

Interviewee: Art Shiver
Interviewer: Tina Bucuvalas
Consultant: Kristin Sweeting
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Place: Cortez, Florida
Transcriber: Kristin Sweeting

Abstract: Art Shiver comes from a long line of fishermen. Originally from Georgia, his great-grandfather George Shiver settled near the Homosassa area, where they operated orange groves and fished. His grandfather Woodrow Shiver moved south to Palmetto around 1947. Since they were poor, they traded oranges and old nets to obtain the funds to move, and once in Palmetto they obtained more nets from local fishermen. The men, including his father Art Sr., built their own pole skiffs and originally used cotton nets to fish for mullet, trout, and redfish. They also did some crabbing.

Shiver feels that he was born into fishing. One of his fondest memories is fishing with his grandfather after school when he was about 5 years old. Around that same age, he learned to hang nets from his grandfather and father. Shiver had his own mullet boat by the time he was 9 years old, and fished throughout middle and high school. Nevertheless, after graduation he went to work for Manatee County government and is nearing possible retirement in two years. When the time comes, he will probably become a full-time fisherman. Shiver is happy to see that his son shares his passion for fishing, and at 23 he just earned his captain's license.

Shiver has a kicker boat, on which he used hard and soft sein nets and castnets. When using his skiff, he only employs a castnet to fish for mullet, jack, and baitfish. Shiver usually starts at daybreak. He fishes mostly inshore in water that is five feet or less. After catching the fish, he puts them in a mixture of ice and saltwater—this brining keeps them fresh until he can sell them to the fish house. His family has long sold fish to AP Bell, and Shiver primarily sells to them.

Shiver identified several problems in the fishing industry. He believes that the primary problem with fishing today is that overdevelopment is precipitating a decline in the fish population. Moreover, frequent waste spills have increased red tide outbreaks and other problems. Fewer young people are entering the profession because of the hard work involved and the necessity of giving up their electronics for periods of time. Shiver would also like the public to receive more education about fishing processes and regulations in order to dispel negative misconceptions.

[00:00:04] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay. So could you say your name again and where we are.

[00:00:08] **Art Shiver:** Art Shiver and we're in Cortez, Florida.

[00:00:11] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So Art, how did your family get to this area, assuming they're from this area?

[00:00:19] **Art Shiver:** Well, my family originally originated in Georgia in the mid to late 1800s. My great-great-great they landed in Crystal River, Homosassa area. Began commercial fishing there and then migrated to Palmetto, is where I'm born and raised.

[00:00:44] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What kind of what do you, do you know any of their names and what, what kind of fishing they did and why did they, why did they come to Palmetto?

[00:00:53] **Art Shiver:** George Shiver, he was my great-great grandfather.

Woodrow Shiver was my grandfather. Art Senior is my dad , Ernest, my uncle, myself, I'm the only one of the family left that actually commercial fishes. They caught mullet, trout, red fish. They crabbed, I even believe they they ran an orange, orange factory across the river in Homosassa..

[00:01:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Did they, so did they regularly do sort of farming and fishing

[00:01:33] **Art Shiver:** Way back then? You did whatever you could to survive, from what I'm told.

[00:01:37] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Right. It, it also sounds like were they were all of them inshore fishermen or was there any offshore fishing and could you kind of phrase that? So they were all

[00:01:53] **Art Shiver:** no, they were all inshore fishermen. They used pole skiffs with old cotton nets back then, that's all they had.

So they would just pole around at night and just catch what they could, you know, to feed their family.

[00:02:08] **Tina Bucuvalas:** That's great. No one's talked about pole skiffs before. Were those the same kind of, were pole skiffs, the same kind of skiffs they have down in the Everglades?

[00:02:18] **Art Shiver:** I'm not sure. These were all handmade hand And just put what net you put on there and get in the back and start poling to see what you can catch.

[00:02:31] **Tina Bucuvalas:** When did they go from cotton to..

[00:02:33] **Kristin Sweeting:** I'm sorry, can I interrupt real quick?

[00:02:34] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yes, I'm sorry.

[00:02:27] **Kristin Sweeting:** Can you describe a pole skiff? Just basic is fine.

[00:02:35] **Art Shiver:** So a pole skiff is just a small skiff that you would get in and he'd take and cut you a branch, whittle it out a little bit, so you could pole around with it, but it's just handmade. Whatever they could find, you know, lumber, yard scraps or cut down a tree or whatever they had to do.

[00:03:07] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So it sounds like when they, what, around, what, what years do they come to Palmetto, do you think?

[Edited, Production crew comments]

[00:03:26] **Art Shiver:** My family came to Palmetto in 1947. They actually traded oranges and old nets so they could get down here. So when they got here, they had nothing had to start from scratch.

[00:03:45] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So did your family have, so your family had the orange grove up here or in Homosassa?

[00:03:51] **Art Shiver:** In Homosassa.

[00:03:56] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Did they also start orange Grove down here too, or They did not. Okay. So when your family got to down here, how did they survive when they had nothing. And what, and did they immediately go into mullet fishing or go to work for someone? Or what did they do?

