

Name of person interviewed: Stephen Lacombe [SL]

Facts about this person:

Age 45-50

Sex Male

Occupation Lumper

If a fisherman,

Home port,

and Hail Port

Residence (Town where lives) New Bedford, MA

Ethnic background (if known) Unknown

Interviewer: Janice Fleuriel [JF]

Transcriber: Azure Dee Westwood [ADW]

Place interview took place: Working Waterfront Festival [WWF]

Date and time of interview: Sept. 23, 2006

INDEX/KEYWORDS**KEYWORDS**

New Bedford; Lumper; unloading; Display auction; Public auction; Mayor; hail; docks; Union; Jimmy Dwyer; Fire Department; Wharf; 24/7; musician; scallops; draggers; pitchfork; fish hold; fresh seafood.

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- [00:00] Tape intro; SL lumper, currently pres. lumper's union; Background—born Fall River, stepfather and older brother lumpers; Lumping 9 to 5 when started, would wait for jobs at auction house; Started part-time while in high school/college;
- [03:00] Evolution of his job and auctions; Changes in auction locations over time; lumpers union in two different trailers; Mayoral involvement.
- [06:15] Process of boats choosing where to unload and why; schedule of lumpers increased to 24/7 with move; description of pricing.
- [09:00] End of auction and failure of boat involvement; lumpers hours and boats decisions for wanting to unload as fast as possible to go home; easy for boats to have 24/7 but not for lumpers.
- [12:03] Union doesn't have much power to change 24/7 hours; unloading descriptions; whiting in fish totes difficult to unload; how they cover all boats that need lumpers; have to be available at moments notice.
- [14:59] SL can't say no to calls like part-timers can, it's his livelihood; Job's been good to him; Had to put up with the changes; SL in it about 25 years, Jimmy Dwyer about 40 something years; Need be in good shape to do the work; Description of typical process in hold and on deck, including cleanup; Hold is very physical work, takes experience, younger guys not ready; Hold and deck paid same, new guys would in hold would slow it down;
- [18:19] Get paid by job; SL and Jimmy split work of calling guys for boats; About 15 lumpers today.
- [21:04] Need endurance not being big, hefty, etc., to work hold; Don't stop until done, often no breakfast/lunch/dinner; Took breaks, lunch hour when first started; Display auction changed the routine; Union benefits.
- [23:56] Description of emptying the hold pen by pen/forking fish techniques.
- [27:06] Stepfather tough on him when first started; [Good story] He and stepfather (and brother at times) getting to where all could work together, SL told stepfather wasn't going to be his career, talking about that before stepfather died;
- [30:09] Played in band (drums) after college, eventually married and stopped doing the band, then lumping was 24/7; Lots of work on boats, docks, for kids willing to work hard, but kids nowadays are lazy, not up to it;
- [33:02] Jimmy Dwyer helped him out when started, got lot of work from him; About 100 lumpers when started, now about 20; Scalloper crews handle their lumping; Nicknames used to be common, not now; Jimmy Dwyer's/Paul Swain's list of nicknames; SL, Jimmy never had;
- [36:05] "Lumper" in dictionary is a wharf rat; No one knows term "lumper," and has to explain for mortgages, etc., and even is misunderstood by public.

- [39:05] Wrap up questions by JF; SL wishes lumping could go back to 9-5 hours; doubts hour change will happen unless mayor/union's lawyer can make it happen; Challenge would also be getting fishing boats to wait for unloading.
- [42:11] JF explains interview with John Exifares [?] about regrets over union losses and his perspective on wider laws that apply to fishing industry; Festival visitors experience freshest seafood, crafts booths, boats being open;
- [45:16] *F/V Fjord* tours at Festival where SL went with his family before the interview; explained areas of boat to visitors; visitors were amazed by process of catch to plate; impressed by the electronics; description of electronics and backups;
- [48:37] Suggestion/discussion of having videos of lumping at festival; lumpers present to answer questions; difficult to get visitors to see first hand lumping though; Jimmy Dwyer has existing videos.
- [50:22]
[End of Audio]

TRANSCRIPT

[Start of Audio]

[00:00]

JF: This is Janice Fleuriel, it is Sunday September 24, 2006 [NOTE: Actual day is 23rd and not the 24th] and I'm talking with Stephen Lacombe who is a lumper and currently the President of the lumpers Union. What we like to do is start by asking a little bit about your own background and your family background. If you could tell me where and when you were born and how your family came to New Bedford?

