

ELLIE BERRY & JOANIE COOKSEY
Crosby's Fish & Shrimp, Charleston, SC

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Date: September 10, 2014

Location: Back deck of Crosby's Fish & Shrimp, James Island, Charleston, SC

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: One hour, fifteen minutes

Project: Lowcountry Maritime

00:00:01

Sara Wood: Okay; so it is Wednesday, September 10, 2014. I’m sitting out here on the dock of Crosby’s Fish and Shrimp. We’re in Charleston out on James Island and I’m sitting here with Ms. Joanie Cooksey and Ms. Ellie Berry and I’m wondering if both of you will say hello and introduce yourselves; tell me who you are and where we are right now.

00:00:20

Ellie Berry: Hello. My name is Ellie Berry, Crosby’s Fish and Shrimp Company, Charleston, South Carolina.

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Joanie Cooksey: Good morning, Joanie Cooksey, Crosby’s Fish and Shrimp Company, Charleston, South Carolina.

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Sara Wood: And then just for the record can you tell me your birth dates?

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Ellie Berry: May 12, 1968.

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Joanie Cooksey: May 12, 1968. [*Ms. Berry and Ms. Cooksey are biological twins.*]

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Sara Wood: I'm wondering if you both would mind starting by just telling me where you grew up and—and what it was like there?

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Ellie Berry: We grew up on the—in Riverland Terrace over on James Island, wonderful experience near the water and our father [*Captain Horace Crosby*] had this business since 1973. So we've been around the water our whole life.

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Sara Wood: Do you know how he started the business? Had he always been involved with the water somehow?

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Ellie Berry: No, did several other things—was in law enforcement and then just decided that he would do this venture.

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Sara Wood: And your father's name?

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Ellie Berry: Horace Crosby and he had the business with his brother, Steve Crosby.

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Sara Wood: And then so Steve had it—he has the other Crosby's is that—?

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Ellie Berry: Division of—there's a retail store on Spring Street in Charleston and a wholesale department up in North Charleston.

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Sara Wood: What do you both remember most about growing up with your father in this business? Is there—are there memories attached that you'd be willing to share?

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Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, just you know the daily in and out, being in the ocean, and he started the business as a live bait business. So he went out daily, caught live bait, brought it back, sold it. My brother Mitchell was a youngster at the time and he was probably between ten and twelve and he ran the business while my father was out. And Ellie and I were probably about seven or eight then, so just a good place to hang out and it was also good to be with him you know every day.

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Sara Wood: Did y'all go out on the boat with him when you were little?

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Joanie Cooksey: I did. I did. Yeah. It was a great experience.

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Sara Wood: What do you remember most about it?

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Joanie Cooksey: Just the peacefulness of it. He worked by his self for multiple reasons. He didn't have to depend on anyone but his self, so—. It was—I guess a—what's the word I'm looking for—he didn't let many people go with him, so if you were invited to go it was a special day.

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Sara Wood: How come he didn't invite many people to go with him?

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Ellie Berry: I just think he liked the solitude of being by his self. You know just it was what he was about and it's what he enjoyed and you know it just was him.

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Sara Wood: You said he had—he had the business since 1973?

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Ellie Berry: Yeah.

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Sara Wood: Has it always been at this location?

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Ellie Berry: Yes.

00:03:00

Sara Wood: Do you know did he build this or did he buy it from somebody do you know?

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Ellie Berry: They bought the—bought it from someone. The building was here. Yeah, this is not the original building because Hurricane Hugo took everything. So we rebuilt after Hurricane Hugo.

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Sara Wood: And was that during—did y'all take the business over at that time or was it still?

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Ellie Berry: We took the business over in May of 1988 and Hugo was September of '89 [1989], yes.

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Sara Wood: So it wasn't too soon—?

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Ellie Berry: Right, yeah.

00:03:38

Sara Wood: I wanted to ask y'all how you decided—I mean when you were growing up with this business if you ever—I mean did you think that you would take the business over? Did you—did you want to? How did that happen?

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Joanie Cooksey: Well I think we had a lot of energy and we didn't mind working hard. And we knew we couldn't sit inside of a building, so I think it was just inbred in us and we knew it was the way we could survive and we would be successful. So we had the will to do it.

00:04:04

Sara Wood: And how did y'all go about taking it over? Can you tell me the story of that?

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Ellie Berry: You can.

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Joanie Cooksey: Well there was a fire in '86 [1986]—

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Ellie Berry: Eighty-seven.

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Joanie Cooksey: —'87 [1987] and we were probably eighteen years old. And I—we just decided we were going to take on the venture with one of our brothers, Timmy and started it. And our dad helped us—

00:04:28

Ellie Berry: Rebuild.

00:04:28

Joanie Cooksey: —rebuild it and get it on the road and oh my goodness. He died several months later. And then we made it a whole year. We did really well—hard, hard work. Hugo came and took it all. So then we learned about rebuilding. And I—I don't think we had many worried 'cause we were so young. We just knew we could do it. We weren't worried about anything. *[Laughs]* We just loved our job.

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Sara Wood: What did your father think about y'all taking it over?

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Joanie Cooksey: It's hard to tell. I—I think he was all for it. He knew we had it in us. You got to work hard. It's what it takes.

00:05:07

Sara Wood: So I want to back up for a second. And I—so there was a fire in '87 [1987], y'all took it over in '88 [1988] and then Hugo hit in '89 [1989]. Was there ever a point where you thought you know, “What maybe this isn't a good idea? There's just too much going on.”

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Joanie Cooksey: No. No; no fear. At eighteen or nineteen we knew we could take on the world 'cause we had also lost the house. We were building the house, building the business back—

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Ellie Berry: Lost our dad.

00:05:33

Joanie Cooksey: Lost our father all in the same two year period. But I think that's what helped get through all the stress and the trauma was being focused on what we thought he would want us to do you know and that just kind of—the busier you are, the less you're thinking about sad times. You know you're just wanting to move forward and keeping your mind busy and stay focused on the job at hand.

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Sara Wood: And when you—when you were up and running at such a young age I'm wondering how much of what you, you know did to prepare and go forward was something that you—like a tradition from your father and—and what you brought to it yourselves that was maybe new since you picked up the business?

00:06:16

Ellie Berry: I just think we liked every bit of it. I mean we just loved to work. We loved the people there; there are so many different folks [*Emphasis Added*] that have come through our lives. I mean you—it—it's amazing. And we love running the store. I mean we talk to—it's a retail store. You're communicating all the time. But we love putting out fresh seafood and making people happy and it's been a joy our whole life. It would—just really has. I think the people have made a big difference in our lives. You—it makes you tough dealing with them day in and day out.

00:06:57

Sara Wood: Did y'all—I mean when you were younger growing up with the business when your father still had it are there any memories of—of characters that—that have come in since then and they're still coming in that you see?

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Joanie Cooksey: All the time. It's almost full circle. I mean we—from people that were here when we were five, six, and seven years old and those people have since passed, some have not, but it is a complete full circle over thirty to forty years—forty years. They're still here and they're still needy and they're still great, good people. And you know you have to think of yourself as almost here for a reason [*generator kicks on for air conditioning*], you know to help people and help them work through what they're going through you know and that's what we do.