[00:04:17] **Production crew:** And what do you mean by down here?

[00:04:20] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Oh, the palmetto. When my family got to Palmetto..

[00:04:22] **Art Shiver:** Okay, so when my family got to Palmetto, I heard they had nothing and they managed to scrape up some nets from some fishermen that they had known over time, to help 'em get started out and, and here we are today. A lot has evolved since then, but definitely a learning curve.

[00:04:49] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Did they create their own company and is that how you got into fishing?

[00:04:54] **Art Shiver:** My family didn't create their own company. I'm more or less say born into it. I spent more time fishing than I did in school, luckily, to graduate with a diploma, just it's in my blood.

[00:05:11] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What, what's what are some of your earliest memories fish out, out fishing with your family?

[00:05:19] **Art Shiver:** My grandfather used to pick me up from school when I was probably five or six years old and I'd either go help him unload the boat that was full of trout or red fish, or we'd go for the afternoon tide. And that's my fondest memory.

[00:05:39] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Were you, how old were you when you actually sort of transitioned to working commercially?

[00:05:48] **Art Shiver:** I actually had my own mullet boat when I was nine years old. Started hanging net when I was five, six years old. Under the guidance of my, my dad and my grandfather. I get 50 yards down and they'd come out and look and they'd say, you gotta cut it out.

And I'd be like, why granddaddy? He says, well, you hung it wrong. So you had to cut everything out and start all over again.

[00:06:11] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Could you explain what you mean by cut it out? I, I mean You got pre-made netting and then you, or did you actually.

[00:06:22] **Art Shiver:** No. You, you put the corks on the, you strung the corks, you strung the leads, pulled the webbin out, and you started from here and went 200 yards a shot.

[00:06:34] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So you were, so you were already making nets by the time you were a teenager. You're probably pretty good at it.

[00:06:40] **Art Shiver:** I made several by the time I was a teenager, several of my own. Some people don't like to hang nets so if you wanted extra money when you're a teen, you grew up in the commercial or fishing industry, people would actually pay you to hang their nets or you help them, they'll help you. You know, everybody watched everybody's back, back then

[Edited - Production crew comments]

[00:07:09] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So, it sounds like your family was at least making some pole boats up in, up when they were a little farther up north. Did your family build any boats down here for themselves?

[00:07:24] **Art Shiver:** My grandfather actually built a lot of his own skiffs. Back then you couldn't afford a boat builder, so they would just go to the lumber yard and find the best wood they could find and just make 'em from scratch.

[00:07:39] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Did it matter what that wood was necessarily,

[00:07:44] **Art Shiver:** I do not know. Nowadays you, you, you know, you want marine plywood, but back then they probably used whatever they could get.

[Edited Production comments]

[00:08:11] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Could you talk about when Cotton Nets went out and why, and what came in? Was it nylon or some other, I think it's something. Monofil, monofil.

[00:08:22] **Art Shiver:** Monofilament. Is that a kind of, I don't know the year specifically though.

[00:08:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Oh, was it before you were born?

[00:08:28] **Art Shiver:** Oh, yeah.

[00:08:29] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay. Oh yeah. Well, could you, could you talk a little bit then about. The why monofilament might be a better net might be better nets than cotton. Okay.

[00:08:46] **Art Shiver:** So when monofilament net came out, that meant you didn't have to dry the old cotton nets with lime after every day. If you didn't lime those nets, they would rot that sun would rot 'em.

So monofilament was a blessing, lasted longer, more durable, and you could be a lot more selective with the mesh size allowed.

[00:09:14] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So the cotton nets, you couldn't be so selective with, or they just came in certain sizes.

[00:09:18] **Art Shiver:** Well, you couldn't, but there's just so many variables they so hard to take care of. And I don't know what sizes they had back then. I just know what we used from when I was a kid till now. So I don't know much about the cotton nets except that just a pain in a butt to have 'em and use 'em, but that's what everybody had. So that's what they used.

[00:09:42] **Tina Bucuvalas:** It seems like I might have heard, and I don't know how you're gonna phrase this, that those, some of those those sort of

[00:09:49] **Art Shiver:** net spreads

[00:09:50] **Tina Bucuvalas:** stilt houses or

[00:09:52] **Art Shiver:** those were net spreads.

[00:09:53] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay. Could you talk about that a little bit and what they were.

[00:09:56] **Art Shiver:** Yeah, so out in Cortez, there's still a few net spreads out there. That's where the fishermen would lay their cotton nets and lime them for the day so they wouldn't rot. Pretty interesting because not only did you have to load the net onto the boat, go out, fish it, catch your fish, come back, then you had to take care of the nets. You couldn't just leave 'em on the boat like you can nowadays, so you don't have to worry about rottin'.

[00:10:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** and could you mention what those net spreads were? Weren't they like little houses or something?

[00:10:34] **Art Shiver:** I don't know. Never been inside one. I was been past them a hundred times, but

[00:10:38] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay.

[00:10:38] **Art Shiver:** I guess there were just a bunch of poles sticking up and

[00:10:44] **Kristin Sweeting:** yeah, net spreads and net camps are different.