SL: All right. Actually, I was born in Fall River and my Stepfather was a fish lumper before me and that was Ray DeMeurs[?] so he kind of got me into this and my brother Ed too who is a New Bedford firefighter but he does it part time part-time and I do it full-time, you know? So my stepfather kind of got us into it when we were like 18. My brother Ed is a little older than me but he was down here when he was 18, you know. So before he became a firefighter, he did this. He lumped for about maybe 7-8 years then he actually went for the exam to get onto the fire department. So he got onto the fire department and the first 3years when you're on the department you are not making much so still did it on the side as much as he could. Back then, it was like a 9 to 5 job when we first started.

JF: It was or it wasn't?

SL: It was. So when we first started, and my brother first started, we'd come down over here which is now the... whatever you call the building there? Right here?

JF: Oh, the Visitor's Center.

SL: Yeah, that used to be the auction house. We used to come here at 8 in the morning and see which boats were on the board and we'd get our jobs, you know. Like I said, he did it before me, like 7-8 years before me because we're 8 year difference apart. Like I said, when I came down here I was going to high school, I was going to college, and working down here part-time. That was 1981. My brother was here before that, like 5-7 years. My stepfather was still here too. It kind of evolved like that. We did what we had to do. I used to go to college in Boston, I went to Berkeley for music, you know. And my brother, like I said, he was on the fire department – he already graduated from college, he was out of there, he went for business.

[03:00]

SL: And it kind of evolved like that. So then they closed down this Auction, you know? So what happened was we went from this auction to the one on... Haste [?] Street? No not Haste [?] Street, right on the corner of... I can't remember street name. But anyways there was another Auction there which was the same thing as this. It wasn't a display auction like they have now, it was a regular auction where you put your boat on board, you mark down your hail, they bid on you, So it went over there for maybe 5 years. We were over there for about 5 years. And then all of a sudden they started the display auction. So we lost this building; we're over there now because... they did the tourist thing. So we ended up over there on Conway Street - that's what it was, Conway. So we ended up over there on Conway Street and then we had a trailer on...Lenin's[?] Wharf, they gave us a trailer. So we would all meet there in the morning. It was the same situation. So we'd meet there at the trailer in the morning and Jim Dwyer would actually go to Conway St. because you couldn't have all the lumpers in there, it would be too many people – all the fish buyers,

the fishermen. So he pretty much went down there, he came back to the trailer and said here's what we have for jobs. "This boat, this boat this boat. They need this many guys..." and all the way down the line. So that's how we did it which worked out great. So then after that they started the display auction. So we lost that trailer. We ended over here on Pier 3 with another trailer. But before that, we were under the overwalk over here. We put up all kinds of tarps and stuff like that, before got the trailer from the Mayor. We ended up with tarps over here. We used to put the board... we had a little chalkboard to write stuff down. What's his name... he used to store everything in here for us.

JF: You mean the Harbormaster?

SL: Yeah, he used to store everything in here for us and we used to go and set everything up in morning. And whichever boats came in... because now we were competing against them... so now it was the public auction and the display auction both same time.

[06:15]

SL: Right. So then the Mayor gave us a trailer which we put on Pier 3, right over there on the corner. So we put up the trailer; we finally got out of the weather and we were in a trailer. It mean it was getting cold, you know, that was good.

JF: You get enough of that on the boats.

SL: So we used to put the boats over there, and the other boats - whoever wanted to go over there would go over there. So it kind of worked out for a little while. And actually, no one ended up coming over here, there might have been 1 or 2. The majority was over there so most of the boats ended up going to display. So we lost the trailer, because there was no one coming, contributing to the cause, whatever it cost to put their boats up. So we ended up over there. So after that, it was like 24/7. We used to have a nice scheduled life - start at 9, work until 5, then after that, it was all display, which is 24/7. They start 6 Sunday morning, they unload until Thursday 3 in the morning. Because you unload on a Monday for Tuesday's auction, or on a Sunday for Monday's auction, or on a Thursday for Friday's auction. So they don't unload Friday or Saturday but then you have all the other fish houses, outside of the display auction. You have Tempest, Burgee's and all the other ones that unload on a Friday or Saturday too.

JF: So they're not going through the display auction, those fish houses?

SL: No. What they'll do is they'll just hold it in their cooler, and they'll get Monday's price. Even if you unload on Friday night you still going on Monday's price. Or on a Saturday - Monday's price. Or on a Sunday - Monday's price. So they'll still offload them, they'll just hold it in the cooler, or they'll just ship it out and it will go for Monday's price. So that's kind of how it evolved.

JF: Well it's interesting because I would have thought... well the whole union thing has come up a lot, not just for lumpers, but the fisherman losing their Union.

SL: Oh, everyone is gone, I think we're the last ones.

JF: Yeah, well the longshoremen, but they are different.

SL: Yeah, the longshoremen.

[09:00]

JF: So the lumpers Union still could not have any control over keeping the hours?

SL: Nope.

JF: It was all the way the display auction chose to work?