00:07:47

Sara Wood: Can y'all give me an example of that or if there's somebody who—there is a memory or story attached to a customer or people coming through here? I know there's been so many but—?

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Ellie Berry: We've had so many good customers come and go. They're happy we're here. We've been to their funerals. It just—there are just so many people that touch our lives and I feel like we've been here for them. This group of fishermen, they belong in the ocean. Joanie's husband after all these years—they've been together forever. He's better out there than on land. I have—after all these years I know that's who he is. These—just incredible people. A lot not educated but smart—smart, smart people. Customer-wise [**Laughs**] there's been so many—so many.

00:08:45

Joanie Cooksey: Well like I can't think—uh—

00:09:02

Ellie Berry: Well I think a lot of times they will say, “Thank you. Thank you for being here.” You know we appreciate it. If you were not here ‘cause there's been a lot of times you go, “Oh my god I want to give up. I want to give up.” But it's those folks that keep you coming back to work and you just make people happy with food, like a farmer. [**Laughs**]

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Joanie Cooksey: They do a lot of bartering you know, trading seafood for services and it's a good way to—it's just like the old days what people used to do, trade their vegetables, trade their fish. I mean we still do that, that's still active. You know the best thing you can do for anyone is you know give and that's what we do.

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Sara Wood: Can you give an example of what kind of services you barter?

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Joanie Cooksey: Well um, what do you think?

00:09:51

Ellie Berry: If it's bartering off a surf camp for a kid or [*Laughs*]*—it just different—*

00:09:56

Joanie Cooksey: Just people that help us work around the dock and you know whether it be labor or you know working on our equipment or you know a lot of people don't want you to pay them. You know they just want the opportunity to be here and help us—

00:10:12

Ellie Berry: Help each other all the time. There's a big group of folks that just love to scratch each other's backs. They—they're not in it for money. This is not a money, money-making business. You're here for the love of what you do and the people that work around you. And—

and we have wonderful employees. I mean we've got right hands, left hands. We've got it all. It's a big family.

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Sara Wood: How many employees do y'all have here?

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Joanie Cooksey: Let's see—

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Ellie Berry: Six.

00:10:43

Joanie Cooksey: —six, you know some full-time, some part-time, summer time you have to employ more which tends to now be our children, so you know it increases with the seasonal, you know summer time, so—.

00:10:57

Ellie Berry: So many people love coming here to see our children work. People, there's no opportunities for you know a ten year-old or a thirteen year-old to be helping a customer and ringing a cash register. There are a lot of people that love it—love it. I mean it's opportunities, we've given them a big opportunity and they know it. They know it. They work hard.

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Sara Wood: How many kids do y'all have and what are their names?

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Ellie Berry: I have a son Christopher who is thirteen, a daughter Callie who is fifteen.

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Joanie Cooksey: A daughter Hailey that's eighteen and twins Nealie and Darby and they're ten.

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Sara Wood: And I mean when they're in here working do you think about the possibility of one day they might take this business over?

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Ellie Berry: The two boys, yes, but it needs to be a restaurant. [*Laughs*] They'll—they'll do better than what we've—we've done just trying—just because of the regulations and—it's gotten so hard. We're really, really trying to stay alive here. But they have good business sense. It'll be—they'll do something whether it's here or anywhere else. We've been able to teach them good work ethic and a trade. They're learning. Joanie's little boy, I mean he's all over it you know. Hands-on, hands-on, hands-on, that's what his daddy does. So he'll be—they'll be fine no matter what they do.

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Sara Wood: And I'm wondering if you could talk about the challenges that you contend with here. You said something about regulations and I know when I was out on the boat with Fred

[Dockery] yesterday he was talking about a lot of things, so for you two here, what are the things you have to contend with to keep this business running?

00:12:44

Joanie Cooksey: Right—well we've been through you know over the years say with the shrimping industry it started with the turtle excluders and then with the fish excluders and you know so we've kind of got that figured out. They've worked through that but you know for a few years that was—as far as new regulations. And then with the fishing industry probably I'm thinking four years ago you know they just completely just shut just about everything off and then they've been feeding opening seasons you know here and there. And it's really been a struggle for them trying to change the way they run their business depending on the seasons of the fish and how all that will work out eventually. And the largest problem with any of it is fuel. You know the cost of shrimp up until this season is, you know, I mean they were getting anywhere from \$1.25 to \$1.75 a pound for shrimp compared to \$3.50 to \$3.60 for fuel. So there's no balance when fuel is your largest cost as far as shrimping, fishing, crabbing, oystering—anything, just fuel.

00:14:06

Sara Wood: I'm also wondering just you know thinking about all the folks you've seen come in here, have you seen a lot of people—I mean have there been people that you once used to see all the time come into the docks that you don't see any more just because they had to throw the towel in and what that means for you guys?

00:14:26

Ellie Berry: Yes, I mean we used to you know generally fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago we had you know it could be upwards to five, six shrimp boats, a couple fish boats, just people coming here seasonally and—but all that's changed because you know it's just made the—everything has made it so difficult. Either you're in it 'til the end or they had to bail. They just can't—their boats weren't paid for. The cost of insurance is so expensive. The cost of maintenance is so expensive. So you know there's been so many people that have had to quit, have no choice.

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Sara Wood: How do y'all feel about that? I mean what goes through your mind when you don't see people come back here?

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Joanie Cooksey: Well I just—we're part of a dying industry you know and we're trying to keep it alive. And there are still you know a good bit of people that feel the way we feel. I mean I want to do it as long as we can, and I want to stay here as long as we can. And I just wish that everything would be better. I don't know. There's just so much coming down the pike with the regulations and the government that you don't—you know I wish they were on the boats. I wish they were here. I wish they knew more about what they're doing. We're all about—we want all this to be saved for future generations but I think there's a better way to go about it.

00:16:02

Sara Wood: Can y'all tell me, I want to step back and just talk about how you run this business. So you sell wholesale but do you—I mean can you talk about the culture of people coming in on boats and people, customers coming in to buy from them? Can you kind of talk about how it works here?

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Ellie Berry: Well we don't wholesale a lot out of here. We're strictly a retail market, but we do some wholesaling, depending on who it is. Crosby's, the other division of Crosby's they do a lot. But we try to freeze anything we can for the winter here 'cause it's—the months—are regulated, seasons are regulated. And we just try to move, move, move it through here. We want to. Some of the fish and some of the shrimp have to go in other directions but we try our very best to keep everything local, fresh, something we would eat. We're very picky. **[Laughs]** And it's hard, but the—the worst thing going on right now is the prices we're having to charge. I am almost embarrassed daily to have to serve a customer and especially regular customers. I always want to give them a discount but we're—we're having to acclimate and it is not easy. It is high. It is a special day for anybody that I think could come in and buy dinner for their family at a fresh seafood market without being some trash from another country.

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Sara Wood: And so is it—you know that—does that link back to the cost of fuel and—and the how things are out there for the shrimpers and the crabbers? I mean is it just—it all—it's all cyclical and connected?

