

Name of person interviewed: Eva Liput [EL]

Facts about this person:

Age unknown

Sex Female

Occupation Fishing Vessel Captain

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

Home port, Fairhaven, MA

and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same) Fairhaven, MA

Residence (Town where lives) unknown

Ethnic background (if known) Polish

Interviewer: Janice Fleuriel [JF]

Transcriber: Janice Fleuriel  
Erin Heacock

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**INDEX/KEYWORDS****KEYWORDS:**

Poland; Woman Captain; Massachusetts; Regulation; Scallops; Sustainability; Limited Entry; New Bedford; Fairhaven; Generations; Georges Bank

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**TRANSCRIPT**

[Start of Audio]

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[00:17]

JF: Can I – I have to, I'm sorry. I paused it when the door opened, and I then just forgot it was not— Can I ask you – Can you just recap your immigration and how you came to be in New Bedford for me?

EL: OK. I immigrated from Poland to United States in 1986 and shortly after that I start work on a fishing boat. The first boat was a fishing vessel *Michigan*. I start work as a regular deckhand.

JF: As a regular deckhand. And you were just telling me that when you were 7 you started getting some sailing experience over in Poland.

EL: Yes, my experience with sailing started when I was 7. Probably my brother gave it to me because he was sailor, 3 years older, and usually the sisters would like to follow oldest brother. And my father was a fisherman. He never fished for scallops because we actually don't have harvest the scallops from the Baltic Sea, but he used to work on the George's Bank when Poland had the contract with the United States in the 1950s for herring and mackerel. So I think it's interesting that I, after 20 years, I'm on the same bank. On the same spot like my father was.

[2:00]

JF: That's really neat! And you said you had come from Poland and originally ended up in Providence?

EL: Newport, Rhode Island. Later in New Bedford.

JF: And then you ended up in New Bedford, and you started as a deckhand. Was it on a scalloper?

EL: Scalloper. Michigan is an eastern rig, about 120 feet long, scalloper.

JF: When was that?

EL: It was 1986. And I work about 6 years on this boat. I would say, after that, maybe I change 6 or 7 boats. All of them were very nice boats. You know you always like boat you work on. It's something like a home. The time you spent out during the trip, you feel like boat you work on is nicest boat, and somehow like your own house.

JF: Oh that's neat! I actually went onto the Pacer yesterday. And I saw the bunk, and I was impressed! That's a really nice bathroom and everything compared to everything I probably thought. But they had a sign where the bunks were and it said, you know, if the person was in this bunk, then this was an emergency procedure. The first bunk would supervise, and the second and third bunks would take this role. So I assume then when people are on the boat there's always the same person in the same—they take their bunk for the trip and that's their bunk?

EL: I would say depends on boat. There is no regulation. If enough bunks for the guys, or more guys, choose whatever they like, whatever is more comforting. On the boat which I work presently we have 14 bunks, and National Marine Fisheries regulates [inaudible] crew to 7, so they plenty of room to choose.

JF: They can each have two! Which boat do you work on now?

EL: I work on the fishing vessel *Quincy*, *Quincy Second* which is 96-foot long scalloper from Fairhaven. Just across the harbor.

[04:22]

JF: Can you recap for me how you sort of came—you know, your history of going from deckhand to becoming a captain?

EL: I start sailing when 7, and I got to the captain license for sailing boats. So I learned navigation when I enjoy sailing. And I passed my exams. When I came working on fishing boats here, the navigation part wasn't that bad because I was prepared already. But all the fishing stuff, the gear. How to handle the gear, how to send dredges, and when I work on a deck it was 1986 so the fishing looks a little bit different. We have a time when it was 2 or 3 bushels of scallops that time I remember, and the crew wasn't limited to number of 7. We were going 9 men. So I spent a lot of time in the pilot house to watch how the captain send the gear, and how the mate work. Before I went to the pilot house, the rules were like that, you have to know the job so I spent a lot of time after every my watch in the pilot house to observe how—

JF: Just because you enjoyed it?

EL: I enjoy, I liked it. And I was interested. I think it was very interesting because the difference between catching the fish and the scallops is that you cannot tell where scallops is. Even with modern equipment which show you just depth under the vessel. But it does not show you the scallops. So the scallops, it's not something you can tell on the sonar machine that actually it's here. It's the experience, you know, observation and just by trying. You try one spot, another, then you just see the sign that maybe it's a pretty good spot to make the trip. But it's, you know, you can hardly say that you make whole trip on the one spot. You have to look around to find it. And there is no information except your experience and observation.