- SL: Right. Because everything else folded. The Mayor gave up that, the Mayor gave up the other trailer. So now... and Conway St. folded, so we ended up over here. The Mayor gave up that building in the original plan, we wanted Conway St.- that folded. So we ended up over here in a trailer, and no one actually participated. So the majority of the boats were going over there.
- JF: And were the boats doing that because the auction would take their catch whenever they happened to come in?
- SL: Anybody would take their catch. It wouldn't really make a difference where they sold, because you're going on the auction price, you know what I mean. So whether they sold at A, B or C, you're still getting the same money. If a dollar a pound here, it's a dollar a pound there, or dollar a pound there. There is no difference.
- JF: I'm probably being slow, I'm trying to figure this out – so what was it... was it just the fact that the 9 to 5... So, if the boat came to the one you had here....
- SL: OK. I know what you're getting at. Now, if you're coming in at midnight. Your crew's on the boat, you're ready to go. So, unload midnight. So go to wherever, start midnight, and then they're done. As opposed to tying up the boat at midnight, and waiting until 8 in morning, then the captain has to come, put the hail on the board, then the crew has to come back and unload.
- JF: Yeah.
- SL: That's the whole difference. I know what you're getting at.
- JF: And it still couldn't be that they... ok so they unload at midnight, but the lumpers don't have to come in until 8, it didn't work that way. No, wait, you unload!
- SL: On a dragger there's only 4-5 fishermen and you need at least 7-8, so that's where we come in.
- JF: Yes, you guys unload, I'm sort of confused.
- SL: That's where we come in. So they need us to be there. So now if they're steaming all the way home, they get in at midnight, they just want to get it done, so they can go home. Now the fish is already in the house, the dealer takes care of that, and when they wake up, they just go and pick up their pay checks at the Settlement Office. So it's easy for them, but not for us.
- [12:03]
- JF: What would have happened if the union ever tried to say no, we're going to try to stick to own schedule?
- SL: They'd get somebody else. I would think so.
- JF: They'd get cheaper labor.
- SL: Yeah. They'd just get somebody else.
- JF: So you never quite know what your hours are going to be?
- SL: No. No. I mean I worked this morning. I had a wedding yesterday, and I got home at 11 o'clock at night. I went to work 6 in the morning and it was all whiting, in fish totes. And it wasn't easy.
- JF: What's whiting in fish totes?
- SL: Well, whiting is like a little fish about this big and probably about this round.
- JF: Like a couple inches around?
- SL: Yeah, it's a small fish. But they put it in fish totes, with water and ice. So you got to lug those totes.
- JF: Oh, right because you're not going to pitchfork those?

- SL: No, because they have to go up with the water and ice. Then they bring them into the building, and do whatever they do up there. Me and Jim [Dwyer] were there [laughs]. And it wasn't easy, let me tell you. And as we were in the fish hold, Jimmy's getting calls from other boats because he's the business agent and I'm the President. So he's getting calls for other boats that we have to get guys to go there to unload them, that was at the auction. So Jimmy's on the cell phone, then he'd say; "Steve you talk for a while". And he'd go work for a little while. Because now I'm by myself, so now I'm calling guys, then we'd switch off, he's calling guys. But we got all the boats covered. But that's way it is, 24/7. You go to work, it doesn't mean job your job is done. Not with me and Jim. We are constantly on the phone, all the time, just trying to get guys to service everybody. Which is what we're supposed to do, you know what I mean?
- JF: Now so do you guys get extra pay from the union? Even more so than just a lumper, you have like really 24/7. Where even when you're not unloading?
- SL: Yeah.
- JF: That's just the goodness of your heart?
- SL: I'm just saying I was at a wedding yesterday and Jimmy called me and said we have a boat for 6am and we're going to start at 7am. I said, "alright Jim." I can't say no, that's my livelihood, I have no choice. My brother can say no, he's on the fire department, he can say no. And the other guys that have part-time jobs, they can say no. But me and Jim, we can't, we're there.
- JF: Did you ever consider making this your part-time job and getting other work?
[14:59]
- SL: It's always been good to me, though. I've been down here 25 years. I started in 1981, you know, out of high school, I went to college. Got my degree in music, but this has always been.... I got a house, 2 cars, 2 kids, a wife, 2 dogs, you know? It's been good to me. Jimmy will tell you the same thing. It's always been good to us.
- JF: So you just sort of put up with the change?
- SL: Yeah, we have to. Like I said, I started in '81, so that would be 26 years, somewhere around there. 25-26 years. Jimmy's been down here 40 – I don't even know – 40 something. He started when he was around 18 or 19 with his dad.
- JF: It must keep you in good shape?
- SL: Well [laughs]. Don't see any fat on me, right?
- JF: Exactly! How old must Jimmy be now?
- SL: Jimmy is I think - don't quote me on this - 62, 63, somewhere around there.
- JF: It's tough work.
- SL: It is.
- JF: Can you go through – we probably have this on tape from other people – but the typical process of once you arrive at the boat, what the lumper does?
- SL: Alright. It depends. If you have a deck job, which means above the fish hold or a hold job, it's two different worlds. If you're in the hold, you're dealing with the fish, the ice, the boards. Then you have to clean it once all the fish, ice, the boards are up. Then you have to clean it with regular bilge cleaner, you scrape all the walls down with brushes, you pick up the floor boards, you clean all the shaft alley where the prop is and all that stuff. So you put everything back together, and then all those boards have to come back down.
- JF: Oh, they all actually go up?