[00:10:46] **Art Shiver:** Yes.

[00:10:46] **Tina Bucuvalas:** No. Oh, okay.

[00:10:47] **Kristin Sweeting:** Yes. You're talking about,

[00:10:48] **Tina Bucuvalas:** that's my ignorance. All right.

[00:10:50] **Kristin Sweeting:** Can you, were there any in Palmetto..

[00:10:54] **Art Shiver:** I do not know.

[00:10:55] **Kristin Sweeting:** Oh. Okay.

[00:10:56] **Art Shiver:** I'm sure there had to have been, but at some point, that's way before my time.

[00:11:00] **Kristin Sweeting:** Just curious if you, you know

[00:11:05] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So, so did you start commercial fishing right after you left? I mean on a full-time basis right after you left school. And what kind of fishing were you doing then? At first,

[00:11:20] **Art Shiver:** no, I actually fished all throughout my middle school, high school, actually graduated in 94. I sat at home Sunday and I went to work at the county that Monday ever since. So about two and a half years. And I can go fishing every day again.

[Edited - Production crew comments - background conversation]

[00:12:34] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So, so although you were commercial fishing, you've been a part-time commercial fisherman it sounds like.

[00:12:42] **Art Shiver:** Oh yes. I've been labeled a part-timer a few times.

[00:12:47] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What's the difference between a part-time and a, or is there any between?

[00:12:51] **Art Shiver:** Oh yeah, there's a difference. Full-time guy, he eats sleep and lives commercial fishing. That is his whole source of income. A part-timer as myself. You have another ways and means of income. When they made the ruling to, for the limiting net ban, in 94, my dad said, you better take this as a hobby. So, not so much took it as a hobby, but I still enjoy it. Love it. I got three boats at the house, so I'm committed.

[00:13:29] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yeah. So basically you have two jobs.

[00:13:32] **Art Shiver:** Oh yeah.

[00:13:38] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So can you tell me, okay. What kind of fishing are you doing now and what kind of equipment do you use for that fishing?

[Edited - Production comment]

What kind of boat? What kind of lines, you know, how long do you go out? How many crew members, things like that?

[Edited - Production comment]

[00:14:13] **Art Shiver:** Well, usually when I go out, I'm either in my kicker boat, which is a boat that has the motor up front, that in the back I usually have either a hard seine, soft seine, and, just all depends. You gotta, you gotta have all your equipment in a row, you know?

[Edited - Production comment, asked to repeat for sound.]

[00:15:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay, so what kind of nets do you have, when you go out, what kind of equipment do you use and do, are each of the nets used for different kinds of fishing? And you could you explain what each net is and what kind of fish you use it for

[00:15:41] **Kristin Sweeting:** And what the difference between hard seine and soft seine is?

[00:15:44] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yes. Yes. I was wondering.

[00:15:48] **Art Shiver:** Well, generally when I go out depending on what boat I take, if I take my kicker boat, I'll usually have a hard seine, hard seine is a lot heavier twine. So you, you encompass the fish, you make a circle around them and you pull 'em down and you also have a cast net on board. So then you would cast net the fish out.

Unless you're doing fishing for Jacks or Lady fish, you have a pocket in the hard seine you wouldn't use a cast net, you would just pull 'em down into that. If I'm, if I'm taking my regular skiff out, generally you just have a cast net and you're either wading the shoreline, throwing off the boat, catching mullet, catching, you can catch jacks also with a cast net. You can catch various baits, pin fish, white bait, it if it weighs it pays.

[00:16:51] **Tina Bucuvalas:** When you go out are you looking, usually looking for a specific kind of, of fish at a particular time? And if so, what fish at what time? And how do you make that choice?

[00:17:07] **Art Shiver:** Well, depending on the weather if it's December, through the 1st of January, you know, a lot of people are looking for mullet.

It's kind of switching over now where a lot of people are looking for Lady fish. It seems Lady fish is a little bit better fishery at the moment. In the summertime, you know, summer mullet you usually cast net those just cuz you get a lot of trash in the water, you know, catfish, pin fish and if you're using a soft seine they make for a bad day if you get a bunch in that soft scene makes it hard to clear hard on your hands, tear stuff up.

[00:17:52] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So you're pretty careful about when you go out. You try to be careful when you go out and what kind of net you're using to, to have the right result, I guess.

[00:18:03] **Art Shiver:** I'm sorry?

[00:18:04] **Tina Bucuvalas:** To have the right result. You have to be careful about the kind of net you use and the time you go up.

[00:18:10] **Art Shiver:** Right

[Edited - Production comments]

[00:19:42] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So when you go out, how long do you stay out? How many miles do you go out? Is it a day trip? Is it a multi-day trip? How do you, once you have the catch, how do you keep them on the boat before you bring them in? And do you, do you have your fish sold essentially, or have a buyer before you go?

[00:20:09] **Art Shiver:** Well, usually when I get up, I'm an early riser, so I've always went fishing, daylight, gotta make daylight, make daylight, and go fishing. You have plenty of ice on the boat so you can brine your fish. By brining, I mean you put your fish in the fish box, you take a salt water and ice, mix 'em together and it makes a good brine, makes 'em real hard, makes 'em look real pretty.