[07:21]

JF: So 'we know that last year this time did pretty well in this spot' kind of thing?

EL: Yeah. So you remember it was June so maybe I can try same place.

JF: Yeah. And you must keep logs?

EL: Yeah. Every captain or mate they keep kind of the log and this way they have information. Now it's easier because most of the boats have computers, charts, so you can make marks, leave those marks in memory of computer so you can always come back and bring it up.

JF: Now do you back it, you must—Do you back it up on disks, your computer?

EL: We do. With computer you can lose the memory. I would say scalloping, it's interesting because you cannot tell where it is.

JF: That's interesting cause I know they talk about fish finders and things. But they don't work for the —

EL: The fish finders, you can see marks on the sonar machine which can indicate the school of the fish. Because the fish can swim off bottom, so you can see movement on the machine. But the scallops lie on bottom, don't pick, you can't tell.

JF: So it won't pick that up. And they're not big enough to pick up a shape because they're just so—

EL: No, there is no information. You have information what kind of bottom is. Sometimes the color change so you can see that it's sand, and now you have rocks. But it's not showing the actual scallops. And the scallops, not like you go and you feel it's there, and you just send dredges, and you gonna haul back and have full bag. You have to catch the scallops. The scallops swim too!

JF: Yeah I saw a video of that once by SMAST people. I couldn't believe it!

EL: Yeah the people are surprised. But the scallops swim, and can swim quite fast. And have, it's very sensitive. The scallops can hear noise. I would say that the scallops are able to run from dredge if hear the sounds. You can imagine that the dredges can make a huge noise when you drag them on bottom of ocean. So somebody say to catch the fish it's very difficult. It's kind of joke!

JF: But I'm looking at your face and it looks like a fun challenge for you. Would that be accurate to say?

EL: It is. Because I always enjoy being outside. I enjoy sailing. And, you know, part of fishing is kind of like competition? It's challenge to catch. You know sport fishermen sometimes do for pleasure of catching. They even release fish.

JF: True. It's the same thing but more at stake maybe?

EL: Mm hm. So when start work on deck I thought very interesting and I was always interested in how actually able to make hauls, and they send dredges, and they bring scallops on deck. How it happens! It takes long—The people might be surprised but to get accurate training to run the boat, to become a skipper, it takes long time because it requires quite a lot of skills. Not only steer boat, but operate the winches, the gear, run the engine room. Usually boat's more complicated than the car. Some people have a problem to make cars work.

JF: And you can't just park it on the side of the road and get off if there's a problem.

[12:12]

EL: Exactly. But the modern technology, I would say they design excellent boats right now. First when I look at the boats, like the style of the eastern rigs, those boats were built especially for Georges Bank, for this kind of hard weather. It's very time-consuming to build an eastern rig. So I would say technically, they perfect boat but it's very expensive to build them because the bottom of them, they have very beautiful shapes. So the modern technology start building them much faster, and develop the western rig for scalloping. But first boats for scalloping on George's Bank were eastern rig.

JF: And you're the first person I've heard say it, it sounds like you think they're better, if not so expensive.

EL: I'd say to replace now the boat like that now would be much expensive to build. But they both good. I would say the both are good. Eastern rig and western rig. But first was to keep eastern rig for scalloping here. Then they start develop western rig which are now perfect boat too. First I start on eastern rig. The difference is that you have the pilot house on the eastern rig on the stern. So can look at crew members on deck in front of you. Goes to western rig, the deck you have, you know.

JF: So you need eyes in the back of your head?

EL: Usually the working station, with winches, they are on back on the pilot house.

JF: So it's harder to communicate or see what's happening?

EL: No, no, no, it's very good view. I said they now design the tool station on the back so you can see crew members working on deck very easy.

[14:53]

JF: So were you ever a mate before skipper?

EL: Yes. It's what I said I work as a mate like maybe 16 years, on a different boats. And took from time to time [inaudible], so I took *Michigan*, *Concordia*, then for last two

years I run the *Quincy Second*. It's what I said, it takes a few years to make the step from the deck to the pilot house, become a mate. Usually this step before people have position like engineer, or a cook, something which you have responsibility. I was about 15 years the mate, then started taking boats as a captain.

JF: And when was that exactly?

EL: 1994. So it was 8 years after I start fishing I took first boat as a captain. It was *Michigan*. It was February. Usually you remember first trip very good.

JF: I was gonna ask you what you remember.