SL: They actually... and someone washes them on deck, they scrub them down with soap and bilge cleaner and all that stuff. So everything comes down clean. So we have to build up everything; build up the floor, build up the pens, all the extra boards we stack them away. Then after that, we're good to go. But the guys on deck, if they are running the hatch, which sends the basket up, or if he's dumping baskets, the one that catches them, they have to deal with every basket that comes up. The guy sends it up, the other guy dumps it, it comes back, he catches it, brings it down. We're filling up the baskets. We hook up, it goes up, same thing, same process. And in between that, we have to send up the boards and the hatch man has to give it to guys washing the boards, and they scrub them up, and they just stack them on the side. At the end of the trip, everything has to come down, we build it all up, whatever extra boards there are, we just stack them.

[18:19]

JF: And how is it determined who works in the hold and who works up on deck?

SL: Um, a lot of guys can't work the hold. It's very physical. So we have a lot of young guys that have joined within the past 5 years, so usually they are up on deck. Because that's a little easier.

JF: It's the opposite of what I would think.

SL: No, that's a little easier. Downstairs, you have to know what doing.

JF: Do you get paid more down there than up on deck?

SL: No. Same pay. But, I couldn't stick a new guy in the hold, because he's going to have no clue; I'll be there all day. I don't get paid by the hour.

JF: There's the incentive there.

SL: I don't get paid by the hour, I get paid by the job. If its 10,000 pounds, I get paid for 10,000lbs. If it's 50,000 lbs, I get paid for 50,000 lbs. If I put three new guys down there who don't know what they're doing, I'm going to be there for twice the amount of time.

JF: And they could potentially damage the fish?

SL: Yeah, that too. Tear it up, and the captain's going not be too happy [laughs]. They're going to tear it up and all that stuff.

JF: So who's in charge then? Is it always you and Jimmy? You get your crew of guys, you need this many guys for a boat, who decides who goes where?

SL: We do.

JF: You and Jimmy?

SL: Yeah.

JF: And is it always...what if there were more boats than that? Or is it always just so that one of you is in charge?

SL: Well, Jimmy goes on vacations, I go on vacations – everybody goes on vacations. If Jimmy goes on vacations, I'm in charge. If I'm on vacation, Jimmy's in charge. But in between, we're kind of both in charge. Because I have boats and he has boats.

JF: Is ever a time though where a boat has lumpers working and one of you are not there?

SL: Yeah.

JF: But you say who is going to go where?

SL: Yeah, right. Because we're responsible. Like I said, we had three boats this morning, me and Jimmy were already working, so I had extra guys to go on the other ones.

JF: Then you make sure you hire someone you know you can trust?

SL: Yeah. I mean there is more than just me and Jim. There's about 15 of us altogether, but you know.

JF: How long does it take a new guy before they are ready to try their time in the hold?

[21:04]

SL: Um, there's some guys that never get it. And there are some guys that catch on right off the bat, no problem, you know. It all depends... you don't have to be a big hefty, stocky guy, but you need to have endurance. You have to have endurance. Otherwise you can be as skinny as me and go all day.

JF: Stamina.

SL: Yeah, you have this big, hefty guy and....

JF: It might work against them in a small space?

SL: Yeah, I'm just saying, you know... Well, sometimes it's not a small space, but they just don't have the endurance to keep going. Which, you have to go. Because they don't stop upstairs. It's just constant until the trip is done. We go without breakfast, lunch, and dinner many times.

JF: And you keep your endurance up?

SL: Yeah. I might get some Gatorade, something like that, soda, whatever they have. Coffee if it's early in the morning. That's about it.

JF: Just you're focused once you get down there, do you even notice you're all that hungry?

SL: Oh yeah, oh, my stomach is growling. But just we can't just stop the trip and say we're taking a lunch. Those days gone. We used to do that. When I first started in 1981, we started at 9am, 15 minute break around 10am, stop at noon, an hour for lunch. If you work until 3pm, 15 minute break, then finish the trip at 4 o'clock, it was overtime. They didn't want to pay us overtime, so everybody went home. "See you tomorrow." Start all over again, on the same boat.

