

ALBERT SIMMONS

Interviewer: Alexiee

Date: September 28, 2003

Place: Albert Simmons' home

Transcriber: Peggy Simmons



Albert Simmons was born on February 17, 1938, and his family has lived here for three generations. He and his wife Peggy have two children and four grandchildren. A lobsterman for 50 years, he has also served in the Navy and as Fire Chief of Friendship. His hobbies include building models of working boats, hunting, fishing, reading, and cooking.

Q: When did you start lobstering?

A: When I was twelve years old. I started out with a row skiff, and then I graduated to an 18-foot double-ended boat with a 5-cylinder make-and break-Hartford. I started it by rotating a big fly wheel.

Q: How long have you been lobstering?

A: Just about fifty years. I spent four years in the Navy, during which time I did not

2

lobster.

Q: Why did you become a lobsterman?

A: My father was a lobsterman, and I guess it rubbed off on me.

Q: What is your job on the boat?

A: The boat is mine. I do everything. I drive the boat, haul the traps, bait the traps, and find a place to set the traps.

Q: Do you have someone who lobsters with you?

A: Sometimes my brother goes with me as a sternman.

Q: What does he do?

A: Fills bait bags, bands lobsters.

Q: Is lobstering a tradition in your family?

A: Yes, as many generations as I can account for.

Q: Describe your boat.

A: Thirty-foot long, fiberglass, typical lobster boat, white, 305-V8 Chevrolet, gas-powered.

Q: What is the name of your boat and why did name it this?

A: *Holly Anne*. This name was on the boat when I bought it from Ronnie Simmons. That is Ronnie's daughter's name. Previously I had a boat built with the names of my daughters, *Amy Beth*. I sold this boat for a smaller one. *Holly Anne* is my third boat.

Q: What equipment do you carry on board?

A: Compass, fathometer, depth finder, GPS, VHF marine radio, radio for listening, whistle, flares, life jackets, life ring, fire extinguishers; I have a hydraulic pot hauler, lobster barrel with circulating water, and cage on my propeller.

Q: Describe your lobster traps, size and weight.

A: Traps are 21 inches by 12 inches by 4 feet long. Two side heads and two parlor heads, 50 pounds each. Three brick, a bait line, and a door.

Q: Do you move them during the season? If so, why and where?

A: Yes. Sheddies start in close, shallow water the early part of June. I move them out as the season progresses. Wherever the lobsters are, the fisherman follows.

Q: Do you use toggles? Explain how they work.

A: Yes, one toggle to keep excess rope off the bottom and snagging on rocks.

Q: What do you use for bait?

A: Mainly herring, some redfish, some pogies, some alewives.

Q: Where do you get it?

A: Delivered to the dealer who buy my lobsters, by trucks, both fresh and frozen.

Q: Describe a typical day.

A: I get up about 4:30, have breakfast, row aboard the boat, put the bait aboard, start hauling at daylight. I come back in mid-afternoon. I go about six miles out. I pull 200 per day for three days, 600 in all.

Q: Describe what you do when you catch a lobster.

A: Throw back those that don't go the measure, either too large or too small. This is determined by a lobster measure gauge. Any lobster that has any kind of a nick on the right side of her tail will be thrown back into the ocean because she might be an egg bearer. This is a conservation measure.

Q: What other kinds of fish get caught in your traps?

A: Codfish, flounder, sculpin, mackerel, stripers, eels, other shellfish.

Q: What do you do with them?

A: Throw them back.

Q: Where do you take your lobsters at the end of the day?

A: To the buyer's wharf.

Q: Who determines the price you get for them?

4

A: Supply and demand of the population. If they don't buy, the price goes down; if they do, the price goes up.

Q: What is a normal haul for a day?

A: Between 200 and 300 pounds.

Q: On a really bad day?

A: One hundred pounds

Q: A really good day?

A: Four hundred pounds.

Q: How does the weather affect your fishing?

A: The wind can keep you from hauling because it's very difficult. Neither the boat nor the fisherman can stay put!

Q: How has lobstering changed since you began fishing?

A: People fish many more traps. People have gone from wooden to wire traps. I was the first lobsterman to try wire traps in Friendship.

Q: What do you like most about lobstering?

A: Freedom. Flexibility. Making my own choices.

Q: What do you like least about it?

A: Dependence on the weather, not being able to plan ahead, unreliable weather reports.

Q: What happens when it's foggy?

A: Nothing, the day goes on. It has to, as we have a lot of fog on the coast and a short time to make a living.

Q: What kinds of problems have you experienced at sea?

A: Engine breakdowns, being towed in, losing time for both boats.

Q: What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you while you were

5

lobstering?

A: I've had no really bad experiences so far.

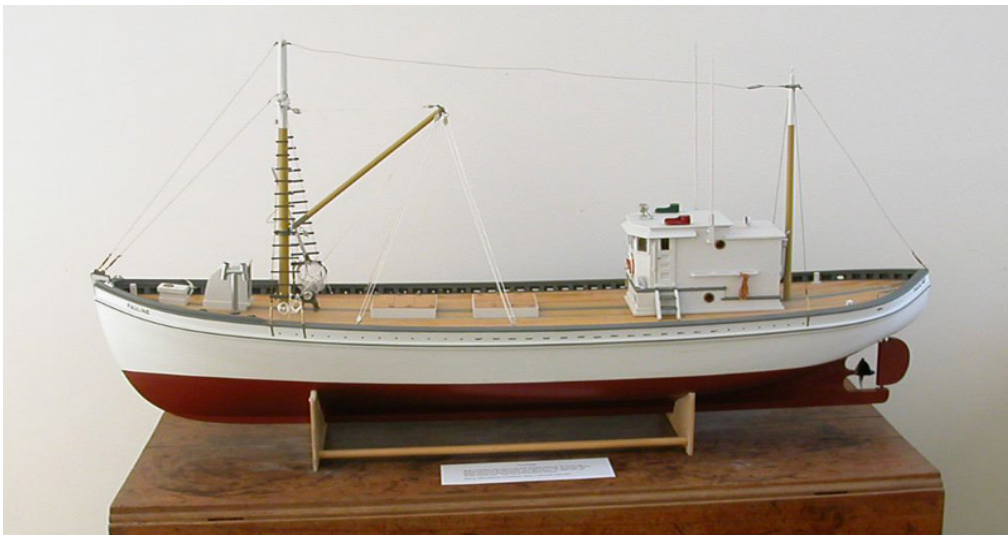
Q: Describe your most memorable time fishing.

A: A lot of them in the early morning--smelling the wild roses, the salt air, and watching the sun come up.

Q: Do you lobster in the winter?

A: No. I take my traps up and haul my boat out by Christmas.

Q: What do you do in the winter?



Albert Simmons' model of the Pauline, an 83-foot sardine carrier, launched in 1948

A: Build model boats, hunt coyotes, paint buoys, work on all lobster gear.

Q: How often do you eat lobster?

A: Two or three times a year, when we are serving it to company.

Q: Do you have a favorite way of preparing it?

A: Steamed or my favorite would be in a stew.