You, you don't wanna show up to the dock with rotten fish, they might turn you away, you know, you don't want to give anybody no bad fish. I usually stay inshore, five feet or less, you know, unless you crossin the river or something. And then obviously gonna get deeper. But never had much for the offshore side.

[00:20:56] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Why is that? Why do you not like the offshore side?

[00:21:01] **Art Shiver:** I do just fine inshore.

[00:21:07] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Who, who do you sell to when you come in?

[00:21:12] **Art Shiver:** AP Bell. Usually

[00:17:12] **Tina Bucuvalas:** You, you kind of have to say, I sell to A.P. Bell.

[**Edited - Production comment**]

[00:21:16] **Art Shiver:** When I come in I usually sell to AP Bell. My family's had a history with them for 50, 60 years back when Karen's dad, Walter was alive. It's just, we sell to AP Bell. I sell to Johnny Banyas also. Just, just depends on who's taking what at the time. I got it.

[00:21:49] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay. Do you have a regular crew or family members that go with you or do you have any trouble finding crew to go with you?

[00:21:59] **Art Shiver:** That's good you ask cuz good help is hard to find these days. Usually, my son goes with me. He's, he can't get enough of it, but no you

find a good crew, man you keep him cuz they, they're hard to find, hard to get somebody devoted.

[00:22:18] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Why do you think it's hard to find crew members these days.

[Edited - Production comment]

[00:22:34] **Art Shiver:** It's hard to find crew members today cuz people's work ethic it's not the same way it was 30 years ago. People just don't wanna work these days.

[00:22:51] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you, do you see that as a, as electronic gadgets and things like this? Or do you see it as a cultural change? Or just, or do you, why do you think people don't wanna work as hard?

[00:23:05] **Art Shiver:** I believe it's a cultural thing. Nobody wants to work hard anymore. They can go to the supermarket and get a job and have a for sure income, you know, commercial fishing, you don't catch a fish, you don't get paid. So I don't blame 'em necessarily, but it's just different from when I was a kid.

[00:23:29] **Kristin Sweeting:** Can I insert a question?

[00:23:30] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yes.

[00:23:49] **Kristin Sweeting:** Do you, do you think part of what is missing is, so you shared with us one of your favorite memories of fishing as a kid, so that passion was instilled in you when you were young. Do you feel like maybe that is part of, can you, I think you know where I'm going. Oh yeah, that, can you elaborate on that?

[00:24:01] **Art Shiver:** I was born into the business. So trying to get someone that has no idea about commercial fishing it's hard to sell it to 'em. Like, hey, you know, you want a job. Get on the boat, well, you know, if we catch fish, you get paid. If we don't, you won't. It's just a game you play. It's, it's, it's hard to make the decision, but I've just grown up with it in my blood.

[00:24:33] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Sounds like your son has too. And so do you think maybe that something like the net ban kind of broke the chain in some families of fishing in the family. I mean, there's not, as, I think a lot of people went out of the business.

[00:24:54] **Art Shiver:** Oh yeah.

[00:24:54] **Tina Bucuvalas:** When thing, when things like, when that kind of thing happened, which kind of broke a family.

[00:24:59] **Art Shiver:** Mm-hmm.

[00:24:59] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Continuity. Do you think that's the case? I mean, it just occurred to me anyway. But can you phrase your answer in such a way, ? The, I don't know, it'll make sense for the camera.

[00:25:14] **Art Shiver:** So after the limiting net ban was approved a lot of families had to pack up and leave. They, they knew no other trades.

My father, he was always a gill netter, and until the day he died, he never threw a cast net. He said, I'm not gonna do it. Various families around the Cortez area, they had to pack up and leave. That's, that's what they knew for generations and Generat. You, you can't take a 70 year old man and try to help him with a new trade. He just, just isn't work that way. Put a lot of families outta business.

See every, everybody says net ban, but it was a limiting net ban, not a total closure.

[00:26:04] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So could you explain what that means a little more?

[00:26:07] **Art Shiver:** Well, I couldn't tell you because what they said it was supposed to be. They took everything we could do. Now I can explain to you about mesh size and give you perspective.

[00:26:21] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Sure. Could you do that, please?

[00:26:24] **Art Shiver:** Sure. So with a limiting net band, they allowed us to use 500 square feet with a mesh size up to four inches. A few years later, we were knocked down to a two inch stretch mesh. So for example, you take a chain link fence, you look at the hole there, it's probably four inches, a little, you know, a little over four inches. You cut that in half to two inches. You can't be selective on what you're catching, all those juvenile fish or go through that chain link fence, the two inch stretch mesh. It catches everything. It It doesn't, can't mean with different mesh size, you could always, depending on the summer months, you'd fish a, a three inch mesh to catch that summer mullet as to where roe

season you want a four inch, four and a half, you know, the little bitty stuff. You just, you catch everything. So...

[00:27:34] **Tina Bucuvalas:** It sounds like, so as I understand it, the net ban was put in place to protect the fish stocks, but..

[00:27:45] **Art Shiver:** Correct.