JF: And so the display auction issue changed all of that?

SL: Ah yeah, totally.

JF: So what the union would provide, how much you would get paid and benefits? Is that what the union is still...?

SL: We're still alive, we still get union wages, we still get a death benefit. We lost the health and welfare, that's gone. That's pretty much it.

JF: Was that negotiation with boat owners or something?

SL: Only because we don't have enough contributions coming. We still got our pension. We had to give up health and welfare. We can get it through the Fisherman's Partnership if you want. I get through my wife's work, myself. But Jimmy got it through the Fishermen's Partnership. We still have the pension, death benefits, union wages, you know.

JF: So there are pluses to it still?

SL: Yeah.

[23:56]

JF: Can you... like technique in terms of... and I don't know if it varies by species...to empty out a pen, what do you call a hold?

SL: Oh, how long?

JF: What tools do you use, how do you make sure you do it without damaging the fish?

SL: Alright. What we do is...everything is in pens. That door, this desk, that cabinet...pen, pen, pen. And same thing this side. Once we get down there, we have cod, yellowtail, haddock, flounder, whatever, whatever.

JF: So they're all separated?

- SL: It's all separated. We'll take out that one first, that one second, that one third...and work it that way. Sometimes you'll have two of the same species which two guys can work together. Sometimes you don't. So you just... it's all boarded up. You take out the boards, so now its fish. You take your pitchfork...
- JF: And so you take the boards out and the fish just don't all fall out, they're stacked nicely?
- SL: No all iced up. It's all iced up and stuff, they don't just jump at you. When you get the pitchfork and they fall into the basket and then you hook them up.
- JF: Oh, so you slide them off the pile?
- SL: No, you got to actually break them out, you know. But then once you get lower, you have to bend over, and pick them up that way. Once you're doing it that way, it's a little harder.
- JF: Are you actually sticking a pitchfork into a part of the fish or just under the ice?
- SL: Yeah. Into the head.
- JF: Into the head so you don't damage the meat?
- SL: Yeah. Once in a while you might miss. It's usually in the head. All the ice that's left over because there is usually this much ice left at the bottom, you have to shovel that into a basket which goes up separate, they dump that overboard. The fish goes up and it's a basket of ice you just say "Ice," and they'll dump that back overboard. It's all dirty ice. But you have to work your way in, and once you get to the back, you work your way that way.
- JF: So you're actually taking down the whole front layer and working then your way top to bottom.
- SL: Yeah, and then you're working in.
- JF: How long did it take you to get hang of it? DO you know?
- SL: Oh, my stepfather was tough on me though! [laughs]. I remember the first trip I ever worked, I came down and he brought me in the fish hold, and said, "This is what you have to do". And I said, "Ok." I kind of got the gist of it.
- [27:06]
- SL: After about an hour, he says, "Steve, just hook up baskets for me". Which means just put the hook on. "I will take care of it". I was slowing him down, actually. He wants to get out of there too. That was ok. When I went home, he said, "Want to try it again?" I said, "Yeah." I went down again, we tried it out, it was good, a little better because there were three guys instead of two. So they were both doing it and I was just hooking up. So I kind of watched what they were doing and stuff. And after 3 or 4 times, I says; "Now I'm getting in there". So I let my stepfather - who was about 50 at the time, I was like 20, whatever 19. I said, "No I'll do it, me and Ed." And I kind of got gist, hooking up. And he says, "You're doing better." That was about a week or 2 went by, and he says, "You now what? Steve, I don't mind you doing the job, but I'm not a hookup man."
- JF: Ah, so he wanted to keep doing...
- SL: "So what are you trying to tell me?"
- "We all got to work together. I hook up a little while, you hook up a little while. Eddy hooks up for a little while. We kind of do it that way." OK. So we did that. After about a month, right, he got really mad at me. [laughs] It wasn't even good. He says, "Steve, we all have to work together here. If we can't work together here, you're not coming down here no more." So I says, "You know what, this is your career, not mine. I'm in college, this is your career. I don't plan on doing this for a living." And here I am 25 years later

[laughs]. And before he died, I told him "Do you remember that?" He says, "Yeah I remember that" I said, "No, that's your career, not mine. I don't plan on doing this for a living.

JF: When did you finally realize it would be your career, do you remember? Was there some moment or did it just sort of happen?

SL: I got out of college, I was playing in a band up and down the east coast, that was my thing. I met my wife, we had a baby, bought a house. I says, well, the music thing, I don't think I can do it anymore. So I got away from that. I was teaching kids in my cellar how to play and stuff. After that, I says, "Well I'm pretty much here." Then it turned to 24/7, and I could never get back to the band situation; it doesn't pay any money.

