

## Voices of Southern Hospitality: An Oral History Project

**Interviewee:** Harris, Theresa

**Place of Interview:**

**Date of Interview:** 2018-06-19

**Interviewed by:** Astor, Allie

**Date of Transcription:** 2019-08-05

**Transcribed by:** Davis, Alexis

**Length of Interview:** 00:39:22

**Keywords and Subject Headings:** Charleston, Mount Pleasant, southern hospitality, coastline, downtown, environment, fishing, government, hospitality, recycle, tourism, tourists

**Abstract:** In this interview, Theresa Harris talks about what brought her back to the United States after being abroad and how she ended up in Charleston for the last 20 years. Her activities mainly revolved around work and her son until her husband had the idea to start a fishing charter company. She gives details about her clientele, which is mainly comprised of tourists, and how she has been able to attract them. She describes the immense growth that she has experienced since establishing the business. Theresa then defines what southern hospitality meant to her when she lived in the North and what it means to her now. She notices the differences among all the cities in the tri-county. To close out the interview, she talks about the importance of preserving the Charleston coastline and the problems that have arisen--offshore drilling, overfishing, and the effects of natural disasters--that are threatening the environment and the seafood industry. She hopes that an advocate will rise to represent the city that she loves more than anywhere else.

**Biographical Note:** Theresa Harris was born in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota. When she turned 18, she left home to go abroad and work for the government in administration and logistics. She was also a travel agent for 15 years. She came back to the United States to let her son experience the culture, and she ended up in Charleston after job hunting. Her first job was in the Public Service Department at the Town of Mount Pleasant. After marrying, she and her husband worked on the Air Force Base for a number of years before undertaking her husband's dream to start a fishing charter company. Since 2004, Theresa and her husband have been captains of The Reel Deal Charters based in the Mount Pleasant area.

### **Project Details:**

In the summer of 2018, student researchers from the College of Charleston conducted oral histories for the research project, *Voices of Southern Hospitality*. The project documents diverse

opinions and stories about southern hospitality in Charleston, South Carolina, but also offers a deeper and more intimate history of a changing community. Over the past thirty years (early-1990s to 2018), the Charleston peninsula and its surrounding islands have experienced rapid economic growth and rapid cultural and ecological changes. The *Voices of Southern Hospitality* project chronicles this profound transformation with the personal histories of Charleston residents.

The project was launched in June 2018 with funding from The Committee for Innovative Teaching and Learning in the Liberal Arts and Sciences at the College of Charleston. In addition to documenting important stories, the project was designed to train College of Charleston students in oral history research methods.

### **Interview Begin**

**[Interviewer Initials]:** A.A.

**Interviewee Initials]:** T.H.

**AA:** So, my first question to you is have you lived in Charleston your whole life, born and raised here, or what brought you to the Charleston area?

**TH:** So, I have not lived here my whole life. I've been here 20--it'll be 20 years in August. And what brought me here was work. I was abroad, working overseas for the government. And, long story short, I had a son that didn't know what the circus was, so I realized I had to bring him back to the United States, and I was chasing a job. So, I marketed this area and Washington state. My parents had just retired into Florida. And so, I thought it'd be a great opportunity for me to live near enough to have holidays with them. So, I moved here from halfway around the world. I didn't know anybody. I had no job. I had nothing, so.

**AA:** Impressive.

**TH:** Yeah. (laughing)

**AA:** So, what did you do when you first got here? What was, kind of, the job that you found then?

**TH:** My first job, I worked at the Town of Mount Pleasant in the Public Service Department just answering phones and--just it was really customer service, is what it was for people that lived in the town of Mount Pleasant. That was my first job that I had here.

**AA:** All right. And what did you do for fun when you first got here? What was your pastimes? What did you find within the community that kind of drew your attention?

**TH:** Really... Well, I had culture shock because I had been abroad for so many years, so we didn't understand that Jerry Springer was just a show. I thought that was real. I really did. (laughing) And so, having a nine-year-old son, most of my social activities was based on him, you know, boy scouts, basketball practice. The things that he did, you know, I was doing 'cause I was a single mother working and with him. And so that--you know, we would go frequent a waterpark or something, maybe a RiverDogs game or something in the community. But that was about it.

