

“Once was a time you could get up in the morning, put your white boots on and go to work. Not so anymore.

Nowadays you almost need licenses to spit and if you have one and your fellow waterman doesn't, well he ain't getting one.

When I was sixteen I quit school and went to work on the water, sort of a family tradition. I started crabbing in early spring. There was no time limit then when you could start; you went by the water temperature. Nowadays, you go by the date.

I started out in Bull's Landing on the seaside for a couple of weeks then I'd go around to the bay at Cape Charles Harbor. Stay there till the following spring.

Oh now things have changed. The harbor, as it is referred to then and now is quite a different place. A little ditch with three or four poles stuck in the mud where we used to tie up. The place is called the inner basin today. Then along came progress. They dug it out and made a basin, put in boat slips, but no port-a-potties, we all still used the bucket.

Then came watermen from places such as Tangier, Deep Creek, Chesconnessex, Onancock, Occohannock and all points in between. Then came the harbormaster, Mrs. Mary, mom to me, she was there for 30 years, hard, but fair. Funny that when she left resources declined, might ought to bring her back, nah, leave good memories alone.

When the day was over you might come back and tie up at the clam dock, Jim's, Mrs. Mary's, the fish dock, coal shoot, the Coast Guard or others. Then come 4 am the next day it all started over again.

I am blessed with a son who quit school (family tradition) and works with me, my wife loves me, my dog loves me, I got married over by mom's dock, hell it doesn't get any better than that.

P.S. An old waterman, who was my best friend, once told me that people like me and you are going to die going to work, working or coming from work. That's exactly what he did.”

Written by Captain Cox, local Cape Charles Waterman.

Changing Times of a Waterman



Cape Charles Interpretive Exhibits

