thin, glaze melts and then the shrimp's not as protected. When you go back to the freezing process again, it ends up removing moisture so we can dehydrate shrimp if they're not protected, which is why we go back to the five pound block, or they go to IQF and they put them in a plastic bag.

Andy: When we get them, we put them in the vats and then from the bats we thaw them out in the cooler overnight. Put water in and put them in a cooler. That way they thaw out slow, under very cold water. We like to try to keep it 34 to 36 degrees. 32 it freezes. We can't do that. We've had that problem. Got to keep it somewhere, maybe we might put the water near 40 or 45 degrees, let the product itself cool off, but we need to have it the next morning where it's lightly touching but not a frozen block. Then from there we ended up running a, we have a pipe that we run through just to make sure it breaks up. We dump it into one wash tank. It comes up, it goes across inspection belt from there, so it's going through the sorter. Smaller shrimp fall out first, bigger shrimp fall out at the end. Then we go back to the same type of bin and ice water and that way the shrimp has been sized.

Andy: Now we've got it sized where everything that's 10/15 should be in 10/15. Everything 36/40, smaller shrimp, would be there. Then from there we ice it up. When our ladies come in, we go to a second packing line. That's the green line. We go to the packing line, from there we take the bin. We put them up by forklift, we have a roller wheel. We turn it over into the vats. This is the third wash. First time we put water in it, actually the fourth, put water in the tank and then it got dumped into the inspection belt where went through the sorting process and then it goes back in a vat of water. Now we're dumping it into another tank, so it's washed three to four times after it's been washed. I make sure it's good and clean.

Andy: On the inspection belt in the packing line, we take out anything that's broken, anything that's a head. Got maybe the whiskers, the guy's head and the whiskers get caught in the gloves. When he throws them it goes with them. Crab bites his glove, he throws into the basket. He went and they missed him. We do a final inspection and try to pick out any fish or crabs or broken shrimp or improperly headed shrimp. We thought it was headed and the throat is there, we try to take the throat off. That way whatever restaurant's getting they're happy with. It goes on our scale. We weigh at five pounds. Then at the five pounds, it's automatic scale. Can't dump above or below. It dumps into a bag. That bag is filled with water. We fold that bag up, put it in a five

pound box. There's a lot of labor in that. From there it's marked and put on a rack and then we count how many boxes, how many sizes, who settled with the boat.

Andy: That rack is put in the blast freezer. We put it in the blast freezer. We try to bring it down to minus 28 or 30 degrees within 24 hours. It's got a lot of horsepower on it. Small room. We have a roof in it that causes the air to circulate. That way you push it over the top and back through the product to make sure all heat is removed as fast as possible, that's why it's called "blast freezer", we're blasting it with air, refrigerated cold air. We take it out from there. We take from off the racks, consolidate them in cases, with the same size shrimp in the case marked. In the 50 pound case, we strap it and then it goes into inventory.

Andy: From there, when we get an order, we pull it out. That order may be two sizes, maybe one size, maybe seven sizes, maybe two different colors in several sizes and then we fill the order.

Don: We've done this all here?

Andy: Yeah.

Don: In this building?

Andy: Yes.

Don: We've got it in five-pound boxes?

Andy: Five pound boxes.

Don: You mentioned restaurants. What count does the restaurant prefer?

Andy: Everyone's different. You may have a restaurant that has a boiled shrimp and they want a 40/50 or a 36/40. You may have someone that's frying one. They may want a 26/30 or 31/35. You may have someone that's doing a coconut shrimp and they want a 16 point. Somebody else may be doing a skewered shrimp, they may want the 10/15 or 16/20. Each restaurant has their own desire for size and application of that product. The bigger the shrimp we pay more because there's less of them. It's a lot more process, has more value. No different than, I mean I hate to compare it to a diamond, but the bigger the diamond, the more you pay.

Don: Exactly right. We're all done here, but we've got to get it to Applebee's, wherever their distribution network is.

Andy: Each one of those can be different too. Some guys may have a distribution in their area where they work with them. Normally with the bigger companies like Applebee's or Outback or someone, they have a central buying hub, which can be anywhere in the US and it can be different in different regions. From that, if they say, "Okay. I'm only using 26/30s." Then when they want an order of 26/30s, a lot of times on the bigger corporate type restaurant chains, they don't really want two, three cases at a time from us. The central buyer may say, "Okay. Look. I'm looking to buy this shrimp." We agree on a price and then we sell it. It may be 40 cases or 400 cases. It goes into their warehouse. At that warehouse, depending on the

customer, we don't do a lot of those guys anymore because they may want us to pay the trucking, and the in and the out, and you just never get out from underneath the handling of the product.

Andy: We try to sell to guys that, we sell it to you delivered to your door and then it's yours from then on.

Don: For lack of a better term, you're selling to a distributor?