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Ellie Berry: Everything is connected. It—it is driven. You can go all the way from the imports causing you know this reaction to fuel. We all go back to fuel. It is so high and finally you know now that the prices we're paying more for things, paying the—you know the purveyors more. We're charging more. People are paying it. Local folks are understanding what local and fresh mean. There was a—just trying to get the word out. *What are you eating?* [**Laughs**] And—and people are—are finally getting it. I really feel like they are getting it. And they're going to pay more for it even though we don't want to charge as much as we do. [**Laughs**]

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Sara Wood: Can you talk about some of the folks like what—what do y'all have come through here? Can you talk about some of the fish and the shrimp and—?

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Joanie Cooksey: You mean the shrimp boats?

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Sara Wood: Yeah and just sort of the products that come through here.

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Joanie Cooksey: Well the two shrimp boats we mostly get you know shrimp off of them and then we have the one fish boat and that's grouper, snapper, dolphin, trigger fish, sea bass—

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Ellie Berry: When the seasons are open for them.

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Joanie Cooksey: —yeah, yeah. So I mean it's—we get a good variety. I mean you know like now we've got twelve or fourteen different kinds of fish they just unloaded on Saturday, so you know it—we—we try to keep it all local and as much variety as we can. And they realize we're a retail market and you know to bring in as much as—I mean the different species that they can bring in, to you know rotate around.

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Sara Wood: And so the boats that you're talking about, the fishing boats and the shrimp boats, are those yours? You have folks going out there and bringing them back or do you—are they independent?

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Joanie Cooksey: My husband and I have the Hailey Marie & Son, so that's our boat and then the other two guys, Dave [Thomas] owns the fish boat and Lucky [Anuruck Suttiprasert] owns the shrimp boats, so just people that have come here and made it their home.

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Sara Wood: And how long have—has like say Lucky, how long has he been coming in?

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Joanie Cooksey: Hmm, let's see Hailey is eighteen so Lucky probably is thinking back has probably been here upwards of about twenty years. He's been here a long time.

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Sara Wood: And is it just he comes in during shrimp season, he—does he come in like a certain number of days a week or does it just all depend on the conditions?

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Joanie Cooksey: All depends on the conditions, the moon, the problem we have at this particular—our location here is the inlet, the Stono Inlet is filled in—of course naturally— in and out. They used to dredge it for us every so many years, but since the lack of commercial activity they've quit doing that and there's no funding to dredge the inlet out. So our three boats are limited to only going in and out of it at a high tide and mostly either full moon or a new moon tide when the tides typically are bigger. And then of course the wind and how rough it is. It's just—it is a dangerous inlet and there's no funding from the government to help us. And due to you know the whole there isn't as much commercial activity because of the way everything has gone, so it's just this vicious cycle that we're constantly fighting. And they just mostly work around the moons and the tides and—and the wind. You know, the fish boat has to consider the conditions further offshore. These boats just work inshore upwards of you know anywhere from a mile to three miles. So just all—is mother nature. There's no rhyme or reason. You can't run your life. You can't organize your life. You can't plan anything because you never know what the outcome is going to be.

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Sara Wood: I think that's something that I've noticed in the last couple days. I went out with Fred [Dockery] yesterday and the day before I went out with Richard Brown. He was doing crabs for his nephew Jamie [White], and it—everybody just seemed to have this—this—there's

something about people who work on the water where they don't freak out about things. They've seen some pretty intense times, probably scarier than I'll ever experience. But it's just you kind of just play the hand you're dealt and that's all you can do.

00:22:43

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, it's all you can do. There's—I mean if you're in it you got to deal with it. You know you try to avoid you know looking at week out at the weather or what you think it might be or—but I mean you just literally don't know. You just have to go with your gut a lot of times and feel like you know what's going to happen or what you know what—what it'll be. But there's—there's—you don't ever know. Never know.

00:23:13

Sara Wood: Do you all still go out to sea? I mean do you go out on the boat at all or has that never been the case for you Ellie and maybe Joanie?

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Ellie Berry: I have never been out. Joanie would love to be out there but this business keeps us—and then well, five kids deep and running a business. We just don't get a whole lot of opportunity. But Joanie would do it, you know and she was in Hurricane Hugo on a shrimp boat, so she has no fear. I do.

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Sara Wood: Can you talk about that a little bit about what that was like for you?

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Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, it was—it was scary. Once again you're eighteen, nineteen years old and you know we had just opened this business and took this business over and then we had the shrimp boat and you want to protect your investment—major investment at the time which was the shrimp boat. So at that moment it was protect that and, but nobody of course knew what that storm was going to do 'til almost the very last minute. But it was a scary night. We ended up—up the Cooper River and went way up in a creek and you did a lot of praying, you know and it was scary and people down the river from us their boats you know turned over, sank, and people died just from trying to you know save their boats. But it was—it was an experience. But, you know, like once again it was no fear. You had—we had no children at the time and it was you wanted to protect your livelihood—you know how you were going to make your money and that was just—that thought at that moment. You know you weren't thinking about ten years from now, you weren't thinking about anything but getting through that moment and that was that storm and you know and—and anyway it was an experience. The family was not very happy that I chose to do that but I mean I was with my husband [Neal Cooksey] and—and that's what we chose to do, so—.

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Sara Wood: I feel like there's so much more attached to the livelihood of this sort of business. You—you put your life on the line for it literally.

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Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, we do. We—we do but you know you don't—I don't think about it. Maybe I should but I try not to think about too much—I don't know how I try to think. *[Laughs]*

I try not to worry too much about the future. You just you know do what you're supposed to do every day and do the right thing and things eventually end up working out.

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Sara Wood: And so do you—so you pretty much, do you stay here with Ellie? You guys run the business and do you ever go out at all anymore? Is there—?

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Joanie Cooksey: Now that the—the children are older I would love to but it's still difficult to leave you know for three or four days. If they all don't go or you know our son would—he started last summer going and being okay to go 'cause shrimp—on a shrimp boat, fish boat, whatever it may be it's—it's dangerous. It's probably one of the most dangerous jobs out there is this industry and there's so much that can go so wrong, so fast. It's another reason my dad never really wanted anybody to go, it's just a liability of the threat of something happening, you know the winches, the cable, the—we've had so many friends that have lost their lives, limbs, just scary situations and it's all fear-based. But I wish—I would love to, you know I still have it in me. I could do it and be happy. But I just don't get to go as often, but the children do. And they love it.

00:26:59

Sara Wood: Oh they go out?

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Joanie Cooksey: Yes, uh-hm, my son does. Ellie's son needs to go and stay. He would love to so we'll get him out there, too.

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Sara Wood: I'm also wondering, I wanted to ask before I forget what's your mother's name?

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Ellie Berry: Elaine Crosby.

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Sara Wood: Now did your mother, did she help run the business at all? Did she play a role—did she go out with your father?

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Ellie Berry: Oh no, she was a housewife, eight children, housewife. [*Laughs*] That was her job—cooking and cleaning, caretaker. She's still alive—eighty-six years old.

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Sara Wood: Does she live around here?