[00:27:46] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Actually.

[00:27:47] **Art Shiver:** It's [A curse word] backwards, I'll tell you, it is. I this part, it makes perfect sense. You take a chain link fence with a hole that big, this fish can get through there. You bring it here. This fish can't get through there, but they're the, they're the smart ones in Tallahassee. So..

[00:28:05] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So have you, [00:24:00] oh, I know what we haven't talked about lately. Seems like before the net ban, or maybe it's still going, Besides local people fishing, there are a lot of people coming from out of state to fish. Do you remember that? And is that still going on?

[00:24:18] **Art Shiver:** A lot of people do come from out of state, from the other coast.

They're all just trying to feed their families. I've met a lot of great people. I've been from here to Marco Island and almost to Panacea myself. You blame a guy for trying to feed his family.

[00:28:54] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Right.

[00:28:55] **Art Shiver:** But there's not as many out-of-towners now as there were back in say, 2011 to 2016 when the mullet run was huge.

You know, we had the best roe quality in the world right here in Tampa Bay.

[00:29:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And, why do you think that was? Or do you have any idea?

[00:29:18] **Art Shiver:** About ?

[00:29:20] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Whether, why, why it's so good for mullet?

[00:29:25] **Art Shiver:** I couldn't tell you.

[00:29:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay.

[00:29:27] **Art Shiver:** I couldn't tell you.

[00:29:29] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So that was back in 2011 or so. Do you think that the fish stocks just come and go? Or have you seen tendencies for the stocks to increase or diminish?

[00:29:46] **Art Shiver:** I believe the biggest problem with your fish docks is your development. pinny Point spills, old sewer system, old pipes leaking into the bays, all the home, all the homes being built. You're standing on your new dock and you're looking around looking for fish.

Well, mangroves used to be there, but that dock is for all, you know, all kind of juvenile and I messed up on it.

[00:30:16] **Kristin Sweeting:** It's okay. You're fine. You can start again.

[00:30:18] **Tina Bucuvalas:** You can start again.

[Edited-Production comment]

[00:30:31] **Art Shiver:** So when you're standing on your dock and you don't see any fish, just remember mangroves used to line that that, all kinds of juvenile, amateur fish would, would take cover in those mangroves. So with all the building just, it's not so much a, a fish shortage. It's much as pollution and everything else.

[00:31:03] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Have you seen, have you yourself seen direct evidence of the effects of pollution in the Gulf or the bays.

[00:31:15] **Art Shiver:** I actually fly a helicopter for the county, and during the Piney Point spill, I saw numerous fish floating, just part of the job. When you're transitioning from A to B, you just, you see white bellies floating everywhere, you know, not two miles from the Piney Point spill, you know, massive, massive fish kills.

[00:31:40] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Was, was that a direct result of the chemicals or in the water, or was there then a subsequent red tide that fed on it, or what do you think happened?

[00:31:53] **Art Shiver:** No, it wasn't a red tide That was all the gypsum stacks .

[00:32:01] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Have you seen any other evidence of environmental problems when you've been out fishing too.

[00:32:12] **Art Shiver:** Well for the last 25 years or so if you go to Palm Sola Bay, your bait doesn't live there long. If you're, you know, sport fishing with a pole per se. I didn't have a fishing pole till I was 18 years old, cuz when I went fishing, it was to feed the family. You know, you just, that's what you did. You got up and you went fishing. But there's some old sewer pipes that leak the air and, out on Lombart, same thing. Just certain times of the year, it gets bad. You get a lot of rain, county can't handle all the residents. They, they gotta cut it loose.

[00:32:49] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And so you work at the county, so you know, some of the processes, government processes.

[00:32:55] **Art Shiver:** I don't know. See, we're independent from the county.

Say, Manatee County has all theirs, but we're an independent taxing district at the mosquito control. So I'm, we're just called Manatee County cause we're a state district.

[00:33:09] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Oh, I see. Okay. I was going to say, why can the county do some things? . Okay. All right. What what have you observed about in your lifetime about the about Red Tide has it in, has have incidents of Red Tide increased? Have they become, has it become more severe? Have you noticed anything to...

[00:33:26] **Art Shiver:** The red tide, it really just depends. It really doesn't discriminate .I mean, I've seen horrible years back in 2009, stone crabbing was good. Depends on the year really. You know, how much discharge from Lake Okeechobee, it just, pick your poison. It just year to year. It's, it's hard to, it's hard to judge.

[00:34:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** As a helicopter pilot, it just occurred to me, you know, I, I went to, I was hearing some kind of talk by some environmental professor who works with things out in Tampa Bay. She said there's an island

out there that belonged to the Indians. Belongs to the Indians, I think the Seminoles or something. And it's been, it's, it's half of it has disappeared almost, you know, just in the last decade or two. Have you seen anything like that? And I mean, real evidence of, of rising water levels.

[00:34:53] **Art Shiver:** Tide seems to be the same. I wouldn't say it's growing or being not as predominant. It just all depends on your weather patterns. You know, you get a south wind, you're gonna get a higher tide. It's just the way it works here on this coast. Northeast wind after a front is gonna blow the water out. So it just, it just all depends on your weather.