Andy: Most of the time we sell to a distributor. He may be buying different sizes.

Don: Sure. Whose truck comes and picks it up here?

Andy: It varies. We have some local distributors pick up in their truck. We have a few that we have delivered to, depending on the arrangement. A lot of them, if we've been dealing with them a long time, we may deliver to their truck. Now we just try to let somebody else do it. Some of the older guys that my father may have dealt with, I can't change a program on them. We do the same but we do less of that.

Andy: A lot of those guys may arrange that somebody else picks it up for them because we do shrimp. Somebody else does oysters. Somebody else does crawfish. That guy comes through and they load it on his truck. For things outside of the state, majority, we work with Best Way Refrigeration because we've worked with them for years and years and they also have a cold storage. If we have to move something for storms, which we're always worried about this time of year, we can call him. He'll send the truck and take our product, put it in cold storage.

Don: Where is that cold storage?

Andy: That cold storage would be an Alabama, Mobile, Alabama. Most of the products we sell outside of the state, we'll go from here and do like Louisiana to Mobile, Alabama to Best Way Refrigeration, which is tied in with CCT, which is their cold storage. From there, if it's going to New York or St Louis or Chicago, it goes from here to there because I may only have 40 cases going but that truck's going to handle 500 cases or 440 cases. What happens is, whenever, I have something going to Chicago. I've got something going to South Florida. I've got some going to St. Louis. I got something going to Boston. Best Way picks it up here, brings it back to their truck hub, then from there, the Florida order is put on the truck going to Florida, one going to Chicago, Chicago, St. Louis, and then it's broke up from there.

Andy: They've been with the shrimp industry a very long time. My father's past got me started. That's past, but we've dealt with them for 40 plus years and they do us a good job.

Don: I've heard of Crescent City ice company or something like that in New Orleans.

Andy: That would be one in New Orleans that's maybe moving product for the guys that are in New Orleans or maybe storing product for them. Most of our products, I don't sell a lot of New Orleans because everybody's selling New Orleans, so we just don't worry about New Orleans.

Don: Interesting.

Andy: For the most part, most of what we do is offer brownies. That's not a market in New Orleans, so we go to other places. Some of the white shrimp that we sell, there's a lot of guys local that sell there. There's some guys that do process in New Orleans and they may have their own route. That's an area that we've just, over the years, just pulled out of and we stay away from. I think we have one customer that sells in New Orleans, but she sells to her uncle. She picks up and brings a product there. Other than that, we don't sell anything there anymore.

Don: Vietnamese?

Andy: No, she's American.

Don: Okay. When's the white season?

Andy: I would start off, let's go back to the first of the year. There's two seasons predominant in Louisiana's culture. I'll say cultural. Is the Brazilian or brown shrimp season, and what happens at that time, the little shrimp get born off through January, February, March, April. Their eggs are laid. They lay their eggs and they come up to the sea surface. They may be in turn for [inaudible 00:59:49] for and that's why the South/East winds or the March/April winds are so important for us.

Andy: These eggs float up through the salt salinity and the buoyancy. The more salt in the water the higher they float. They tend to come in on those winds and they come into our estuaries for the brown shrimp. They're already hatched, they're a little larva coming in. As they come in and they try to get into this estuary which is a huge problem we have with our estuary, because we're losing so much coastline. That open Bay is not the estuary. It's any regular bank line.

Andy: We're losing so much by the day. It's incredibly. It's sinful that's what's going on, but we're going to lose this estuary. That's going to effect the shrimp. That would be the red fish and speckled trout, crabs, oysters it will be everybody. They're just studying too much, not doing enough. It's a whole another story. I'd have to cuss for an hour. They're just a waste of money and time.

Andy: As they come in, those little shrimp attach in the estuary and then they start growing, they've got attached to something or beneath some protection. They grow. That's our brown shrimp. One slang is Brazilian, because of color of the shrimp. One is brown shrimp, which is what they say they are. Then there's another one that they call the Macy's. That usually generally as a rule, opens up on or about the third Monday of May. The target date is around the 15th. Mother nature can change it at any given time.

Andy: At that time, the big white shrimp come in and they come into lay. About the time the season opens up. A lot of the big whites shrimp are gone. Brown shrimp, from my understanding, and white shrimp, only have about an 18 month lifespan. Brown shrimp lay once. White shrimp lay multiple times. As the white shrimp come in, they can be big or small, and they lay, but they go after the white shrimp and catch some of the small brown shrimp. The brown shrimp, as they're harassed, and get caught and they grow. They need a little bit more salinity so they

start migrating out. By the time we get to May or June, not May, June/July, most of those shrimp have moved out and our season closes.