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Ellie Berry: Oh yeah; she lives with me. She's an amazing person.

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Sara Wood: What does she think about what y'all have done with the business?

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Ellie Berry: Oh I'm sure she's very proud. Yeah, she's strong. That's where we get our strength—from her, easy peasy. She's tough—tough.

00:27:58

Sara Wood: I know you both mentioned your brother's involvement in the business. But I'm wondering with eight children, how did it end up with you two? I mean why—why you two? Were you the youngest?

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Ellie Berry: We're the youngest. We had one older sister, five brothers, and two girls. But **[Laughs]** energy I think and we just worked hard and we could not sit in the classroom. We just—most of everybody else besides one was educated. Everybody went to college. Everybody and the last—Joanie and I and then one brother we just—I don't know. Our love for the water. I swear I think it's just inbred in you. We live on the water. Don't call me spoiled. Don't call me whatever. But if I don't have *this*, life would be completely different. It's just a peace about it every day. It's who you are. You know it's—it's just necessary. It really, really is.

00:28:58

Sara Wood: I'm also wondering I mean I've sort of asked you this in a different variation but and it's—it's kind of a chunky question but I mean to come here every morning and to devote so

much of your life to this. This—you know this is your livelihood. You've been doing this for so many years. And you watch your customers' reactions and you have these relationships with people coming into the docks. I mean what does that mean when you think about being younger and growing up and watching your father, what it means for you guys to carry a tradition forward, to have this tradition so deeply woven into your being?

00:29:38

Joanie Cooksey: Well that is kind of tough. But I tell you, I just firmly believe we're here for a reason. A lot of people come through and they need a lot of help. **[Laughs]** A lot of problems. I'm telling you, this fishermen breed is a completely different breed of folks. They need—I think we understand them. I really, really do. It's—it's really hard to describe. I—I think about it a lot. There's not one other thing I'd do I don't believe. Again we just like making people happy, giving people good, good food. At the end of the day it's hard though. It's hard.

00:30:27

Ellie Berry: The—I lost my train of thought. What was the question again?

00:30:36

Sara Wood: I asked about what it means to y'all to carry a tradition forward.

00:30:40

Ellie Berry: Oh I think it's—it deeply means—means a lot. I mean people you know appreciate it. I think being here since we were the youngest, the boys, my sister and the boys all were already kind of planted and you know they were in college and they were doing their own thing.

I think being the youngest and literally just being here every day and with my brother Timmy also, he worked with my dad and he ran boats, and I just think at such a young age, we grew up around older people. We—we just had that sense of caringness. We cared about them, they cared about us. They taught us so much at such a young age. And we just that—I think that's where a lot of it came from, the need, the want to be around, you know, the older more—I don't know mature people that just I don't know. I just love learning. Every day we learn something new or something different around the dock about the seafood, about building things, working on things, you know, there's never a day that you don't learn—learn from your surroundings you know. And I think that's really you know—I don't really think about carrying on a—you know I really just don't even think about it. You know, I just stay so focused on what the day's things are but I mean we've been here so long we really need to think about that. **[Laughs]** You know think about you're here for—you know I mean we've literally been forty years here. It's a long time, but the years have gone that you don't even—I don't even think about that. I don't even think about the boys or the girls taking over the business. Those things just don't even occur to me. I just go with the daily plan, the daily to-do list, and get through it. But I do think being around older people when we were younger really just—really just put—I don't know. It just tweaked who we possibly could have been, I don't know. They just had a really—a bearing on who we are.

00:32:52

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, a lot of—we've been around so many people. You know we've seen a lot and then we try—we do try to—our children are around. They see things a lot of children don't see. They might even hear things. **[Laughs]** But you know to teach them to be good

citizens, respectful of older people, we can—there's a lot of—a lot of life lessons right here, right here, helping other people, customers. It's just—it's amazing just being good citizens.

00:33:23

Sara Wood: When y'all were talking about growing up with people coming through here I can only imagine all the different people you've been able to meet and all the stories you've heard and you both probably could write four or five books.

00:33:33

Joanie Cooksey: I could.

00:33:33

Ellie Berry: I'm afraid I'm going to start forgetting things and I really, really—I've even got a name for a book in my mind. **[Laughs]**

00:33:40

Sara Wood: Can you say what it is?

00:33:41

Ellie Berry: No, well what—*How Do They Mow this Grass* and that would be somebody—god, what was that—? A customer came in and from up north and looked at the marsh grass and really thought how do you mow that grass, like some helicopter would just come in and cut it and trim it. **[Laughs]** I said that's going to be the name of a book one day.

00:34:08

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, I could write multiple books, and I'm like Ellie I'm afraid I'm going to start losing it. I really need to start because it's—it's all good things. It's real people, real stories, real experiences, and like we keep saying just life lessons.

00:34:25

Ellie Berry: There's a lot of laughter. There's a lot of laughter. I mean I cannot—imagined being stoved up in some office where you can't—I mean you can't say anything for fear you're going to affect some policy and around here we can just be who the heck we are, all of us, yeah. I mean you could say whatever you know, there's expressions, there's I mean and you do laugh. I mean you cry but you laugh. I mean there's—there's been a lot. But I think we're a group of people that everybody needs—we need that. I mean when we have a baby you know we're not stuck at home suffering from post-partum and this and that, we haul that baby to work. And we got people to be around and—and that's what we—that's who we are—work, work, work.

[Laughs]

00:35:14

Sara Wood: I know—could y'all tell me, 'cause you guys start pretty darn early. I mean this place is opened from six a.m. to six p.m. but what is the day? I don't know, I'm sure there's not a typical day but what—what is a day in the life of Ellie and Joanie?

00:35:25

Ellie Berry: Well **[Laughs]** we're here. We try to come together to get everything done exactly how we like it. Freshness of seafood, the way we've done it, I mean we are pretty particular on

how we like things. In a real world we could split it up and each be—have a few days off but it's not how we're—it's not how we've done it. So we start early and we've always—or I especially—I was going to be at home with my children in the afternoon and we have made that happen. That was the biggest goal—work, get up, be tired, but be there for your children. I—I—and they have acclimated. Our kids they're number—they became number one and there's two of us, so some things are hard to do like on your own, single people running families. Even if Joanie's husband is gone you still have that connection. But we work. Several—we work seven days a week still. We get up and come to work every day and it's not that we don't have trust and faith in our employees, but it's our schedule. We love to be up early. We'll get up at four o'clock in the morning and we're housecleaning and we're coming to work. We're cooking breakfast and then we finish it at home. That's what we do.

00:36:48

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, that's it in a nutshell. You know we—we just set goals after I guess after ten years you know is when we started getting—hiring people, five years, ten years, you know to where you know once the kids were in school that we would be home with them and once two o'clock came you know then you just shift to kids. And that's when you hire people to come in and finish out the day. And that's what we just had to do. If not, we'd be here you know—it was too much. I don't want to do that. It's not fair to the children 'cause they—they hear enough that you know you can't do this, can't do that because it's you know summer or you can't vacation in the summer. We have to do it in the winter, so there's already major restrictions on what—I don't think there is a normal life or normal people but what normal people you know how they operate. And we just—we can't operate like that and they understand that.

