



Sonny Morrison

Interviewed by Gail Matthews

1. Sea conditions and storms (1:01)

Morrison: Sea conditions usually are the best forerunner over storms they, um, of course your cloud formations have a lot to do with it, but your sea conditions a lot of times it'll run ahead of a storm, you know, for several days there will be, there will be a difference or a long ground swell that's not, or a sea that's running from a storm and you can, you can tell it.

Matthews: Oh, so that before the storm comes the sea would get higher or fuller because it....

Morrison: Usually wider and a little higher, it's a, it's a swell that runs ahead of a storm and it's not, and it's not wind driven, um, there's a difference between a sea that's running from a storm and one that's generated by winds locally.

2. First nets (00:40)

Morrison: The first nets that were made, they spread the reben oak and then took a board, and laid it [out?] a lathe, just spread the reben oak where they wanted it, and they just cut down that, with a knife and they laced it back together and they were sewed and thy were hung on, um, manila rope and you had to take them out to rehang them every week and probably would have been a lot better if you had done it everyday.

3. Shape of a net (00:26)

Morrison: Well, the easiest way to explain a net to you is if you took a funnel, you know what a funnel is?

Matthews: Uh-huh.

Morrison: And you stepped on it so that it was only, you know, so it was spread side-ways but didn't, you know, wasn't round but had a flat top and a flat bottom.

Matthews: Uh-hum.

Morrison: And that's, that's generally the shape of a net.

Matthews: So like a long sock.

Morrison: It's like a long sock.

4. Turtle excluder (01:42)

Matthews: What was it called, retractor? I'm not sure.

Morrison: It was called an excluder device.

Matthews: Excluder, yeah.

Morrison: It was the first one that was developed, that used webbing instead of hard-hardware. A lot of your metal ones weighed up to 100-150 pounds, the um, soft edge that we put in would just fit right in the net, they were soft and they weighed less than four pounds.

Matthews: Now was that at the mouth of the net? Is that where it fits?

Morrison: Well, it was a little further back in the net, towards the tail, but it just formed a [area[?]] up on an incline and you cut a hole and it excluded turtles, um, horseshoe crabs, depending on which way you turned it you could even get rid of rocks, if you turned it down, and um, you got rid of a lot of your crabs, you got rid of a lot of your trash, and you got rid of a lot of your fish, you got rid of a lot of your flounder, um, and commercial and sport fish, you got rid of a considerable amount of those.

Matthews: Well, that would save you time and wear and tear on your nets too, wouldn't it?

Morrison: Yeah it would save you time, and saves time and then saves, um, wear and tear, and you can, by catching less fish you can extend your tow time.

5. Placement of turtle excluder (01:13)

Matthews: I'm trying to get an image of what this looks like, cause the net is kind of like a long sock or whatever and where would the excluder be, ok, would it be...

Morrison: About above the ankle, in other words, it would be your foot, say it would be the tail back or the tail end of the net and the excluder works to kick it out, your trash out before you get to that, but it's back in there, in the forehand of the net but it depends, of course depends on the size of the net, but the um, larger nets it's pretty well back.

Matthews: Now, how would they get out of they already go that far into the net before they hit the excluder?

Morrison: You got a barrier there that's on an angle and you got a hole at the top of that point of the barrier, and the barrier is a triangle and it's turned up, and so would [unintelligible], and whatever follows up from [unintelligible] you get to the point of the triangle you just cut a hole and everything goes through that.

6. Making nets (00:58)

Morrison: Well, it's like making a dress, you get the, you buy the material and you cut it and shape it and sew it together, and that's, um, for somebody like me it's a terrible ordeal, for somebody that really knows how to sew it's amazing to watch them.

Matthews: Have you ever made your own nets?

Morrison: Yeah I can, I have, I know, I understand how they are made, and I can make a net, but it's like the blind leading the blind, I could take you and show you how to make a net and then I could carry you and show you somebody that can make them so much faster it's pathetic.

7. Using hand signals (02:43)

Morrison: We would use hand signals almost like, like semaphore.

Matthews: Really?

Morrison: Yeah.

Matthews: What kind of hand signals? To each other from boat to boat?

Morrison: Yeah.

Matthews: What kinds of things would you....

Morrison: Tell each other how many shrimp we were catching, and um, if we were using a tri-net, we can tell them how many shrimp we had on the tri and then signal how many shrimp we had on the tow.

Matthews: Oh, really?

Morrison: Yeah, and you can look and see where the other fellow was and if you passed you knew, if he was doing better or you were doing better.

Matthews: Uh-huh, would you tell the truth though?

Morrison: <Laughs> Some of them would tell the truth and some of would tell a bold face lie.

Matthews: What is some of the hand signals you could use to let people know?

Morrison: Well, if you were counting you- just 10, 20, 30....

Matthews: Oh, just flashing your hands.

Morrison: Yeah, um....

Matthews: How would you, you know, if there was something on the, if you were trying to tell them what you caught on the tri-net?

Morrison: Well, you would signal 10, 20, 30 or more or less, and then if you were signaling the other way a basket, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, whatever you're at.

Matthews: Oh, so....

Morrison: Half basket, quarter basket, if you wanted to be accurate.

Matthews: So a circle with you finger around, looping around would be baskets?

Morrison: Or if you were a little further apart you could use a hat so they could tell.

Matthews: Oh ok, and then if you're, I'm thinking about the tape recorder cause it won't know what we are doing, um, if you wanted to do a half basket you just do palms straight out across your chest, and then um, you said a quarter basket....

Morrison: You know, small amount you just....

Matthews: So this uh, flashing of the hands that be the tri-net?

Morrison: Yeah, so if you, if you were far enough apart you would raise your arms high, and you could see for a half-a-mile, quarter-a-mile.

Matthews: Yeah, I'm sure you could, and if you were circling around that's what you actually caught.

Morrison: Um-hum.

Matthews: Uh, in terms of baskets, and that would be on one pass of the net?

Morrison: Yeah.