**AA:** And so, what got you into the line of work you do now?

**TH:** As far as this goes, as far as a fishing charter company, I worked in... My whole career from the time I was 18 and left home, I worked in administration, logistics. When I lived in Japan, I actually ran an airport, and then I went from logistics into travel. And so, I had 15 years as a travel agent. So, when my husband was retiring from the military, I told him, "You got to find a job. Do something. Whatever you love, you know, do it. You've given 22 years to the government. Let's do what you want to do." And he said, "If I had my dream come true, it would be to start a fishing charter company." And I said, "Well, do it, and we'll make it work." Because I knew my background in admin, logistics and travel would help him have a company. I mean, we just knew it would work.

**AA:** And so how did that come to fruition? So, you had this idea to create a fish charter company and then what were your next steps in that?

**TH:** It was--our first step was for him to go to school to become a captain, get his licensing correct, buy a boat and actually do the business startup, you know. You establish the LLC, you set up all the, you know, bank accounts, credit cards, all the stuff that you need to operate a business. And then I actually had a job at the time; I worked for the government. And so, I would help him with this when I got home in the evenings, on my weekends, and I had Wednesdays off. So, I had a four-day work week. So, Wednesday all day, and then Saturday and Sunday all day. [Phone rings; conversation interrupted for a time]. I don't remember where we were.

**AA:** So, we were just talking about kind of getting started up and how you got into the business. So, when you were first starting this business, who was your main clientele? Who were the people that you were looking to bring into your fishing charter business?

**TH:** Tourists. Total, total tourists.

**AA:** What year was this?

**TH:** 2004 we started; the end of 2004.

**AA:** Okay. And how would you describe the tourist scene in Charleston at that time?

**TH:** You know, at then, because we worked... We worked on the Air Force Base for a number of years, so we never understood how Charleston, how South Carolina tourism was their biggest industry back in those days. So, we didn't understand it, but we got open to it really fast. A friend of mine in the travel industry really opened our eyes. We had a meeting with her. We were just chatting, and we went out for dinner and she said, "What are you guys gonna do?" And we told her, and then she kind of really opened our eyes to what it was. And so, we grew learning about the tourism industry, but we didn't see it. Living here locally, living up in, like, you know, Ladson, Moncks Corner, working at the Air Force Base, we weren't affected by the tourism. We just didn't know. We heard that it existed, but we didn't know that it existed.

**AA:** So, what did you find the most effective way to draw in these clients? Were you online? Were you kind of... I guess, had outlets in the downtown area where there was more interaction with them? Or what was your approach to engaging these tourists?

**TH:** As far as, like, advertising? How--

**AA:** Yeah, and kind of getting tourists to see--

**TH:** You know, back in those days we had phone books, so phone books, obviously. Joining, you know, agencies that worked in travel, like the Visitors Bureau. That's very detrimental to the tourism industry in the state, especially in the Charleston area. And so, we just met people networking through that. Phone books. The worldwide web--owning a website back in those days was like, oh my God; nobody owned them. So, that was really hit or miss. So, we did get a website established very young in our journey. And the other thing was Google. At some point, a couple of years in--maybe, yeah, maybe one or two years into this, we were invited to one of those seminars. They send you the postcard: come and you would get, like, an MP3 player--which is outdated now. But we didn't even know what an MP3 player was. We didn't know how to put the music in it, you know, but we didn't know. But you go to this thing, listen to their spiel and then you get a free MP3 player. So, we went to it and Google was only a concept at that time. And so, they were pitching the concept of what they were planning to do. And so, we joined Google as one of their initial investors, like doing the processes with them. And so, because we were one of their initial clients, then we have favorable--like, they do a lot for us, probably more than they do somebody that would be starting today. We're not paying the same rates as other people. We were... I think we have, like, a grandfather--we're

grandfathered in with them because we've been around. Yeah. So, it's ironic because for you to do this paper now, in 2014 or in, you know, 2004, how old were you? You know, you go back, we were still on a flip phone. Smartphones were non-existent. You know, Internet, the wireless Internet wasn't even around. I mean, it just didn't exist. So, we've had to, you know... Conceptually, we targeted tourists on phone books, having a website, joining Google when they were a concept, and going through the motions. That's how we worked it.