00:37:47

It's just like I tell my children as far as you know saving money, you know we work real hard in those spring and summer months and it's just like the animals. You save, save, save for the winter, you know and then in the winter you vacation and you take some time off and you have more family time and so it's a way of life. And it—and they have to learn that and know that to be able to function. Their lives may not be like that but it's the way our lives are and have been and are still and they need to get it and figure it out. You know they're—I know they have needs and I know their friends do you know different things and I just tell them. This is the way—how we do it. And it's because of the way we live and we live by mother nature. That's the biggest thing. Our lives revolve as far as I mean here yes, but I'm more talking like the shrimp boat and their dad being gone so much and what our lives are like and you just—you got to deal with it. And they have to get that and they do.

00:38:54

Ellie Berry: We have a lot of energy. We—we can still do a lot with them and thank God for energy. *[Laughs]* We—they're fine, they're fine. But they'll come down and work early, you know, they—they know. They're used to it. Everybody goes to bed early and you get up early. That's how we do it.

00:39:14

Sara Wood: I'm wondering Ellie, did—is your husband involved in the business at all?

00:39:17

Ellie Berry: No, he is not. He is not. He works for Yellow Cab of Charleston and he runs the maintenance shop there. And our husbands are first cousins, not our first cousins, but they're first cousins, so and we—we've always lived four or five doors down from each other. **[Laughs]** We—we're very close. Not many people can do what we do and still maintain. We're in constant contact all day long, every day, every day of the week. I don't know how we do it. It's frustrating sometimes but I think we just learn how to—I mean we still fight. **[Laughs]** Forty-six years old and we still fight. I mean it just—I don't know, it's hard to explain. It's an unbelievable relationship.

00:40:07

Joanie Cooksey: Now Ellie—the other side of the family that owns the Crosby's retail downtown and the Crosby's in North Charleston owns Yellow Cab Company. So that's where Ellie fell into place. My uncle used to run the mechanic shop which Ellie's husband Chris does now and when he passed away Chris walked into that—his footsteps and that's where our dad had originally started 'cause they were brothers and they were in business together. They owned the cab company together, a fence company together, and then they bought this together, so you know throughout history of I guess the Crosby family you can call it you know they worked together, they owned businesses together and it's kind of just trickled on down to us.

00:40:51

Ellie Berry: Not many people can work together I'm telling you. I don't know how many businesses survive. You know we're from eight children and Joanie—we've done it. I swear I

don't know how 'cause it's—it's—it's difficult. It is difficult, a family it's tough [*generator from air conditions inside kicks on in the background*].

00:41:11

Sara Wood: I'm wondering, I mean you talked about your father and your uncle. Did they—did the Crosbys grow up here so they're all from around this area?

00:41:20

Joanie Cooksey: They're originally from Walterboro and then moved—moved here. And they just like I said they dearly loved each other and owned various businesses together and that's just kind of how it all happened.

00:41:37

Ellie Berry: And we watched it unfold. We watched them work together so you know you pick up on it. You—you figure it out, you know you just figure it out.

00:41:47

Sara Wood: Was there a point when y'all were growing up when you were little when your father was—had this business and did you think—did you ever talk amongst yourselves or just think to yourself this is exactly what I'm going to do? Did you think about that before you were 18 and decided to take over?

00:42:01

Ellie Berry: Oh yeah. We had it figured out by seventeen. We weren't staying in school. We could not—we could not do it. And you know now that we've got you know now that you're older, you're more mature, you know, how everybody says, "Well when you grow up you know looking back, you know if you could just look back," and there's so many kids these days. We had the energy—you got to work with your hands. There are those children that—and we—we fit that class of people. We—we could not do it. We had to do something different.

00:42:33

We would have had opportunity to—to go to college, just do anything but I don't know. We weren't made to do it, but this is an example. We were just taught to work hard. Our grandmother was a devote Baptist. Nobody should miss church on Sunday, nobody. If you worked on Sunday though you had an excuse. That—and that's just an example. I don't know why we picked up on the importance and why we were driven but we've had probably you know some people with a lot of emotions or things that go on, whoever you are—I'm trying to figure that out now—physically, being able to physically work helps get you through a lot of things. And we had a lot of stuff go on and I think that just—we're driven. We wanted to succeed.

00:43:30

You know, it's like somebody telling me, "You can't do it," and then you're not going to tell me you can't do it. I'm going to do it. And it—we were just bred that way—bred that way. We had a lot of strong line of family who I mean our grandmother opened—she ran grocery stores on John's Island and she had to divide her children up. Somehow she had to make it, she

sold houses. She started a little store. She cut a—at a home she lived in you take the door. You cut it in half and she sold potato chips and sodas out of it, just to make money.

00:44:07

One of our dad's sisters, who just passed last year, she owned a business on Folly Beach, a tackle shop—very business driven. People—you know we're—we just love people I think. It's not all about the money. **[Laughs]** You know and if you can get by and just—and about being simple. We're all just simple people, very simple. Everyone that's here, every fisherman, they are who they are. They're not putting on a show. They just have good work ethic and they're smart people.

00:44:43

Sara Wood: Do you want to add anything to that?

00:44:48

Joanie Cooksey: I think Ellie has got it all in a nutshell. I think it's just all family, you—well depending on how observant you are as a child and then that has a lot to do with it. You know, I think we just observed our family and—and what they were about and how they did make ends meet and how driven they were and—and I think if you—if you pick up on all that somehow it's embedded in you and you know that's what you want to do. You know, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know how it all unfolded but it did.

00:45:22

Ellie Berry: It would be odd for us not to get up and come to work every day. It—it just—I don't ever lay in bed and say, "Oh god. I don't want to get up today." You just get up and you do it. Just do it.

00:45:39

Sara Wood: And before I forget what's—what was your grandmother's name and do you know the name of the store—the stores that she—?

00:45:45

Ellie Berry: I don't know the name of it but her name was Callie Richburg. It was—we were raised with her, so a lot of strength come from her, too—tough.

00:45:55

Sara Wood: That was your mother's mother?

00:45:56

Ellie Berry: My—our dad's. Yeah [*Laughs*]. Yeah so now, you know, like I said when you're—you get older and you start reflecting and looking at your family and you know where they were and who you are I think you start figuring it out. I think I know now. [*Laughs*] Yeah and they all loved to hunt you know and fish and I don't know. Just like Indians I think is the best way to describe a lot of folks in this business. You know providers—

00:46:33

Joanie Cooksey: And the drive like Ellie said over and over again is making people happy, you know. There's no better business to be in other than a farmer to give vegetables—I mean my children's teachers absolutely when they have our children 'cause they get seafood. **[Laughs]** But it's just the joy that, you know, being able to—the opportunity to give you know and that's what makes your heart feel good and that's what makes you who you are, I think, I feel like you know.

00:47:01

Ellie Berry: I always say Joanie would give the farm away. She's the give, give, give, give, give. She thinks about everybody, who she can give some to next **[Laughs]**; it's just—

00:47:11

Joanie Cooksey: That's one of our struggles between us. I just give it all away and Ellie is like, “No. You can't do that.” “But it makes me feel good!” “But you can't!” It's just who you are though you know. What do you do?