Andy: Then in August, those little white shrimp that had been laid, grow to a marketable size, usually. It has many factors. Then we have, on or about the third Monday of August, that season opens up. Then you may have a few remnants of a few browns that stayed in, but for the most part that's the white shrimp season. It will go on till about October. There's a date in October, I don't know the exact date. Maybe the 10th, maybe the 30th. There is a certain date that they have to be, for whites or Browns, they have to be 100 count to legally be caught. After that October date, then the count law comes off. Then they could be 150/200 pounds and they could be caught because they think a lot of them are going to die if we have a hard winter. Again, as you harass those shrimp and they grow, they tend to migrate out.

Andy: You actually have the two seasons and then about December 10th to 20th, the inside will close. After that, at some point in time, the three mile closes. Then at some point in time in the Spring, the three mile will generally open. It protects those white shrimp out to three miles.

Don: What about beyond three miles?

Andy: Beyond three miles, does not close, does not close at all. The only difference in that, throwing a curve, but so in case the question comes up later, Texas usually closes when we open. If we opened May 15th they close. They close from the Texas line against Louisiana to the Mexican border. When they close they have a system or a set up with the federal government that they claim 12 miles. We got screwed out of that somewhere back a long time ago. They claim 12 miles and then they actually extended to 200 nautical miles. They close the entire Gulf, roughly one third of the Gulf. Maybe a little bit more than one third of the Gulf. They statutorily can only stay closed for 60 days. This is one of those years they probably needed to stay closed longer, but they had to open up. They closed May 15th, they opened up February 15th. One of the things that happens upon our offshore fleet is when Texas closes, those guys come work, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana warrants. Everybody in the Gulf is working here.

Andy: When they open up, everybody over here goes return the favor and goes to work over there. That's usually where a lot of our boats, the biggest trip of the year comes from. That's the time those shrimp are migrating out and growing and it's untouched waters, for 60 days and they usually have the biggest trips of the year. That's usually a turning point. A lot of guys struggle all winter. They got to get that trip to get back on their feet.

Don: What time of year was that?

Andy: That opened up July 15th. Most of the boats had just cycled through. Most of them are already cycled through.

Don: If you're working off the Texas coast, where do you take your shrimp? Aransas?

Andy: Again, it's very complicated. It depends on one, where you're home port is. Two, where you hear the highest price is. Three, where you want to go or where the boat owner tells you to go if you're not the boat owner. Then four, if you haven't had a Texas license for X amount of

years, there's a hold on the Texas license. You can't buy one. If you didn't have a Texas license for five years, they shut it down and said, "We're not issuing anymore." Then you got to come back to Louisiana or Mississippi or wherever you are. We do have some boats that have a license. They may be from Alabama, go over there, unload. Fish off of Brownsville. Go to Brownsville, unload. Then come back and fish off of Galveston.

Andy: They could go to Galveston if they like the price of not, they may come back here. They may go to Alabama and they may go right back. Or the Texas boat may make his first trip there and then after he figures out that they fish hard, there's a lot of boats in an area quick. He may run off to Alabama if he hears they're catching bigger shrimp. If he has an Alabama license, he may go in, if not, he may go all the way back home to Brownsville.

Don: You can fish anywhere you want to in federal waters, but you have to have a state license to offload?

Andy: Correct. You have to have a federal permit now to fish in federal waters. If you don't have it, you can't go in federal waters and fish.

Don: What about off the coast of Mexico? Do you need a license?

Andy: You can't go to Mexico. That's a foreign country.

Don: Unless your home port's in Mexico?

Andy: But if your home port's in Mexico, you can't unload here. We are supposed to stay in our waters, they're supposed to stay in their waters. Does somebody cheat? Probably so, but if you get caught over there, they'll probably seize your boat. You get caught here, they'll probably tell you to go back, just the way we do things.

Don: All right.

Andy: If you go over there and get caught, they going to keep your boat, or they'll charge you a tremendous amount of money to release your boat. There is a line. The fishermen know the line. It shows up. It's not written in the water, but they know it exists and where it is. You go there, they have the right to seize your boat.

Don: Well Andy, this has been a truly educational experience. I like to keep these about an hour. We're a little over that.

Andy: Okay.

Don: You’re a wealth of knowledge younger man.

Andy: There's some of the older guys you need to get before they pass on.

Don: I would like to.

Andy: There's some things that, we grew up in the business, we were told, "Just shut up and go to work." That's what we did. We didn't ask questions.

Don: I'd like to talk to Lance's daddy and his mom.

Andy: Yeah. We didn't get to ask them questions, but they're the generation before us, that when a lot of this was really becoming a mom and pop and the industry was developing, they were in there. When we were there, it was already going. We were just told to get it done.

Don: Yeah. But there's a real story there. We don't want to lose it. I'm going to, not because I'm bored, I've learned over the years, at about an hour we're going to terminate. But I maybe be back.

Andy: Okay.