[30:09]

JF: What did you play?

SL: Drums. It was a lot of fun. I had a good time. I have a lot of good times, you know. I could always be a music teacher or work in the school department or something like that. But like I said, I make a good living down here, I'm comfortable. It's not easy work.

JF: Would you... we always like to ask the people actually involved in the fishing ... if given the state of the industry with regulations and expenses, would you even advise a young person to go into either lumping or any aspect of commercial fishing these days?

SL: I would say if a kid's got a lot of ambition and wants to work hard, there is work down here. Whether it be fishing, lumping, you know, dock work, painting, welding. If you have a lot of ambition, there is a lot of work. There really is. But I noticed the kids are really lazy nowadays.

JF: The TV generation?

SL: Yeah. They don't, they don't really... I don't know... have what it takes to do it. There are a few. I mean 9 out of 10, no, you know. You see the Mexicans, Guatemalans, that are all doing it. Why can't some kid in New Bedford come down? Portuguese. I mean it's all here. It's not going anywhere for a while. Yeah, the government is putting a lot of rules and regulations on us, but, it's working. But there are still a lot of work down here for someone who wants to work. That's the whole thing. If you think you're just going to just go down there and sit in an office and push a pencil, you'd better go to New York. Go to New York and work in a high rise or something. It's not going to happen down here. That's the only thing I can see. Like I said, I made good a life. Jim's made a good life. My brother has. And there are a lot of other lumpers.

JF: It seems like people hold Jimmy Dwyer in such high regard.

SL: Yes.

JF: I get the impression it's both because he's willing to get in there and do the work and it's because he's a really decent person?

SL: Yeah. Both. Like I said, he'll stand by me any day. And he's almost twice my age, well I wouldn't say almost twice, but I'm 42, and he's pushing 60. I'm just saying, you know?

[33:02]

JF: When you were starting in it, was he a good source of encouragement for you?

SL: Yeah. He was probably, when I started, 35, I would say. When I first came down here. Yeah, he had to be about that much, 30 or 35. I got a lot of work from him back then. He had a lot of guys ahead of me. When I first came down there was like 100 lumpers. 100. I think we're down to like 20. I think we're down to about 20.

JF: For about how many vessels?

- SL: Well, there's a lot less too.
- JF: But still it looks like a lot to me.
- SL: Yeah, I mean there is a lot out there but, a lot of them are from the south, a lot of them are scallopers. We don't do a lot of scallopers.
- JF: Who does the scallopers?
- SL: Well it's seven man crew, do they can do it themselves. The draggers are only 4-5, so that's where we come in, because they need that extra 2 or 3 hands. That's kind of how it works.
- JF: I have about three more specific questions. I've heard a couple different people use the term 'hail'. Is that the catch?
- SL: Yeah.
- JF: Is it H-a-l-e? Or H-a-i-l even?
- SL: H-a-i-l. Hail.
- JF: I'm wondering, do you ever hear people use nicknames to each other these days?
- SL: Oh yeah!
- JF: They do?
- SL: Not so much today. Years ago, yeah.
- JF: I wonder why that changed? Does anyone have any idea?
- SL: I don't know. I'm still Steve [laughs]. These guys back in the olden days...Punchy, PeeWee, Rappie
- JF: Paul Swain, I don't know if you know him.
- SL: Yeah, I know Paul.
- JF: He was saying, I think it was him and Jimmy have sat down and tried to remember a list.
- SL: I think Jimmy has it at his house. Yeah, all the different... Jimmy would know better than me, all the different nicknames.
- JF: I just wonder if maybe when the auction stopped being face-to-face any everyone stopped seeing each other everyday where they used to and they just stopped doing that? I don't know.
- SL: Yeah, yeah.
- JF: So you never got a nickname?
- SL: No I never did. No, never did. Jimmy never did either. I'm surprised. He was back in them days. There was all kinds of names; Sweet Pea.
- JF: I remember Paul saying one was Big-eared Mike or something [laughs].
- SL: Yeah [laughs]. I know the guy [laughs]. Yeah. Big-eared Mike. His ears, he was big... Ton of them back then.
- [36:05]
- JF: Do you know where the word "lumper"? Why is it called that?
- SL: Well, if you read in dictionary—which you can look it up—a lumper is a wharf rat.
- JF: Wharf rat? Like the actually little animal? Wow, who gave them that name?
- SL: [noise like "Who knows?"] Do you have a dictionary? Do you have a dictionary?
- JF: Oh, I believe you, I'll look it up.
- SL: Look it up and you'll see lumper and it will say something like "a waterfront wharf rat". Or something like that. Yeah.
- JF: Interesting. So have you run into someone and they ask you what you do and they tell them you're a lumper and what do they do?

