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Transcript of Wrestling with a Shark

James A. Coon

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Title: Wrestling with a Shark

Storyteller: James A. (Jim) Coon

Interviewer: Casee Clark

Interview Date: 2011-07-29

Collection: *Launching through the Surf: The Dory Fleet of Pacific City*

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Transcriber: Mary Beth Jones

JAMES COON: James A. Coon. I started commercial fishing on my own in 1958. Was in high school, and so, uh, went down and asked Dad¹ if I could use his boat and commercial fished out of Pacific City.

I saw sharks. I caught the largest shark—almost—uh, ever caught at Pacific City. Was fishing with a, a square stern dory. The square stern dory was about 22 feet, so I had 22-foot poles that were made out of small trees uh, that extended from each side of the boat. About eight or nine feet from the boat are lines with 40- or 45-pound leads that are called deeps, and then out on the tip are lines that are, oh, 50 or 60 feet behind the boat, held up by a float so that you're fishing, uh, two lines from each side of the boat and then you're, most of the dories were fishing, one line from the middle of the stern. Trolling along just north of the rock, and all of a sudden the whole pole starts shaking, which they never do. My goodness, what have I got? And I just turned and kind of panicked, that float went underwater and went toward the stern. And uh, about that time, the stern float goes under—and the stern davit was an inch and a half or two inch galvanized pipe—and it bent over, straight toward the back, and I'm being pulled backwards. And I'm in a pretty good panic mode, looking for the pliers and can't find 'em.

[Clears throat] And at any rate, well, what am I gonna do? The boat slowed down, and I thought, “No, I’m not gonna let it get away with it,” and I went back and took the brake off of the stern. And I would crank it a little bit, and then it would go out real quick. I finally got up to the stern of the boat, it was—I don’t know how long the shark itself was. I cut its tail off. The tail was three inches short of being seven feet long, and uh, threw that in the boat and then got all my gear that was tangled on the back and the sides of the shar—shark off the shark, and then drat the thing kinda did a funny roll and went down in the water, it was dead. But uh, one of the tel—one of the television stations in Portland came down and took movies of the—how big the shark tail was and all that. I would’ve tried a lot harder to keep the shark, or to make sure I got it when I—after I found out that it was a thresher shark and they were quite valuable, and I didn’t have any idea. So.

NOTES:

¹ James C. (Jim) Coon