**AA:** Yeah, absolutely. Kind of going off that point of how things have changed over time, how has tourism--have you noticed a change in tourism throughout the past 14 years?

**TH:** Absolutely.

**AA:** Can you describe those changes?

**TH:** The changes have definitely been a growth because, especially when I go back to, like, '08, which was a recession year. We grew our company, I think, hundreds of percent the year of the recession. And so, what we found was that, as the country was in a total recession, losing jobs, losing houses, losing their dogs and everything else, people were still coming to Charleston rather than doing that two week in Aruba or one week in Florida; people knew that they could come here. And the CVB was instrumental in promoting that at the time, that you can still afford to take a mini vacation and come to Charleston, South Carolina for a weekend or a longer weekend, a holiday or something like that and still make it affordable to have activities. So, we really felt that here... I mean, we were growing, growing, growing, but we would see the world news was totally different, but not in the Charleston area.

**AA:** Yeah, definitely an interesting... How certain industries have different impacts.

**TH:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**AA:** So, if you had to pinpoint throughout your time starting your business, pinpoint a time when you really saw that increase start, would it be 2008 or when would you pinpoint the big boom in tourism for your company?

**TH:** I would say 2008 was really starting... we started increasing 'cause we went from, like, one boat to three boats. And so, we knew that there was enough work to bring other people in. And so, we started bringing other people in 'cause like right now we're, I mean, we're 20 boats, 20 captains. We probably do anywhere between 1500 and 1800 trips a year, which is a lot. But I want to say that the recession is probably the something that really gave us the push to grow.

**AA:** Definitely. And can you just describe to me what--if a tourist was to come to you and say, "We want to go out on charter," can you describe to me what your trips include and what your business, I guess, essentially is? Like, what do you guys do?

**TH:** So, we do everything on the water. Everything. We do mainly fishing, but we do other things as well. As far as when the customers contact us, we believe on 100% customers, we speak. We're not online. We don't book online. We want to talk to them so that we know they're on the right trip for them. Like, there's safety issues. You wouldn't want to take a two-year-old deep sea, but there are people that don't understand the differences. So, we stay on that old-fashioned premise that we want to talk to you. If you've never fished a day in your life, you're not going to want to spend \$2,600 to go do that because it's unbeknownst to you. Then you get out there and you paid a couple grand and you get seasick. That's not for you. So, we want to try to wage what your thoughts are, what your, you know, your demographics is and what you're thinking, you know, and then move the conversation in the right direction so that you would be on the right trip.

**AA:** And what areas do you service? Are you mainly in the downtown harbor area or what waterways do you--

**TH:** As far as the boats, the boats are in the waterway. So, we fish the rivers, creeks, intercoastal waterway, the harbor, the reef, the shelf, the continental shelf and the Gulf Stream. We go all the way out there. So, from skinny water all the way to, you know, the Gulf Stream. But as far as servicing the area, we look at it not just being Charleston, we look at it really as a tri-county area. So, we have customers that come to the saltwater from, you know--I mean, we even get a great deal of customers from the upstate, from Columbia. They want to come, they're coming in for the weekend or a lot of people, you know, like somebody in our family, she grew up in Charlotte, but they always had a summer home here. So, her whole life, Charleston's been her second home, and so they come here. So, you know, we're trying to facilitate all people from everywhere.

**AA:** Definitely. And where in the world do you find that most of your tourist attraction comes from? Is it like the South Carolina upstate area or do you get a lot of people from all around?

