

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution
Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project
Watermen: Observer's of the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland

Bob Abner: My name is Bob Abner. I was born in Washington, D.C. And lived here in Chesapeake beach ever since. Well, I made a brief attempt to go to college. Didn't work very well. So I asked my father, what was I to be? And he says to me, "You're gonna have to be what you really like to be. Don't do anything that you don't like." He says, "If you do what you really are interested in, you will excel in it."

Bob Abner: [1:05] The man was right. Not knowing what you're going to do for the next day as far as harvesting whatever you're gonna harvest. It always puzzled me, what's gonna be in that next crab trap? And I think that's why I've been a crabber for 63 years. What's next? Challenging, very challenging. You looking at the way the crabs move you almost get an idea of what's gonna go on. So you might, you might pick up couple of hundred traps and put them in an area, "Oh, we're gonna get them tomorrow." And then you come back the next day and you stupid sucker, what did you do that for?

Bob Abner: [1:51] There's nothing there. Or it could be the other way around, jackpot. There they are.

Bob Abner: [2:41] We need regulations, we really do. As a Waterman myself, I can say, I can live with all regulations but, the biggest regulation was only letting us work eight hours a day. And then we can only work six days a week which before regulations came in, we could work seven days a week.

Bob Abner: [3:07] And we could work whenever we wanted to, a Waterman, especially one that is just getting started can never count on anything but itself. You go down on your boat, the wiring's sweat the engine won't start. So it takes you a half a day just to get the engine on.

Bob Abner: [3:25] And, then they put a regulation on you can only work eight hours, four hours is already gone. And it's a pretty handsome fine for working over eight hours but I can see how they do it, why they did it. And, in modern times here, I can live with it. We do need management, we do need management. If we don't have management things could go very bad for us.