

Part I

My name is Don Pierce 00:00:29:00

I live in Rockhall, MD 00:00:32:03

00:00:41:09 I have 2 children and uhhhh...Lord...3,4,5, 9 grandchildren

00:01:02:05 **I've been a commercial waterman since 1969.** Been crabbing since 1980

00:01:14:13 In **1984 we were hit with a total commercial stripe Bass Moratorium. That shoved me into becoming a crabber full time cause the state federal gov. shut the Stripe Bass fishing down for 6 yrs.** And then were were still on a very limited harvestrate on the Stipe Bass. When one industry closes in the Chessapeek Bay it forces us into other industries and I chose crabbing.

Part V

00:01:58:19 We generally have crabs (eat) 10 to 12 times a year. My wife picks crabs to provide for the Grandchildren. Is what she does..yeah

00:02:16:21 How do they like the crabs or the Christmas?

Un Christmas is very good around this household yes yes Grandmom sees to it that it is avery good Christmas.

Part ?

00:02:34:00 My boat's 48ft. I built her personally in my yard in Rockhall in 1988. She's 100% fiberglass, she's 48ft. long, 13 and half foot wide and I spent my income on it since I built it in 1989.

00:03:04:16 at that time , at that time in 1988 we wernt , we were only crabbing and I built the boat in the winter time. And I built the boat to save myself \$100,000. I couldn't make \$1000,000 in thw winter.

00:03:28:11 Bri-Steff because my 2 children Bryian and Stephanies. That's how I come up with that name.

Part V

00:04:18:14 When I think of the word "water" the Chessapeek Bay comes to mind. Yes and...just comes to my mind

Part III/IV

00:04:55:20 Well generally we start around ...if I'm in the Crisfield area and we live in Rockhall we get up at 1:00 am in Rockhall. It's a 2 hr drive to Crisfield and then we have to load the boat with bait, baskets then we presume out to the grounds which can be anywhere from a half hr to an hr and a half away. **The state lets us start crabbing 1 half hr prior to sun up and we're allowed to work for 8 hrs.**

For the next 8hrs, **then you have another 1hr** after the 8hrs **to set pots aside if you have pots on the boat.** Its actually an 8hr ...if you count it all its about 16hrs a day. **It's not a nine to five. If you're gonna become a commercial waterman you throw the 9 to 5 away.**

Part III

00:06:26:11 Well we went out to the CHRisfield area and it was about an 1hr and 15min to set the pots and actually we took the pots up and the area that we had them there had been some crabs but the crabs are migrating south for winter so when the production gets low the harvest get low you have to move the pots to other areas where the crabs will move to cause they are definitely on the move. And when we do this as you actually seen in the loading of the boat we brought the pots ashore, duped the crabs out, rebated the pots, clean the pots if they needed to be cleaned , stacked the pots in the boat and then we moved them aprox. 5miles south into deeper water. Where carbs now are getting ready to spend the winter. Yeah because when the water temp gets below 50 degrees they won't go in the pots. They can still be moving but you won't catch them. Their metabolism slows down so much.

Part IV

00:07:51:03 Its ah.. when I was a young man it was very strenuous because we didn't have hydrolic winders and we pulled them manually we actually pulled the poys by hand. Now its strenuous cause the pots are 20 they weigh about 20lbs a piece. Then if we get about 10 to 15 lbs of crab in each pot then it's the weight that you have to handle until you get the crabs out of the pot. Then we rebait it and stack them on the stern or we sell them back sometimes. If we are on good numbers them we put them back sometimes. If we're on good numbers we put them back in the same area.

Part III

00:08:47:07 I sell to 90% of my product to Ford Seafood which is based here in Rockhall. He follows me even if I go to Cape Charles Va. He comes and picks my crabs up.

00:09:05:09 Yes Yes and he distributs them. He has a retail store and he also distributes them to customers.

00:09:12:00 That is wholesale yes

00:09:30:19 The **business expenses** crabbing at the present time on the boat in Chrisfield that day **run average about \$800.00 a day. That is bait, fuel, salarie for some of the crew.** Uh that's all of the expenses incurred from the time I leave my home til the time I get back. Its average daily, daily average expenses about \$800.

00:10:01:02 So on the 6th day we got roughly \$5000 dollars in operating expenses.