**TH:** We--I'll say Ohio as a joke 'cause everybody dogs the people from Ohio. We love all the people from Ohio. They help us pay our bills, you know, so. There's a... You know, the landlocked states are very much so when it comes to, like, spring break and summer vacations and stuff. That Indiana, Illinois, Ohio. We don't see a lot from Vermont or Minnesota where I'm from, you know, but we definitely see a lot from the tri-state area. The Georgia people come from Georgia for the weekends. Some Florida; Florida has so much coastline down there. Not a whole bunch, but we do see some. North Carolina, obviously Charlotte's just a hop, skip and a

jump. So, it's a wide influx because we handle people from abroad. We've handled people from, you know, we get a lot of international people. We get... People come in--we've got a guy coming in tonight, flying in from California to go fishing, you know. And it's just... Everything is different because, you know, you get the single mother bringing her son. We've had that where he got a straight A report card, and that was his thing. The guy that's coming in tonight from California, he's a mogul; he's being flown in on his private jet. So, you know, I mean it's from A to Z, you know, so we get all... We get them from really everywhere. There's not one central location that we do.

**AA:** That's really cool.

**TH:** The upstate has a lot of potential because a lot of those people own family properties at Wild Dunes. I don't know, but I think Wild Dunes was the kind of place, like, you know, when I was a kid, when they were building it or something, that it was like a timeshare type deal. People were buying into it. And those have been passed generation to generation. So, you know, we do see a lot of those people from the upstate. Then they usually have a place at Wild Dunes, and they come a couple of times a year.

**AA:** Definitely. And in your experience, what features of Charleston interest the tourists the most? What do people attribute to the reasoning for coming to the Charleston area?

**TH:** I think it's the... I'd have to say it's just the overall hospitality because you get people that go to the beach and then you get people that don't want to, you know, they come to golf. I think it's gotta be the hospitality. I don't think it's any one thing. I think it's just the overall experience. The food is different than anywhere in the world. The hospitality, I think, is different than anywhere in the world. The adventures--you can do as little or as much as you want. You can come with a highly filled itinerary or you can come with nothing to do and just lay around. It doesn't matter.

**AA:** Yeah. And so, kind of going off the hospitality point, as this is *Voices of Southern Hospitality*, what does southern hospitality mean to you and what do you find that people expect southern hospitality to be when they get here?

**TH:** You know, I think the term, and I say this because I'm a Yankee--so, southern hospitality, what I always believed when I, you know, lived up North and I had never visited, I thought that everyone was, you know, genuine and sweet and all that. And I don't think it's that. I don't believe everyone is genuine and sweet and happy and all that. What I believe is that it's just like that old fashion respect. "Yes sir. No sir." Go out of your way. Yeah. I mean, you know, in Charleston, not everyone is as helpful as you want them to be, you know that. And I know that. But I think overall in our industry, if somebody were to call me and say, "Hey, we got a

question. It's not about fishing. Can you help us?" I'm going to help them because this is my job, and it's a reflection on me; and it's always a "yes ma'am, no sir" kind of answer, and you'd go out of your way. You know, 'cause when you go to somewhere else, I think it's always nice to have somebody to call. We had a call one time. They were at the beach, a family that had fished with us. They were at the beach swimming, the kid got bit by a jellyfish and they had no idea what to do. And so, we told them what to do. We had another family call. There were tornado warnings here and they were from, you know, New York; they don't have tornadoes there. And they called us and they're like, "What do we do? We don't know. What are we supposed to do?" So, you know, we try to build a bridge so that people know they can call us. We're real people, we're obtainable and we're here to help them.

**AA:** Definitely. And what is your interaction with the tourists? Obviously you take the phone calls. Do you ever go out on the charters with them or what is your direct engagement with the tourists?

**TH:** I speak to them, I get them set up, I get them situated, and I'm always a phone call away. Other than that, on occasion I'll get away and go have drinks with somebody or meet them, you know, if I can schedule it because I work so that 20 other people can stay working. So, it's a lot that I do. If I could hire another me, I'd be okay. But yeah, I meet some of them, but I get to know them over the phone. So, like, we might have regular old customers that have been fishing years and years and years with us. And so, I wouldn't know them if I saw them, but they call me, and I know them by name. I know them by voice. So, you know, that's about my only interaction.

**AA:** Yeah, definitely. That's really--it is interesting to think how this whole, like, people from everywhere coming together to this one place and it's your job to get them into that charter.