00:47:25

Ellie Berry: Compassionate, caring, that—that—that's the biggest thing, I think. You're just bred that way, just bred that way.

00:47:35

Sara Wood: I just have two more questions for you guys is that all right with you? I know you guys are—. And I wanted to take a couple portraits of you guys together; is that all right?

00:47:44

Joanie Cooksey: Except for I didn't comb my hair.

00:47:46

Sara Wood: Well we—

00:47:47

Joanie Cooksey: It's okay.

00:47:48

Sara Wood: We can take a little time if you want to.

00:47:50

Ellie Berry: No, no, we don't hardly—

00:47:52

Joanie Cooksey: I don't comb my hair—

00:47:52

Sara Wood: I think you guys have great hair. I mean it's very shiny and beautiful.

00:47:55

Ellie Berry: We were very lucky. That's from all that salmon and stuff we eat. **[Laughs]**

00:48:00

Sara Wood: You were talking about growing up with a lot of older folks and seeing the people come through here, but I'm wondering as you get older are there newer traditions that you see come through like younger people come through here that have just started for themselves, like crabbers or oystermen, or oysterwomen?

00:48:16

Joanie Cooksey: Oh I tell you it's mostly just our own children. But I think there's some interest out there, but I'm afraid all these people are getting so much older that they won't be able to teach them. And we've had our kids oystering this year just to get them out there to—to know 'cause it's technique. You just don't go strip and oyster bank. They need to be taught that. So you know you don't see a lot of it. I generally think it's just these fishermen's children. I mean our friend, our kids' friends, you know they like to come around and try to help but there's not a lot of opportunity. I mean we don't hold seminars on how to go oystering. *[Laughs]* Or—

00:49:03

Yeah, or how to work the back deck of a shrimp boat or how to work a—a reel on the back of a fish boat. I mean I don't know. I think the industry in whole has gotten so—I think there's a lot of wannabes in a lot of different areas, but I don't really see how they're going to make it. It's not like it used to be, you know it's just not—I don't even really know how to say it. I just—

00:49:34

Ellie Berry: Well it's not like being in the lawn business and you start out with one small lawn mower and a rake. Then you've got all this other new and fancy equipment and anybody can do that. This stuff you cannot do. You just don't jump on a shrimp boat or a fish boat or in an oyster boat and go succeed; you don't. And I mean like I said, there's no seminars, there's no big computerized [*Laughs*] you know throwing it out there for everybody come let's learn how to do this. And so it's—it's dying. And it's a shame. It is. I mean we all try our best mostly with our own kids and I know other fishermen do, other crabbers do. Do we want more for our children? Yeah, this is hard, hard, hard, hard work. But you know what? If they love it dag-gone it if they're going to live you—if you can catch fish you can try to shrimp, you can—you're going to live. You might not you know—it's who you are. So they'll figure it out.

00:50:41

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, my husband is adamant our son will not follow in his footsteps. He just doesn't you know he doesn't—not that he's—

00:50:49

Ellie Berry: It's unknown.

00:50:50

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah.

00:50:51

Ellie Berry: All the time.

00:50:52

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, all the unknown and just the financial part of all of it you know.

Somehow or another it's just got so different, just so different. I don't know. I don't know. But there are plenty of people that want to be in the business and they try but they fail you know and it's not that their failures. It's just—it's the way the business is now even different five years ago, ten years ago, you know on down the road. It's just different. Different and it's—it takes a lot of experience, that's the other thing. It takes years and years of experience to know and to learn what these guys know. And you can't—you can't learn it overnight. You can't learn it in four years of college. You know that's—or eight years; I just don't know the answer to any of it. I don't know.

00:51:44

Sara Wood: When y'all are talking about—I mean I feel like that's the story I hear a lot is that this—there's traditions that are dying because people can't keep doing it. And so I wonder, I mean do you—is there a pressure that comes with that—that you guys feel at all or—? And if there is how do you deal with that, because you guys are still standing, you know and there's a reason for that?

00:52:07

Joanie Cooksey: I wish we had the answers I really, really, really do 'cause I tell you these folks that have worked so hard all these years, they are going away. They are. It just takes a special person. I—I—that's why we need to get back to trade schools [*Laughs*]. I hate to ban a college degree and I'm not doing that. But our youth need to know what it means to—to have a trade and to work hard. It's what it takes. People—you've got to have it. Yeah, you know

spend—you can only imagine watching these people out on these oceans and how they come home and what they've been through and hearing their lives and what price they're going to get and oh my god the fuel and it is—

00:52:55

Ellie Berry: So much negativity.

00:52:56

Joanie Cooksey: There's so much negativity.

00:52:59

Joanie Cooksey: That's the part that takes a toll on me or us as a family and as a business the last probably five years. It's the negativity that surrounds all of it and the negativity comes from fear, because they're scared, you know. They've done this most of their entire lives and they're scared of the unknown. I mean they're not scared to go out and fight that sea but they're scared you know when they come to the dock or what season is going to be shut off next, what fish they can't keep—

00:53:31

Ellie Berry: How am I going to pay my bills? I mean it—

00:53:33

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, how am I going to pay my bills?

00:53:34

Joanie Cooksey: I've got a family you know. It's fear. It's fear and that's what's changed. You know gradually over time but the last five years has really taken a toll and it's all back to you know more—you know I'm not bashing government, but government regulations and the fuel. You know why is—what I don't understand in my mind is the cost of food and the cost of fuel is that's what drives this country and that's what we all need to be able to function in this world and as a human being and it—it's just—it's priced out of everyone's league. I don't understand the philosophy behind—where all that has gone wrong. I don't understand it. I just don't have the capability to.

00:54:20

Ellie Berry: And these are the guys that reduced the food to go on your table. I mean go ahead if you want to buy all that stuff from all over the world, you know but we don't. You know, we want fresh foods from farms. We want fresh food caught right here. It's important. It's important. It's important for our children to learn that.

00:54:39

Joanie Cooksey: I think that's where we've gone wrong. You know someone just moved here from up north. I was at the baseball field talking to them and they're like, "Well, what did this island look like?" And I'm like, "Well, actually you know where this was it was all tomato fields. You know where this was—was all," —and that was only you know fifteen—ten, fifteen, twenty years when you really look back and reflect. It's changed here so much and we've gotten away from the farm to table, you know the farm to table in this country I feel like. And—

00:55:16

Ellie Berry: So this movement. There's a movement. I mean they're really, really trying to get people educated on it. You know, I see it at restaurants. We don't eat out tons and where you do you're you know—you want to know your food and—and there are folks now in the restaurant industry that I can tell are working very hard to have everything on their menu as local as they possibly can and to tell the truth about it.

00:55:44

Joanie Cooksey: That's where the problem is—is not telling the truth. You know everyone that comes to Charleston thinks that every restaurant they go the shrimp and the oysters are all local and they're told that a lot of the times. And it's not true. I love to go and question people where they get their seafood from or where they—you know and just—it's *unbelievable* and it's important. You know we tell the truth every day. We label everything what it is. It—nobody is winning when you don't—you're not upfront and forward from where you're getting your product from. And I just don't believe that and that's a lot of the problem but here locally the past probably three years this huge movement in local farms, local seafood, and it—it's making a difference. It really is.