[00:35:23] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do, now you've spent a lot of time, you know out fishing and have you had any, what have been your best experiences, fishing and maybe some of the scariest experiences that you may have had? I mean, going back to being a boy or today or whatever.

[00:35:45] **Art Shiver:** Best experience was having my own boat at such a young age. All the neighborhood kids always wanted to go fishing per se. Well, we didn't have fishing poles, so it was always easy to find help when I was younger because everybody wanted to go out in the boat.

The worst experience I've had right off Bean Point we're catching mullet probably 15 years ago through the net, I got hung on the ledge. I wore a ring around my wrist for four hours or that I thought I was going overboard. We finally got a knife and cut it loose. I've seen people get dragged [00:32:00] over. I've seen people drown. It's a risk, you know, you compare the deadliest catch to a good front here in, in the wintertime, the size of their boats and those waves.

It's kind of comparable to the size of our boats and our waves. So just it's dangerous all the way around.

[00:36:52] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yeah. So it sounds like, sounds like it is.

[00:36:56] **Art Shiver:** Yeah. You take a hundred and 130 footers and 25, 30 foot waves, you take 24 footers and seven, eight foot, nine foot waves. It's kinda the same in comparison.

[00:37:08] **Tina Bucuvalas:** That's a good point. That's a good point. Have you ever been caught in a, a really bad storm or hurricane?

[00:37:14] **Art Shiver:** No hurricanes.

[00:37:16] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What storms?

[00:37:17] **Art Shiver:** Been in some really bad storms. Tampa Bay lightning capital of the world, so early, early spring, early summer, a lot of energy, so it produces real bad lightning strong squalls. So I've sunk a boat or two. It, it happens. You've done it long. It happens.

[00:37:45] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Can you tell me about one of the times that one of the boats sunk? I don't even know what would sink a boat. So,

[00:37:52] **Art Shiver:** Well, we were fishing and a, a bad storm came up, started taking on too much water and wind blew like 58 mile an hour.

Sunk right in between Port Manatee and Terra Ceia.

[00:38:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What happened to you guys?

[00:38:15] **Art Shiver:** Well, we jumped on another boat that come by, called the Coast Guard and let 'em know about where the coordinates were and came back, flipped it, and towed it in.

[00:38:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And did it, did it go back to work?

[00:38:31] **Art Shiver:** Uhuh. No. The insurance company got that one.

[00:38:39] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So do you live in, do you live in Cortez or do you live in Palmetto now?

[00:38:46] **Art Shiver:** Palmetto.

[00:38:46] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Palmetto. Okay. Oh, could you talk about you know, they had that Pillsbury boat works. Could you talk about how your family knew these, you did it when we weren't filming, I think, but could you talk about your family and knowing that family and what it was like living there then.

[00:39:11] **Art Shiver:** Yeah. So, Pillsbury's on the Manatee River. We used to sell our fish there back in the late eighties, early to mid-nineties before limited net band. I heard it used to be a, a boat shop way back when, you know, Pillsbury's, just down, messed up again.

I'm trying to put it all together before I say it.

[00:39:37] **Kristin Sweeting:** Take your time.

[00:39:38] **Art Shiver:** Yeah. All right. And you call it Pillsbury Boathouse, right?

[00:39:44] **Kristin Sweeting:** You can call it whatever you knew it by.

[00:39:46] **Art Shiver:** I'm just gonna call it Pillsbury's.

[00:39:47] **Kristin Sweeting:** Okay, go for it.

[00:39:50] **Art Shiver:** So Pillsbury is on the Mantee River. When I was in middle school till I graduated, we would sell fish to them cuz it was convenient cause we live in Palmetto. We would obviously still travel to A.P. Bell when they had too many fish. My cousin actually married a Pillsbury and he fishes full-time for A.P. Bell currently.

[00:40:17] **Kristin Sweeting:** And who is your cousin?

[00:40:18] **Art Shiver:** Kurt Howard. He's the fisherman.

[00:40:24] **Kristin Sweeting:** Okay.

[00:40:27] **Art Shiver:** As I, I could have said my cousin Rhonda, married Kurt Howard, which is a Pillsbury,

[00:40:33] **Kristin Sweeting:** that doesn't need to necessarily be in the video just for transcripts records.

[00:40:37] **Art Shiver:** Gotcha.

[00:40:40] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So could you talk about what you're planning to do once you're, in two years and don't, four months and nine minutes, you know, , after you get done with, after you retire and what kind of fishing you might be looking forward to doing, what your plans are?

[00:41:02] **Art Shiver:** So in roughly two years and four months, I've gotta make a decision whether I go into the drop with the county, which is the deferred retirement plan, or go back to my roots and go commercial fishing.

Obviously, have to do what's right for my family, but I'm a, I'm a commercial fisherman from day one. Born and raised in Palmetto, 46 years.

[00:41:29] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Sounds like your heart would be in that.

[00:41:32] **Art Shiver:** Most definitely.

[00:41:35] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And the three boats.

[00:41:37] **Art Shiver:** Yeah.