**TH:** Yeah. Try to figure it all out.

**AA:** So, how has Charleston--with all these tourists and this increase in tourists--changed since you first got here?

**TH:** Oh my gosh. I mean, well, when I first got here, we didn't have the growth that we have now. So, obviously, but I don't think that's tourist based. I think that's job based. I think that's finances with, you know, big companies coming in, Boeing and Google and you know, all these other companies growing. I think that the tourism--I have to say, if anything, the tourism had growth in opportunities because we have more hotels, we have more restaurants than we used to. We have more excursions. Like, you used to not be able to do--what's that thing called? Like, parasailing, but now you can go parasailing. You have, you know, the kayaks, the SUPs, that's



pretty relatively new, but somebody saw a market for that. So, I want to say that the tourist growth probably made more opportunities for everybody.

**AA:** And have you noticed a change in the demographic of people that live in the Charleston area since when you first moved here?

**TH:** No. No, not really. I mean, living in Mount Pleasant now, this isn't where I lived before. We had to move here because of work. So, we lived in, like, Ladson and then Moncks Corner and then we moved to Mount Pleasant to get closer to the water because it was our work. So, you know, with the growth here in Mount Pleasant, once you live in Mount Pleasant, most people-- we don't leave town. We really don't. We say everything here. And I think that's true about James Island people; they stay on James Island, all their businesses conducted. So, yeah I mean growth, there's a lot of growth but I don't see--other than, you know, growth and the infrastructure being really overwhelmed. That's about all I can say on that.

**AA:** Gotcha. And do you get into the downtown area often and if you go to other areas, do you get a different perspective or do you kind of feel that that applies to--?

**TH:** If we go downtown, it might be for dinner or something like that, but it's an occasion for us to go downtown. I go down for business, you know, to get my haircut, but that's--we don't go downtown. It's not the place 'cause it's so saturated with tourism. Like, no matter where you go, it's going to be more saturated. You go there, you're waiting an hour and a half for a table, you know. So, we don't, but the one thing that when you ask that question that I'm thinking of is to me, everywhere you go in this tri-county area, if it's James Island, Folly Beach, Mount Pleasant, Isle of Palms, downtown Charleston, wherever you go, it's like a separate little world. Like, how they dress and act in Summerville is totally different than how they dress and act in downtown Charleston. So, everything is real structured around where they live. Like, I always tell people the, you know, the surfers live at Folly, and that's the general rule of thumb. The hippies, you know, people and I have friends that live on James Island and they're just real hippie, you know? I mean, but it's like generalizations. I think that, you know, people say that in Mount Pleasant it's fake. It's Mount Plastic, you know, and yeah, it is. But I mean there's--we do have normal people. I'm pretty normal, I think. (laughing) So, yeah. I mean, so every little place is different. When you--like, you went to school downtown, so you wear dresses and, what, Jack Rogers?

**AA:** Sandals (laughing).

**TH:** Yeah. So, but you know, you go to James Island and they're wearing Birkenstocks and shorts. So, it's just very--even the guys; the guys fashion, you see the difference.

**AA:** So, what is your favorite place in Charleston?

**TH:** Like, to do what?

**AA:** Do you have, like--since you moved here--kind of a spot that has grown to be like... if you're not going to be at your home, you want to be at this place?

**TH:** I'm always home. I work from home, so I'm always home. I'm just always home. When I travel, when I vacation, I'm gone. But I'm excited to come home 'cause I love Charleston. So, no, I mean I have my favorite restaurant: Hall's Chophouse downtown. I have... Just really, no, we work such... Because of the work we do, 12-hour days, we don't--seven days a week. We don't have a lot of opportunities to say, oh, let's go screw around. If we can catch a movie at 9:00 at night on a Friday, we're lucky, you know, I mean, so.

**AA:** How has your workload changed in the face of all these tourists coming? Obviously you say you work really long hours.

**TH:** It's greater. It's greater. Yeah.

**AA:** Like, how has that shifted from in 2004 when you first started to now?

**TH:** I was really working part time just to try to help offset, you know, us doing this as a joint venture, my husband and I. But now, I mean I'm here, I answer calls 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and I have staff that help me with other things and then, so it's just totally insane. It's insane. That's all I can say. It's totally insane.