00:10:26:03 Most of the time when you experience or see us moving pots that because we are not making the amount or money we want to make. You never move pots when you're on good numbers. We always kind of put them back. Now when the crabs move away from the pots you have to move them to where the crabs are going. **See like last Saturday, I think our sales were like right around \$1000.00. \$800 of it was ate up in expenses. So there was only like a \$200.00 profit. That's no profit for the business. You've got to do 2 and a half times the operational expense for the business to survive.**

00:11:34:20 ah.. on an average when that boat was first built before all the slow downs and crab regulations bad water qualities whatever you can put that boat was doing \$300,000, \$350,000 gross sales. Now I'm down to somewhere into 2.

00:12:08:15 expenses on the 1 bushel to 100 it doesn't make any difference. It doesn't make any difference about the cost. Your bait and fuel cost are going to stay the same. You gotta try to find good numbers in harvest so that the business makes the money.

Part IV

00:13:37:01 **Oh, its very strenuous on the home life** especially with the way that we do it because we travel a lot. We follow the crabs. We'll start in March in Cape Charles, which is 50 miles further south in the bay than where we were on Saturday.

00:14:10:19 No actually I have 3 grandsons. My son was a waterman and due to some health problems with him also the industry has been regulated down to Striped Bass . He had a boat similar to mine. We built it to help to make sure he didn't have the high cost of ...we done a lot of labor on his boat. But its so many regulations and water quality low oxygen dead zones in Chesapeake Bay. If there's no oxygen in the water then crabs can't live.

Part I/II

00:15:04:03 Neither one of my grandsons have been on my boat to learn any part of the industry. I don't want them to have to work like I have to work to be a success. It may be nice for them to see it but **the thrill of the hunt has been taken away by legislation, regulation and water quality.** And the high points in the industry are getting so far apart...I'm talking about the high financial points to where you can accumulate to where you have that engine failure cause everytime that engine makes a turn its one day closer to engine failure . You know..just expensive its gotton so expensive. **Crabs and oysters have become a rich mans delicacy. For many, many years seafood was a poor mans delight.**

Part III

.....Our operational cost has skyrocketed its gone up %400 in the past 10

yrs. Crab pots when I first started were \$20 in the water now its \$20 before you even put them in the water.

Part II

It's a big cash flow it sounds great but not a lot stays with you. Over the last 3 yrs **we had** hurricane, **tropical storm Irene,**

.....Actually the pictures that are hanging on the wall of my boat was taken by a helicopter those are the flood waters from Irene. We were taking our pots from the flood. The water is actually, that's the color of the water . That was that brown. Usually the colors blue but from the muddy water the silk content was high and **that's what kills the crabs. The crabs run from that kind of water. Yeah that was an economic disaster for us. And then next year we had another storm. Its just been 2 bad falls and then we had the crabs die off last summerits been a rough 3 yrs.**

Part I/II

00:18:35:23 In 2013 we had great market prices cause of the low supply of crabs since last August when something happened to them. But it didn't only happen in the Chesapeek Bay. This is something that happened in the whole estuary. In the whole country we had...something happened to them. Pots were full fo Baby crabs. We knew we were going to have a better year this year. But when we started to see the death at the bottom we countd figure out why.....It could have been crab pneumonia.....it could have been anything. **We do have a number of Stipe Bass eating up a lot of our crabs. Everybody loves a crab...Everybody! And we're the only ones who can be regulated or stopped. You cant tell that Striped Bass not to eat the crab because he can't read or write. He's just mother nature. If the crab wants to eat**

Part II/III

00:20:15:16 The loss of our junile crabs are due to the influx of the puppie drum which is an ocean fish. Its come in to the bay waters...because its warmed a couple degrees. **The large number of recruitment in Stripe Bass since the moratorium has increased ten fold.** All these fish have to be fed. Just this summer me and my wife were in Bar Harbor Main and the state of Main told the commercial Lobsterman that they would never again catch 50 million lobster again in their life. They will never do it. Because there was no amount of Juveniles and the fish populations were high. Now the fish populations are low the projected Main Lobster harvest for this year will be an excess of one hundred and twenty five million lbs so don't tell me that the fish don't like lobster and crabsAll **the fish have made a come back and** everyone of them love crab.