[00:41:41] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Is there anything you would like people to know about commercial fishermen or any misconceptions people may have that you might like them to think differently about?

[00:41:56] **Art Shiver:** When you see a commercial fishing boat, give him a little way. He's trying to provide for his family. There's bad apples in all of us. Just cuz he has a net and he's circling doesn't mean he's killing everything. We have to protect the resource we have or we'll have none left. And as regulated as we are, we're lucky to make it now what they let...

[00:42:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you think there's a decent future in Florida in commercial fishing

[00:42:36] **Art Shiver:** If they stop developing, I think we got quite a few more years commercial fishing around here. Along with that, all the development, you're gonna have more pollution. So it's, it's gotta, it's gotta stop somewhere. I've seen a lot of changes since I was a kid and where there was mangroves for miles, there's condos.

I mean, I get it. This is paradise. Everybody wants to live here, but we gotta protect what we have for future generations.

[00:43:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What would you do if you could, to change things?

[00:43:19] **Art Shiver:** I don't wanna, I don't wanna sound rude.

[00:43:25] **Kristin Sweeting:** If you wanna share. We're interested in hearing .

[00:43:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** We'll just cut it out if it ...

[00:43:30] **Art Shiver:** It's just the building. It's, it's just the building, you know. So many boats on the water, you know, and not even enough boat ramps to take care of the boats we had 10 years ago. We just gotta stop building. I don't know where they're gonna get the water from. I hear they already buy it from Sarasota County, but that can't last forever. It's not like we usually get the rain, we usually do. It's just all this growth. I mean, good for the economy, but bad for the habitat, per se.

[00:44:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And you said your son comes to fish with you? Just one son or?

[00:44:19] **Art Shiver:** Yeah.

[00:44:21] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you think he's going to become a commercial fisherman for ...

[00:44:26] **Art Shiver:** Yeah, he recently got his captain's license.

[00:44:29] **Tina Bucuvalas:** My son, recently.

[00:44:30] **Art Shiver:** Oh, okay. So my son, he's, he's 23 now. He recently got his captain's license. He's held up a species SPL (Saltwater Products License) since he was 16, old enough to get one.

[00:44:47] His heart's in it. I'm sure he'll do what his wife lets him.

[00:44:54] **Kristin Sweeting:** Can I insert real quick?

[00:44:55] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yes.

[Edited - Production comments]

[00:45:10] **Kristin Sweeting:** How do you feel knowing that your son is going to continue the family tradition when so many other families are not following that same path.

[00:45:24] **Art Shiver:** It makes me proud that my son wants to kind of follow in my footsteps. As far as hanging your cast net or your seines, it's a dying breed. Not many people know how to do it anymore if you don't hang your nets correctly. They're not gonna catch fish correctly.

[00:45:50] **Kristin Sweeting:** So I'm glad you circled back around nets. So can you, you touched on it a little bit, but can you describe in more detail, like exactly like how you hang net and what type of maintenance is involved in monofilament nets.

[00:46:13] **Art Shiver:** We can't use monofilament nets no more.

[00:46:16] **Kristin Sweeting:** Oh no . What type of nets do you use?

[00:46:19] **Art Shiver:** Nylon.

[00:46:20] **Kristin Sweeting:** Nylon. Sorry, I thought. Okay, so cotton, monofilament, nylon.

[00:46:24] **Art Shiver:** Yeah.

[00:46:25] **Kristin Sweeting:** Now we're at nylon. Sorry. What type of maintenance is involved in nylon nets?

[00:46:30] **Art Shiver:** So generally your nylon seines that we, we use now the soft seine per se, which starts at a 69. I messed that one up, jesus Christ.

[00:46:44] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Is that centimeters

[00:46:45] **Art Shiver:** number, number 69

[00:46:47] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Oh

[00:46:47] **Art Shiver:** is the strength of it.

[00:46:49] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Oh, okay.

[00:46:50] **Art Shiver:** So I can start over.

[00:46:52] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yeah.

[00:46:53] **Art Shiver:** So the nylon nets we use now, the hard seine nylon net, depending on what you catch, if you catch a bunch of mackerel and it, you got a lot of patching to do cuz mackeral will chew it up. The soft seine, depending on what size you have. Size, I meaning tensile strength number 69, 139, 208.

Your trash fish, your bottom fish the lighter, the lighter the twine, the easier it's gonna rip. So your 69 is not gonna last as long as per se, like a 208. The soft seine you get a couple months, the season of the fish you wanna catch, then you gotta just gotta hang a new one, you know, if you're gonna hang a new net, you know, you either cut out your old hangings, your hangs on meeting your, your float rope, which is a cork line, and your lead, core lead line, which is obviously your lead line.

So you string 'em up out in the yard and the house, if you're fortunate enough to have a big enough house to hang, and like I say, they allow us 500 square feet, no more than 14 meshes on a 12 inch. So it's kinda like a brick wall, which is really isn't good for us per se, cuz you want you want a lot more bunt in the net so they entangle and wrap up in it. So it's it's a lot different than, than Gill netting when they used to let Gill net.

[00:48:29] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Sounds like it. Did that answer?