**AA:** Definitely. So, with this larger burst of tourism, how do you think that tourism interacts with the environment?

**TH:** I think it does a lot, especially in what we do. So, we get a lot of people that come here and want to fish, and they want to fill their freezer, fill their freezer, fill their freezer. And to me that's just... I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but I'm saying that based on history, like our grandfathers would keep everything that they caught. So, the rules had to come into play at some point. So, the rules now are very strict because we're struggling to save our environment. We are. And so, I get that from that perspective. That's not to say that you can't, you know, have a meal, a nice you can take some fish back with you and enjoy the overall experience. I just think that the environment has everything to do with us, you know. For us especially, you know, global warming has an effect on us. The fishing shortages, the fish kills from the snow we had in January. I mean the hurricanes, the flooding, all that stuff affects the fishing for us. And so, the environment is key. It is.

**AA:** Yeah, absolutely. And you mentioned how there's rules that have to be put in place. How have you--like what rules and regulations have you interacted with in your 14 years of doing this in Charleston?

**TH:** Well, besides the laws of running a business--the IRS, the Secretary of State and things like that--the rules about fish. So, there's size limits, there's slot limits, there's number limits. Like, you can only keep so many of a certain species, and every year the belt is getting tighter and tighter. So, like the true American red snappers and offshore fish, you see them in pictures, you see them on a menu, but if they're saying they're a local snapper, they're lying because the federal government closed it down. It's been nine years that that fish, you can catch them, but you cannot keep them. And so, we've had three days a year, four days a year, maybe five; last year we had zero. So, what we find is because the laws are so strict, people call and when they know those dates, if we get dates, they know those dates. They want to go and catch and keep everything they can. So, I don't even know what to say 'cause I don't know that the data that the scientists submit to the federal government, I don't know that it's accurate. But then again, our federal government allows Vietnamese and Japanese boats to come in and keep whatever the hell they want. So, you know, I think the rules should be fair and equitable for everybody in our water, not just the US. Like, our rules as a charter captain are the same rules if you had a saltwater license; we fall under the same rule. So, it is what it is.

**AA:** Yeah. And have you noticed, oh, so there's rules and laws and then there's this new... there's the debate over drilling off the coast, there's the pumping of sand into Wild Dunes. Have you noticed changes in the environment due to those kinds of processes?

**TH:** No, no. I mean we all have our opinions about what we want and what, you know, what we feel. Because it's, you know, it's an individual decision, but I don't think any of that has impacted. I will say this: if they do dig the oil fields, that will have a huge impact on our offshore fishing. And we don't know... We don't know what it is. We can only look to somewhere in Louisiana that has gone through this. And, you know, there's an instant, like, they're gonna screw it up initially, but then it will get better over time. But that could be your lifetime, your children's lifetime, your grandchildren's lifetime. We don't know how long that frame is. I don't know.

**AA:** Yeah. And then in terms of you--obviously we were talking about snapper earlier and I'm sure there's a wide array of different species that you guys go out to catch that draw people in. Have you noticed changes in the availability of certain fish in different... like, availability of people who are like, "Oh, I want to catch this fish," and now...?

**TH:** Yeah, I mean, yes and no. I mean, people know what specifically they want to target and if not, we can try to lead them to what, you know, what we think based on what they're telling

us. A lot of people do call, and they already know, "This is what I want to catch regardless." So, in that sense, yes. You know, but then some people have no idea. So, yeah. There's not really an answer, it's just kind of--yeah.

**AA:** I appreciate whatever you have. And do you notice a difference between how tourists and locals interact with the environment while they're down here visiting?