00:56:33

Ellie Berry: I think we've got more customers going, “Oh my gosh this is really what grouper tastes like?” You know Joanie's daughter just went off to college. She had a great story. We packaged her salmon, fresh salmon and you know individually serving so she'd have food 'cause she's got a ton of food allergies—whole other story— but and her friends are eating Great Value Wal-Mart brand tilapia and that kid is like, “Oh my god.” She can't believe it but she understands

they've never been educated. It's normal to grab a bag of frozen something. So we—we're trying to get the word out. *[Laughs]*

00:57:16

Sara Wood: Can y'all tell me just a little bit about—and I saw the sign that's written up on the whiteboard up there—y'all do the—the cookouts on Friday. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

00:57:28

Ellie Berry: Well we started 'cause things were getting really, really hard here. We did not know if we were going to make it, so we thought what can we do to subsidize—you know to help a little bit? So we started with a fryer on the dock, cooking and people were like, “Wow!” But then we came across a bunch of regulations. What we were doing wrong, so we started an adventure on trying to figure out how we can do it and legally do it. Well, so we got this food trailer and—and got all—everything straight, legal with that, and we decided since you know children running a business already—how are we going to handle it, so it wouldn't going to be every night? So we started just doing it on Friday nights four hours and from the beginning it's been one, weather permitting, and two, what's going on in our lives. So you look on Facebook. We're not savvy with social media but we do have some connections. And they put it out there if we're going to have a Friday night dock party. People call on the phones now. They're accustomed to it. And I'm telling you, it's—it's worked out really well. But again, people are so happy. They bring their children. They bring a hula hoop. They might bring a dog. And it's so—satisfaction at the end of the night and there's no, “Are you going to do it Saturday? Will you do it—?” It is when we can do it. And but I tell you; we—we want it to be good fish and good

shrimp. Never change the menu up. Leave it as simple as we possibly can, but without a lot of battle. We've had some battles you know to get through to make us okay to do what we want to do. But we're—we're good. It's really a fun night.

00:59:26

Joanie Cooksey: What also kind of helped create it also was we always have family functions here, graduations, you know birthdays, weddings—

00:59:35

Ellie Berry: We have weddings.

00:59:36

Joanie Cooksey: Two weddings so far, but what—we don't take it for granted, but we know this is a beautiful place. You know people love this type of atmosphere and it's going away. You know it just isn't everywhere it used to be and that feeling that people have when they come here I can't even explain, you know when they leave in the evening they're like, "This is just the best time you know I've ever had. The feeling I have when I'm here is beautiful." It brings back older people's childhood memories because this is what they remember fifty, sixty, seventy years ago when they were growing up. Places like this were everywhere scattered along the coast. And it just brings back a happy time for them. And that, once again, is what drives us you know to want to do it, to please people. We have our cousin, Jerry that was my Uncle Steve's son, he comes. He's a—plays music and sings and you know—so it's still once again family oriented. Our kids help work it.

01:00:42

Ellie Berry: Work. *[Laughs]*

01:00:44

Joanie Cooksey: And so it's just one of those things that—but we really got to the point where we didn't know what we were going to do. The cost of everything was elevated and you lose a pound of fish here or there or shrimp and, you know, you lose all your profit. You know stuff that costs anywhere from \$10 to \$15 a pound and then you're losing it, so it's just we started really thinking once again my uncle way back had another location in North Charleston to where they—when the Navy yard was in existence they had retail on one side—seafood and then they had—he had a small kitchen on the other side, so anything that they thought they wouldn't sell they rotated it over the kitchen, still fresh. Freeze it ahead of time and it just was a win/win situation. We just didn't even have the energy or the time—really still don't now but really people love it that much. And you know it is a change in the day. It's a—we've always done it with a large family, big you know our Christmases and Easter and everything is on a large-scale and it's a gathering and it's just a fun time. So we've always been used to that type of thing and so it's not a pressure for us. One of our brothers is in the event planning business. It's JMC Charleston, J. Mitchell Crosby and he also—we rent the dock here, too. He's the one that really started like, “Our family has used this dock for years. I think I can really you know get some people to rent it and it's a great location,” so he's the one that really pulled the trigger on all of it and we—so people do have their wedding receptions here, their you know all kinds of crazy stuff. But he is the one that came up with the idea and then we just took it to the next level. So he's a huge part—part of that.

01:02:35

So each one of our brothers in different ways, you know, contribute and always have. They've always backed us whether it's you know, "Oh my gosh, I can't take it anymore," or you know, "Help me work through this." So they're all involved at different levels.

01:02:51

Sara Wood: I'm wondering if there—I've taken up a lot of your time and you've been very generous—if there's anything—I wanted to ask one more thing and then ask you guys if you wanted to add anything else, but is there anything that you know when you started this business that your father told you, a piece of advice or just something that he did in a certain way that you still carry with you running the business today?

01:03:23

Ellie Berry: You know, I—so many things can come to mind I guess but just the normalcy of what it meant to get up—get up and go to work [*Laughs*]. I think it was—it's just second nature. I don't—I don't know. I—I think and I've said it once but I just—in each of us we all need something and we need—we need this atmosphere to be who we are. You know people need peacefulness. You know, I could be having a rough day or whatever and you look out and you're like, "Ugh," you know there it is—there it is. But he just taught us a lot—a lot in a short period. He was a very—he was an incredible person but he didn't talk much. You just had to look and learn. And when he talked you—I mean you *did* listen. And that was a big deal—big deal.

01:04:28

Joanie Cooksey: Yeah, he was the one you know he was up at four and if you were on his day planned for the day, I mean you were with him, and he was like Ellie said, a man of few words. There weren't—

01:04:41

Ellie Berry: He was honest though—honest, honest is—oh my gosh. But I mean you had to watch him to learn. He didn't ever say you know it was like, "Do y'all want to take the business over?" That was it. And then he helped get it back going and—but he never said, "This is what it's going to be like. This is what—" "there was none of that, no communication on—I mean you just—there weren't—there were no sit-down, have a conversation, and, "This is what I think y'all need to do."

01:05:11

Joanie Cooksey: No meetings.

01:05:12

Ellie Berry: No meetings. I mean you just did what you were supposed to do and you watched him. You know you watched he did, how he ran his day, you know then you knew what you were supposed to do to be a part of that. You know, I knew my job every day what I was supposed to do to help prepare him for the next day. And it's just what you did. I don't know, he just was like—I keep saying a man of few words. There was no—you know a lot of people these days you got to sit down and have a talk and—I'm like, "I don't even know where that came from," 'cause we didn't really talk as a family. You just did—

01:05:49

Joanie Cooksey: Did. [*Laughs*]

01:05:49

Ellie Berry: —you know and when they did talk you *listened*. You know and that was it and that's the way it was, so no to answer your question. I guess we're just following through with what we were—what we were taught and what we watched.