- SL: Yeah. You try to get a mortgage on house, and you tell them you're a lumper. "What?" "I'm a lumper." "OK, so what do you do?" "I unload boats, that's what I do." Ok. "How long have you been doing that for?" "I don't know, 20-25 years." "So actually what do you do?" Well, when boats come in, I [laughs] take the fish off the boat." Ok. So how do you get the fish off?" I said, "I fork the fish - doesn't that sound perverted [laughs] - that's what I do, I'm a lumper.
- JF: So many of us are just so divorced from it....
- SL: No, I'm just saying. I mean I file my taxes every years, its all on record, its all there. But its funny when someone comes... I refinance or whatever to do something like that, or when I first bought house. You try to explain it to them and it just goes right over their head. [laughs] They just don't get it.
- JF: Well I mean none of us... even if we think about that somebody caught the fish....
- SL: It's not like saying I'm an accountant. You know, Ok, fine. I'm a fish lumper, and I offload the fishing draggers, and I fork the fish off the boat. That's all I can tell you, that's what I do.
- JF: I suppose if you said it's like being a longshoreman for fishing boats they might understand.
- SL: But I'm' not a longshoreman [laughs]. Which I've done. Which my brother Ed does too. He's in the Longshoremen's Union, Fireman's Union, Lumper's Union, he's a real estate agent; he don't stop.
- JF: Last year I interviewed Ray Houghtman from Longshoreman. And it was fascinating; they have the different terms for the different parts of the job.
- SL: Yeah, "sign man" [laughs].
- JF: That was interesting hearing about that.
- SL: That's all they do [indicating with his hands]. "Line man". "Crane operator".
- [39:05]
- JF: The only... two wrap up questions. First I'd like to ask people if there's anything I didn't think to ask that you really would have wanted to share about your experience with the waterfront of with your job in general?
- SL: I would say, the only thing is I wish it was back the old way. Only because, its 24/7, I don't know when I can actually leave the house with the family. And if I do leave the house with the family to do something, like a wedding or whatever, and I get called to work, I'm pretty much obligated, and now I have to leave. Even to go to a cookout, or go to the beach. Then I'm obligated to leave; I have to pack the whole family and go home. It ruins their day. Because I have to go to work.
- JF: How do they deal with it? Are they good about it?
- SL: Yeah, pretty much. And I wish it would just go back to the old way.
- JF: You don't feel that there's any chance?
- SL: No I don't think that there's any chance, I doubt it, that it will ever go back to a 9 to 5 job. Unless Scott Lang, the Mayor, which I... God Bless him, I'm glad he's in there because he's our union lawyer too. He doesn't show it because he's pretty much running the office up there. He used to faithfully go all the time but now he sends someone from the lawyer firm to come to the union meetings. I'm hoping he can do something, and actually get a regular public auction, city run, public auction somewhere on this waterfront. Don't know where, wherever it might be, city run, public auction. And not put

those guys out of business, they got a business to run too. But at least, we'll know where we stand over here.

JF: Now then what... the big challenge there would be making an incentive for the big fishing boats to go there and wait until the next morning for you guys to come on the boat?

SL: That would be the whole thing. If they're willing to wait, which they all did years ago, tie up to the pier, go home, go to bed, or spend some time with the family, or whatever, if they come in at 6 at night. They have all night... go home, spend some time with the family, go to bed, come down here, put your hail up, the fish buyers would come over here, they'd bid on it, guarantee you. Because if they know there's fish here, will are going to be here. And start at 9, load the boat, and be done. And the other guys who don't want to do that, they can go to the other place. And kind of work it that way.

[42:11]

JF: Wow, there are so many tough challenges.

SL: Oh yeah.

JF: Friday I interviewed John Exifares [?].

SL: Johnny, yeah.

JF: That was interesting, I hadn't had that perspective. My only other question...

SL: What did Johnny have to say?

JF: Well, he was interesting... I was sort of hoping I'd get to hear some juicy stories about how conflicts and how they got settled. He was very diplomatic, being a lawyer, didn't say... But he talked about... I think he really liked the fact that he could help make life better for people through unions, and that, and very sad about the processing infrastructure....

SL: Yeah, and how went down? Yep. I would say that's what he would say. Yeah. Sounds about right.

JF: It was also interesting because of course he kept quoting these laws that had nothing to do with the industry per se, like Magnuson or whatever, and I realized of course, when we come interview people we get very tunnel vision about the fishing industry, but of course he has to keep it in that bigger perspective that every law also applies to all of you too. So that was very interesting.

SL: Yeah.

JF: But yeah, the union's thing, he has big regrets.

SL: Yeah. I would figure that's what he would say. I know all them guys.