**TH:** You know, I can't say that I do. I will say this, that the rules that we have now, like, you know, 10 years ago, even 20 years ago, we didn't have recycle. And so, when we moved to Mount Pleasant 10 years ago, we were one of the subdivisions that was just new to the recycle program. And now the recycle program is so easy, like, I can't understand why somebody wouldn't. So, then when you get the tourists in and you go to tourist spots, you don't see any recycle cabinets, you know, like a recycle trashcan for soda bottles or water bottles or--all you see is just a trash can. So, everything goes into the trashcan. So, I think that there's things that our local government could do better to try to mesh those two things so that it's the same thing because... I mean there's no sense in getting--I think what's going to be a big factor in this is next year when we go to the no straw, no Styrofoam, no plastic. We had some friends here last week, and she was mad because everywhere she went to have a drink, they would give her the paper straw versus the plastic. And I told her this is going to be the new norm. So, businesses have to work into it 'cause there's not going to be, like, a dead date and today you're getting plastic and tomorrow you're getting paper. I think, from a business perspective, owners of businesses are gradually making the changes so that they're not flabbergasted when the date comes. You know?

**AA:** Definitely. And when people call in to schedule charter boats, do you ever find there are people who look for this ecotourism perspective and care about your company's interaction with the environment?

**TH:** No, not really. People don't care. I mean we get--you know, we get some people that want to just do an eco-tour and go out and look at the birds and the turtles and the fish and you know, the dolphins and stuff like that. But, I don't think--I've never had anybody really ask. I mean, the one thing I would tell somebody is that if you're not gonna--if you kill a fish and your intention is not to take it home to eat, then don't kill it. And the one thing I don't do is, like, when the guys are out, I see other people, like, if you're shark fishing, they'll toss the shark up and let it flap down in the water. And my guys, no, don't do it. I don't want to see it. I don't want to hear about it. Because if you have that one person that's on your boat and they're like me, I would be offended by that. Because just because it's a shark doesn't mean you have to hurt it, you know? I mean, I don't believe it. I'm not a PETA person. We eat meat; we eat what

my husband catches. My husband's a hunter. He's an avid outdoorsman. But I just want some sense and responsibility and I think if everyone used that responsibility, it would be better.

**AA:** Yeah. And I know you mentioned now your crew has grown to be like 20 or so people. Do you find that you all share that kind of value or do you think there's a variety?

**TH:** I think so. I think so. Especially this year a lot of things have come out of the woodwork because of the eight inches of snow, 21 days of freezing temperatures, and we had a huge fish kill. So, the big conversation months ago was how are we going to handle our customer base that wants fish to take home to eat. So, we had to have an open forum that everyone could voice their opinion, and we had to come up with a general consensus. Yes, we are going to promote in the office, on the phone and on the boat in person, we're going to promote catch and release to try to help the fish rebuild their populations; the ones that died, like, the sea trout especially, and the red fish. But we're not gonna forbid someone from getting a couple of keepers to take home. But if that's what they're wanting to do, we know up front, so then we would maybe go and target a different type of fish, not the trout and red fish that are so protected right now.

**AA:** That's really interesting. And so, do you often--do you find that you coordinate with other charter boats around these issues of decision making or is it more--?

**TH:** It's all in house. It's all in house, which they are all charter boats and captains. So, everyone has a voice here.

**AA:** Yeah, definitely. And so, these last two questions are going to be more like broad overview, kind of to get to closing remarks on the topic of southern hospitality and tourists in Charleston. How do you view the changes that have occurred in Charleston? Good, bad? What is your opinion on these changes that have been occurring?

**TH:** I think it's great. I'm one of the people that I'm not against growth because with growth comes opportunity and with opportunity, the sky's the limit. So, you know, if we wanted everything back the way it was 20 years ago or 40 years ago, I'm not from here, but a lot of people, they don't want the change. For me being in the tourism business--'cause that's what we are really, I mean that's our main client is the tourists--the growth has brought us great opportunities and growth opportunities. It's made better jobs for my son who's now, you know, he's almost 30. He has a great job in the area. They're staying here, you know. I mean, you're graduating from college. There's great opportunities here. So, be it, you know, you got to take the good with the bad. I welcome the change. I personally do, and I would probably have a lot of my... I would say half of my staff that were born and raised here that say, no, that's BS. But you know, I'm from a suburb from a major city, and so there was nothing not available to me

growing up. If we wanted to do something, we could go to the city. And I lived in the suburbs; we could do it in the suburbs or we can do it in the city better. You know, 'cause there was more stuff down there. But here I think with the small-town charm, we just have many opportunities now that we didn't have 20 years ago.

