



Ben Newton

*Interviewed by Michael Chiarappa*

**1. Different Boat Lengths (00:36)**

**B. Newton:** A fourteen foot is as long as I could get plywood.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Marine Plywood.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** And then...I could drop down to a twelve.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Then I could drop down to a ten.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** And a ten is as short as you'd want in a boat....

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** In the river.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Now I have built eight foot boats.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** But....that's just a single man pond boat.

**2. Boat dimensions (00:59)**

**B. Newton:** You got a narrow boat.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um h-

**B. Newton:** This is, uh, what we call a [slope] boat....but the reason you make it that small...is because when you go in the narrow water and the trees are real close together.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** You have to get between'em.

**M. Chiarappa:** Right, right, right.

**B. Newton:** And....a wide boat, say a thirty-two inch boat wont make it.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum. Um hum.

**B. Newton:** But a twenty-eight inch boat....now that's twenty-eight at the bottom, it's wider at the top.

**M. Chiarappa:** righ-

**B. Newton:** Wanted to get that clear.

**M. Chiarappa:** Is that twenty-eight in the middle....Is that in the middle of the boat?

**B. Newton:** No, that's the widest part in the bottom.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** The sides come up fifteen degrees.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um, um hum, um hum, and how high are the sides <mumble>-?

**B. Newton:** Twelve inches.

**M. Chiarappa:** Twelve inches. Really? Uh huh-

**B. Newton:** Twelve inches and when you put the reel on you got thirteen inches.

### **3. Fish Well (00:39)**

**M. Chiarappa:** I saw one [*he obviously means boat here, but doesn't say it*] that had a little box built in it....in the center of it.

**B. Newton:** No! That's a fish well.

**M. Chiarappa:** Oh, is that what it is?

**B. Newton:** Th-There you put your fish in there!

**M. Chiarappa:** Oh....Ok. I s-

**B. Newton:** I-I-I built them.

**M. Chiarappa:** Oh really-

**B. Newton:** Now they cost extra.

**M. Chiarappa:** Oh really? Uh huh.

**B. Newton:** But you build a fish well and drill a hole in the bottom of the boat....and that stays full of water.

**M. Chiarappa:** Ok. Ok. See I didn't look hm....I-I didn't see....I didn't look real closely. I saw it from a distance. I saw it-

**B. Newton:** <Exasperatedly> You see. You see. You Yankees don't know nothing.

<M. Chiarappa laughs>

**B. Newton:** I mean...I...well I shouldn't-

**M. Chiarappa:** Ah, it's great. No <laughs>.

#### **4. Maneuverability (1:21)**

**B. Newton:** You have a flat-end boat....which is a common boat in this country.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum...hmm.

**B. Newton:** You can pull straight up to the log.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** And the man in the front can walk out-

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** And can pull the front end of the boat up on the log.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum. Um hum.

**B. Newton:** The man in the back, can walk up, and step on the log.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** And you pull the boat over.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** An-and th-that flat-end boat i-is so much better than the sharp-end boat.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum, Um hum, Um hum.

**B. Newton:** I-In that manner.

**M. Chiarappa:** Right...right, ok.

**B. Newton:** But, th-there's no other manner that...I'd take a sharp-end boat runs the best.

**M. Chiarappa:** Uh huh.

**B. Newton:** But...uh

**M. Chiarappa:** Right...but it's not...but you don't have that, maneuverability with it, you know, that you'd have like you say-

**B. Newton:** Well, we get in places, where the water's real shallow.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** A-And...the man in the front can step out in knee-deep water...or...less than that...six inches of water and pull the boat over, and go over that little gap.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** A-And we can both get back in an-

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** No problem.

### **5. Building boat (2:10)**

**B. Newton:** You start with the bottom....and you built it.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** ....and you run your little strip, down the side.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum, um hum.

**B. Newton:** You put them on fifteen degrees.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum....ok.

**B. Newton:** For the angle....of the sides coming up.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Alright? Then you cut all your little strips in between, uh, on about two foot centers....and you nail them to the bottom.

**M. Chiarappa:** These strips that go....Ok you have the strips that come down the sides, on the bottom. Then you put strips that go across on the bottom, as well?

**B. Newton:** Oh yeah! Every two feet.

**M. Chiarappa:** Now are they on the outside of the boat or the inside-

**B. Newton:** Inside-

**M. Chiarappa:** Oh, this is inside, right, ok.

**B. Newton:** Everything's inside, the only strip on the bottom is the little-

**M. Chiarappa:** Strips on the-

**B. Newton:** A quarter inch strip I was telling you about.

**M. Chiarappa:** Right, so this is th-the ribbing. Is that what....they would inside the boat?

**B. Newton:** Yeah, that would be the R-ribbing or the stability.

**M. Chiarappa:** Uh huh, uh, ok.

**B. Newton:** So when you step in the boat....you not stepping on three bottoms.

**M. Chiarappa:** <chuckle> Yeah.

**B. Newton:** You got....something to hold you up.

**M. Chiarappa:** Right.

**B. Newton:** I...and when you finish all that...you cut...a board in the front.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** A front seat, which is of no use except, [know], step on.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Uh...and you cut a board...a seat...about...two-thirds of the way up to the front.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** That's for the first fisherman.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Then you go right in the back...and put another seat. Now if you're gonna run a motor, you might pull that seat four inches off the back.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** In other words, you get your....

**M. Chiarappa:** Exactly, give you some-

**B. Newton:** Give you some leverage behind you.

## **6. Selling boats (00:38)**

**B. Newton:** I carried'em to Orangeburg...Columbia

**M. Chiarappa:** Really?

**B. Newton:** A-And everywhere just distributing the boats.

**M. Chiarappa:** Really?

**B. Newton:** I'd tell the man. He'd say, "Well [bout] you want for that boat? A hundred dollars." I said, "I want sixty dollars." He said, "Man you jokin'." I said, "No." He said well, "I'll take four of em." I said, "Well help yourself." And I didn't have but a pickup load.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** Wasn't bout about four or five on the pickup.

**M. Chiarappa:** Hmm, um hum.

**B. Newton:** But, I made money.

**7. Quality of his boats (00:31)**

**B. Newton:** The word got around that I could build a good boat.

**M. Chiarappa:** Um hum.

**B. Newton:** ....A-And man tell me his boat leaked. I'd say, "If it leaks...just bring it back to the house and put it there in the shed...I'll build you another one."

**M. Chiarappa:** Hmm.

**B. Newton:** I ain't never had one bring one back yet.

**M. Chiarappa:** Hmm....that's great.

**B. Newton:** I mean....I build a boat....the way one, ought to be built.