JF: So my only other question then would be, what would you want the average festival visitor to come away from their time here understanding about the industry or the work that you do?

SL: Why would they come here?

JF: No, what would you want them to understand when they left, like, to have learned?

SL: Oh, I think it's all running fine. They get a taste of the freshest seafood you could actually get almost anywhere. I wouldn't say 100% anywhere, but... I ate over there. The scallops were good, the fish was good, the clam cakes, my father in law had, I tried one and...someone else got raw fish, everything I thought was all excellent. We al shared a little bit, you give a little piece of fish. I thought the seafood... for an experience... and the cruise ships here, and all them people are here to come from somewhere else and taste this, they're not going to get it from nowhere else. I'm telling you, they're going to go to

restaurant, and they're going to go, "Euwww" ["ick"-like noise]. It's a totally different... you know.

JF: Helps them get an appreciation for...

SL: And actually that, and, like I said, I saw the mending booth over there where they actually teach you how to tie a knot and stuff. And the other booths that they have, I can't mention them all, but different crafts, net-mending, you actually get to see people on stage shucking a scallop. I went on Lar's... the fleet fish owner? He had his whole boat open.

[45:16]

SL: He had a stairway going down, he was letting people on, check out the galley, check out the pilot house, go down into the engine room, you know, he had all kinds of people. These people have never seen that stuff. I took my boys on there too because they wanted to check it out. They've been on a few boats here and there. Actually I took my youngest son to ice a boat the other day, because I do icing too. So I mean, those people don't see this stuff. So when I was there, I could tell it had to be from the cruise ship or wherever, they'd never seen this before. I said, "this is where they sleep, this is the galley this is where they eat." Brought them downstairs to the engine room, and said, "this is what powers the whole ship." And I brought them on deck, and I said, "these are the dredges that they actually drag on the bottom, they bring them up, they dump them out. This is where they shuck the scallops, there's a whole wall there where they shuck them and they throw the shells overboard and they go down the chute and the shells go back into ocean.

JF: So it all got to be more real for them?

SL: Yeah, and it actually...when they left they were, like "Wow, I never realized there was so much involved in getting that little thing on a plate!" All you do is eat it.

JF: I shucked a scallop once....

SL: And they asked me how long, I said "You know, a scalloper 10, 14 days. A fishing dragger" which they hadn't seen "is like 7-8 days." They were totally amazed, they were snapping pictures of the whole boat and all that stuff. That was on the Fjord. F-j-o-r-d.

JF: Like the Norway fjord.

SL: I think it's something like that.

JF: Those big tall cliffs. Well that's cool.

SL: They went in the pilothouse, looking at all the electronics, like, "How can you read this?"

JF: When I first started interviews, I had no clue how sophisticated they boats had gotten. It's amazing.

SL: There are the depth finders, the doors that go out, the one to read that. And you have the sonar. There's so much. Actually when it gets foggy out and you can't see nothing, you're just reading the screen. Seeing little bleeps [laughs] here and there. I've never been out fishing but, I know a little, all the electronics they have in there, if this one fails, they got the VHS, the cell phone, the satellite phone, you know. A lot of electronics up there. If this one fails, they have that one to back it up. Or if that one fails they have this one to back it up

[48:37]

JF: I wonder are there any videos of you all doing your work? I think it would be fascinating....

SL: Of us? Jimmy would have them.

- JF: For the visitors to get to see, I mean we hear about it but of course you really can't demonstrate it, it wouldn't work too well.
- SL: No. To get a boat to come over here and we show them how to offload...
- JF: You can't waste a whole day like that...
- SL: I'm just saying, it would be almost impossible, and then you have the tourists. How are they actually going to get down there while we're working. You would have to have a video. Which Jimmy does have.
- JF: I'll have to ask Laura about that, it there could be a station where people could get a little glimpse of you guys at work, I think it would be really fascinating. You can hear it and you can start to appreciate it, but I don't think you can start to appreciate it even fully, or even begin to unless you see.
- SL: Like I said, you couldn't actually go down onto a boat with a crew of people or tourists and actually... it would have to be a video.
- JF: Well that's good to know he might have some.
- SL: Jimmy does, I know he does. It shows the whole process. I know he has one from the Mary Kay. Think he has a couple others from other boats too. I know he has a lot of pictures.
- JF: Then maybe somebody could be there to explain if people had questions. That would be neat.
- SL: Yeah, something like that.
- JF: Until a boat came and you got called away.
- SL: Yeah [laughs]. No, yeah, that could work. It could.
- JF: That's good to think about. Well, thanks so much. I appreciate it
- SL: Thank you, Janice.
- JF: I'm glad you guys stopped by and they wrote you in.
- [End interview]
- [50:22]
- [End of Audio]