**AA:** And those people who voice their opposition to this growth, what are their main reasons for that?

**TH:** I don't know. Nothing ever stays the same. I mean, you know, your family structure. Look at that. Nothing never stays the same. A lot of parents, they raise their kids and they get divorced and the house, you know. You lose a family member, somebody dies. Internally, everything changes. And I think for somebody to go through life and really believe that everything should stay the same... I don't know. I don't get it. I have experienced the world. I left home 35 years ago, and I never went back because I was there 18 years. I got all I needed, and then I went out and I learned new things. I had to broaden my horizon. I had to broaden every viewpoint that I had in life, my political viewpoint, my cultural viewpoint. I had everything to broaden. And so, I think when people say that or they want it the way it used to be, they just don't know that the best still might be to come. You know? That's what I think. I welcome growth.

**AA:** Awesome. And so, as a closing question, what is your vision for the future of Charleston and how does tourism play into this future?

**TH:** I think that Charleston is doing a wonderful job in the tourism business. My only wish is that somebody in Charleston would identify with the fact that these waters off the coast are valuable and important. I don't think that Charleston as a whole even understands that fishing is a business. Fishing is an important part of this area. Not everybody golfs that comes here. The tourism and the local people that live here; there's more than just the beaches and the golf course. It's an industry that's not identified. And I think eventually what's going to happen is there's going to have to be a switch that somebody's gonna realize that there's a full industry out here and then they're gonna identify with it. And I think at that point then they're going to bring more to the table. I think those things, those issues that are gonna come upon us, like the offshore drilling and things like that, I think people will--if they have clear understanding, I think that there might be a change of opinion as far as do we want to do this? Do we not want to do this? Because the water is important. We're the Lowcountry. We have a shrimping--we used to have a huge shrimping fleet, and now we only have a few boats that shrimp. But everyone's so hip to, "Oh, are these shrimp local? Are these shrimp local?" Well, everything that happens in the water is going to affect those things. Do you want your kids to grow up on shrimp and grits or you know what I'm saying? And fishing is a very family-oriented thing. It's not like your dad goes to golf course on Saturday, and you don't see him until he comes home in the afternoon. I

think fishing is huge. And I think that it's more than just beaches and golf courses here. I think that somebody's going to have to identify with the water as being important.

**AA:** And who do you see being that advocate for that?

**TH:** I really don't know. I don't know. I don't know if it's going to be a mayor, you know, or somebody locally. A Congress person or a senator or somebody that grew up on the water. Be it fishing or shrimping or just enjoys it. It's going to be outdoor person. I don't want to say outdoorsman because it could be a woman. You know, it's going to be somebody that has a true passion and love for the outdoors. And I think that they're gonna have to voice their concern publicly and stand apart from the rest and say, "This is an important part of our culture. It's an important part of our land." And it separates us from Atlanta. I mean, Atlanta is a great city, but they don't have saltwater there. You know what I'm saying? We could be anybody if we didn't have our coastline. We could be anybody, you know. Our coastline's important.

**AA:** Yeah, definitely. So, the very last--you just mentioned some things that set Charleston apart. What, for you, are the key defining features of Charleston that make it the city it is today?

**TH:** I think the location. I think the history. I have to say the hospitality, be it southern or northern. It's just the general rule of thumb is that you welcome people. Welcome, you know, change. You're just welcoming to whatever differences. There's a lot of things that you can welcome. I think that those things set us apart. And, you know, obviously our location, location, location, you know. There's no place better to be than Charleston, South Carolina. You know, I say that. I've been many places, and I love where I live. I do, I do. I travel everywhere. When I'm in vacation mode, I'm gone, but I can't get home fast enough. And every time I'm on a plane somewhere coming home, I tell my husband, "I love where we live." That's it, you know. I mean, it is.

**AA:** All right. Well, thank you so much for taking part in this today.

**TH:** For sure, for sure.