01:06:02

Joanie Cooksey: Well and we were—we were only here as an operating business before he dropped dead on us. He didn't get to see us do it. You know, he helped us get it there and then he died. So I think that also gave us the drive being so young, you know, “We're going to do this.” You know instead of being stressed and, “I lost my daddy and how am I going to live without him?” we're going, “We're going to do it.”

01:06:30

Ellie Berry: We're going to keep this place alive for him 'cause he loved it. You know, it's what he loved.

01:06:33

Joanie Cooksey: Talk about tradition that—I think that happened to us. We're like we're—we can't quit. We got to keep going. He wouldn't like a quitter.

01:06:46

Ellie Berry: I don't ever think about that. I mean now that you ask the question, but you—you just don't think about it. You just—we just did it. You know of course you want your parents to be proud of you, and this is what he wanted. He loved this place more than anything in life for all the reasons we love it. And that's why we're still here. You just feel like you're doing the right thing you know. I don't know. I think that's just it.

01:07:10

Sara Wood: Do y'all want to add anything? I don't have any other questions for you but if there's something you want to add that you think is important for this interview or something that I didn't think to ask or didn't know to ask and I should have?

01:07:27

Ellie Berry: Just you know as a country, as a whatever I think just—just think back to supporting your local businesses. You know there are tons of families out there that are starting you know young people starting, farmers—

01:07:44

Joanie Cooksey: Farmers.

01:07:44

Joanie Cooksey: —I see that's making a little bit more of a comeback more than the fishing industry with the younger people. You know give people a chance. You know not everyone is set to you know go to college, and I'm not bashing that. I'm just saying you know give the people a

chance that are willing to work hard and, you know, and buy from those local businesses and those farms and—and think about what—what we're eating. That's—you know it's so important that—to me and as our—and as a family and as our neighbors and our friends, you know, making them aware of—of what you're eating and—and how important it is for our bodies. I really truly believe that. And the biggest thing is giving people a chance, an opportunity is what that is.

01:08:35

Ellie Berry: And like Joanie said just shop but be conscientious you know, get the public more aware and just you know just keep supporting local businesses.

01:08:49

Joanie Cooksey: And think about—this is what I often think about is, you know, think about how those shrimp actually made it you know to our counter or the fish. You know think about the process, the—the people that handled it, the people that took care of that product, the people that—you know they care and it's hard.

01:09:08

Ellie Berry: To tell you the truth a trip starts when they leave this dock, you know whether they get ice, whether they get fuel, whether they get their groceries, you know then they're gone and then they come back and then our unloading process and then it gets to the counter, but you know it's still not shipped across waters for weeks. It is here for everyone to enjoy. You got to pay for it now [*Laughs*] but it's here for everybody to enjoy and it's a healthy, healthy option.

01:09:39

Sara Wood: Well, I just want to thank you both for doing this—this morning because I know you're very busy so I feel very grateful to you both for taking the time to do this, so thank you.

01:09:47

Joanie Cooksey: Thank you.

01:09:47

Ellie Berry: You're welcome.

01:09:48

Joanie Cooksey: For taking the time because it's people like you that you know that—that will help it really—what you're doing is amazing and it makes a difference.

01:09:56

Sara Wood: Well I feel that way about you guys. I could never work as hard as you work, but the fact that I'm here I just feel like I'm on holy ground right now, you know?

01:10:04

Joanie Cooksey: Well and we appreciate that 'cause you know I don't know how many people—I could call up and here we go again, a government or whatever agency saying, "You know we got a problem. Could you come talk about this? Could you—?" And you just—it's like you hit a brick wall, over, over, over, and over, and over again, and it's complete awareness, you know. There's some things—you know I always look about how people's lives are, how they

work, where things come from, but I tell you. These farmers, these—these commercial fishermen, shrimpers, they're some of the most incredible people you'll ever meet. That's it.

01:10:45

Ellie Berry: And you helping get that word—you know just to—to bring it back to life. You know some—somewhere and I think that's probably where you're trying to get at possibly is you know, how do you keep this alive for future generations to have these experiences? I feel like our—I really feel like our children are blessed to—to—we're blessed to have them to—to share this with them whether they take it over, whether they—whatever they do with their lives, they'll always have it. You know, they know—they know and they know the people here, they've experienced a lot, and that's important to me. And I—and I do try to share those experiences with our friends' children which means a lot to them. Anybody like you said about holy ground, people—it's amazing how even the people we meet, how we meet them but they feel the same way and they—they beg us, "Please let me children come down there." You know, "Please let my children experience what your children are experiencing." I mean everywhere I go people, you know in Wal-Mart, "Can my son please come down there and work with Nealie?" You know, "Can he hang out with him for the day?" So I—I—I feel so blessed to—to have that and—and know that—that we're special in that way. I mean and we are and we're not doing anything special. It's just who we are and what we have here. And—and we're blessed to have it. You know how came into our hands, how it all worked out, it's truly a blessing, truly is.

01:12:23

Sara Wood: I know we talked about the tradition being passed on, you know whether or not your children move forward with it, it's up to them but would you like for them to carry this on? Would you like for them to take the business over?

01:12:35

Ellie Berry: In—in some aspects I do. But again, I mean it's the insurance. I mean we could go on for hours. You know we've even got family members that are you know males or whatever, I'm sure he would love to live his life, but you know do you want a family? Do you want to work that hard? How are you going to have insurance? I mean there's—it's a lot. It—it's—it's a big risk right now and it has been for several years to—

01:13:10

Joanie Cooksey: Well, and I don't want to say that, just I feel like it's all made this major turn in the last I keep saying five or ten years.

01:13:15

Ellie Berry: I agree, yeah.

01:13:16

Joanie Cooksey: Whatever is happening I can't quite figure it all out but ask me five years ago and I'm like, "Yeah. You know it would be great," you know—

01:13:24

Ellie Berry: And now, “It’s like oh gosh I don’t know.” I don’t know. I don’t know if I want them to or not. You know I—I—I just—I don’t; it’s—it would be a tough call. You always want more for them and you don’t want them—. That’s just on the table, you don’t want them to have to go through what you did but you know what? They’ll make that choice. They will have the opportunity. Joanie and I own this property. We worked very hard to pay it off. If one day we got to all live here, we could live here and that’s the good thing. That’s the really, really good thing. We don’t have to—we don’t have to sell it. We could sit on it. We could put a damn tent here if we wanted to and—and we’re fine, so—.

01:14:09

Joanie Cooksey: I think the children are going to have to make that choice, you know if they want to do it. I’ll let my children do whatever you know their heart desires or what they think, you know, they want to do. I mean you got to give everybody a chance and if it’s in their blood and they want to do it they’ll do it. It’s just how we work.

01:14:28

Ellie Berry: Not going to force them do it.

01:14:28

Joanie Cooksey: No.

01:14:29

Ellie Berry: I’m not going to force them to do anything.

01:14:32

Sara Wood: Well thank you both very much. I appreciate it.

01:14:36

Ellie Berry: You're welcome.

01:14:38

[End Joanie Cooksey & Ellie Berry Interview]