[00:48:33] **Kristin Sweeting:** Yes. I do you have more or I have a couple more.

[00:48:39] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Go ahead.

[00:48:40] **Kristin Sweeting:** Okay. So we've, have there been any times in your time fishing where you've gotten direct public feedback from [00:44:00] someone either. So, for example, we've had other commercial fishermen tell us how the public have approached them to share their feelings about commercial fishermen. Have you had any experiences like that?

[00:49:17] **Art Shiver:** I, I've had some people say some not so nice things while I'm commercial fishing. Number one, they don't want you right off their dock.

They don't want you fishing a thousand yards away from 'em thinking, you know, they think you're going to catch all the fish, you know, there's not gonna be anything left. Well, it doesn't work that way. Commercial fishing doesn't have a real good eye on it, you know, but people are just not educated. If they would take the time to learn what they allow us to use they might, they may have a different perspective.

[00:49:59] **Kristin Sweeting:** And so what would you say directly to those people if you could share some additional..

[00:50:06] **Art Shiver:** I can't share ..

[00:50:09] **Kristin Sweeting:** Okay. From an education perspective, share.

[00:50:14] **Art Shiver:** Mm-hmm. You know, the best thing you can do, you know, with someone in the public that's mad for you, commercial fishing, you just gotta try and educate 'em, let 'em know, Hey, we're not doing anything wrong.

This is not a gill net. This is what the state allows us to use. Call the FWC if you'd like. It's fine. We get stopped daily, sometimes two or three times a day, so it's just education. And a lot of people, they just, they don't wanna take the time to educate themselves

[00:50:50] **Kristin Sweeting:** And kind of a weird side topic, but, so before your job, anywhere else, you were a commercial fisherman from age nine or before even. How do you think the traits and attributes that you grew up with commercial fishing help you in other aspects of your life?

[00:51:25] **Art Shiver:** I'll let this traffic get by.

Growing up as a commercial fisherman, we grew up poor. We had jalousie windows, if you know what jalousie windows are, and I'm 46 now. We didn't have air condition until I was 16, and that wasn't central. That was a window shaker. When you grow up poor as a commercial fisherman, you become resourceful.

You, you learn how to make things last. You, you learn how to work on your equipment yourself. You know, you don't have money to spend for someone else to fix it. So it's done me a lot of good in my lifetime. I'm pretty well rounded, fix a lot of things on my own, work on my outboards. I don't regret my childhood any.

[00:52:23] **Kristin Sweeting:** Besides commercial fishing, what's your, what's your next true passion? Got your whole heart?

[00:52:35] **Art Shiver:** I got nothing.

[00:52:38] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you like flying the helicopter?

[00:52:40] **Art Shiver:** Oh yeah.

[00:52:46] **Tina Bucuvalas:** How did you learn to fly a helicopter?

Right place, right time. My father-in-law, he was actually a helicopter pilot, so I just, I'm right place at the right time.[00:48:00]

[Edited - Production conversation]

[00:53:17] **Production crew:** I don't know if you, we asked this already, but if you've got any advice for someone who is looking to get into the fishing that you're into now, what would you, what would you say?

[Edited - Production conversation]

[00:53:37] **Art Shiver:** If I had any advice for an aspiring young man or woman, wanna be a commercial fisher. Talk to the people around where you want to fish. Try to become a deckhand. Talk to the old timers, they've been around. They know what works. They don't, they know what don't work. Knowledge is, is huge in this industry. If passion, go for it.

[00:54:11] **Kristin Sweeting:** Beautiful, I love it.

[00:54:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yeah, no, that's great. Do you think this is true, but, and you're the 10th person?

[00:54:25] **Art Shiver:** I'm sorry?

[00:54:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** I, I'm, I'm asking do you think this is true, but you're the 10th person we've talked to everyone we've talked to love, loves fishing. I mean, they love it. I mean, I, do you think that makes for a happier life, or do you, do you, how do you feel about..

[00:54:47] **Art Shiver:** Being your own boss... sorry, loud, muffler.

So being a commercial fisherman, you know, essentially you're, you're your own boss who wouldn't wanna get up and hit the water every day and do something you love and make money while you do it. You don't have all the benefits that you would elsewhere, but just if it's your passion, if it's in your blood like it is mine, I'm coming back to it.

Never really left, but it'd be nice to be my own boss one day again.

[00:55:34] **Kristin Sweeting:** It really shows on your face how, how passionate you are about it. It's really lovely to see that come off of a human . I don't know how better to say that, but ...

[00:55:50] **Art Shiver:** My dad used to row a rowboat, you know where a Snead Island is? He would row a row boat, up tide, past I 75 bridge and, and strike gill net out of a rowboat and would row all the way back.

You know, that's, I, I don't know, in nautical miles, I don't know what that'd be. Probably seven, eight miles. But that's a lot of rowing. Before they had outboards, well, excuse me, before they could afford an outboard.

[00:56:28] **Kristin Sweeting:** That's when you know you love it.

[00:56:30] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yeah. . Yeah

[00:56:32] **Kristin Sweeting:** When you're willing to work that hard at it. For sure.