EL: It was February. I remember we had quite choppy weather. After any trip, you ask any captain how was weather, usually they say 'Oh, wasn't bad.' It's kind of like you don't remember. But I remember it was February, and it was blowing, very windy. Most of the boats stayed in harbor. And we sailed because I thought we have to. They asked me if I'm gonna take boat, captain took a trip off. And when we left, I thought 'Oh maybe better if we stayed few more days, wait for better weather.' And it was freezing sprays, and whole boat covered with the ice. And I thought we doing awful, like we didn't catch much enough, but we when come back to harbor, we find out that we had pretty good trip. You think you not doing that good because the weather, all those factors. But that time pretty decent trip. And I would say it was even more successful because my first mate, Gregory Bednarczyk [unsure of spelling], it was the first trip for him as a mate. So we were both kind of fresh so it was good because now he's the captain of this boat, he's the captain on the *Michigan*. So we both became captains. And we both start same time in the pilot house. And the first trip wasn't excellent weather, but—

JF: But you can home and that's good!

EL: But how it is! February usually tough. For everyone.

JF: Do you remember any particularly scary trips because of storms or any other problems?

EL: I don't remember which year it was. Probably it's not hard to find because this event was recorded in the book *Perfect Storm*. Eighty something. It was then Halloween. I remember it was Halloween. And it was the hurricane coming and we were heading home. I remember it was very bad. I remember that the waves between islands was so huge that for a while I thought, 'We gonna make the gate to the harbor?'

JF: Before they shut it, you mean?

EL: Before they, yeah. We make it, but I remember that some boats didn't, and they had to stay outside of the harbor through all this hurricane. Sometimes it's like all these boats in bad weather, awful weather. After a while you just don't remember. 'It wasn't that bad. If we make it, it wasn't that bad'.

[19:48]

JF: It's just part of the job! That's interesting! So have you seen in your time, you must have seen some change in the technology that's taken place. How does that strike you?

EL: The whole technology develop better gear. First when I start fishing, I thought it amazing how somebody construct the dredges that they catch. Because they took quite heavy steel construction. Send them both sides of vessel, just tow behind your stern, and somebody just figure out how to make them that actually you are able to drag them on the good side, how to design the bag that actually opens and gets some

scallops inside. So for all these years, we can observe that every year somebody improves something with fishing gear. We also have kind of restriction from National Marine Fisheries. How the gear's supposed to look. Most of the fishermen don't always agree, but we have to keep up to the rules. And other things, the winches on the vessels. Most of the vessels now carry hydraulic winches instead of mechanical one. When started on Michigan, had the mechanical winches. They always—They worked. They still are. You can find some Hathaway Winches was very big company here which produced Hathaway winches. And the service, with the parts, mechanics which can fix it. But they always bring a little more problem, a slower one. If goes to fishing, you not only go for trip but you have to make production. So any saving of the time it's very important. Just saving four or five minutes on haul back can count very much to the final trip. Because you make. let's say, 24 haul backs during one day if you tow about one hour. If tow half hour, you make about 46 haul backs. So huge amount. If save five minutes every haul back, make few tows more. And so they develop hydraulic winches, which are much faster, much easier to operate, and they more comforting for crew because easier to operate. To find good winchman for Hathaway Winches was like...

JF: Now did that—Would the hydraulic winches increase expense because they would need fuel or something to run?

EL: It goes to power of the boats. Many boats different design. But, let's say, the boats who have separate winch engine. You know, it goes to the usage of the fuel. You can save a little bit of fuel if engine brand new, but after a while the consumption of the fuel becomes almost same. If it goes to the winch engine, you run the winch engine just few hours a day because if, let's say, the haul back takes ten minutes, then you make, let's say, 20 haul backs a day, and multiplied by 10 minutes. So it's not like main engine of the vessel which needs run all time. The engine you start and after haul back you stop.

JF: Oh ok. So it's just a little bit here and there. And for the amount you bring in, it's probably worth it.

EL: Exactly. And if you save time, and even if you invest with the hydraulic winches, the boat can always bring in a total after a few trips. Some boats don't have separate winch engine. They have power take-off which means the main engine of the vessel at some time during the trip becomes winch engine. You can have a reduction which they call 'power take-off.' And you use the main engine as the winch engine which saves the cost of equipment and usage of the fuel because you just use one engine. But if you think on the other spot, you have no backup. You know what I mean? In same time you can lose main and winch engine. If you have separate winch engine, this means that maybe you cannot operate the haul backs but you have the main engine to run vessel. So I personally prefer the boats which have separate winch engines.

JF: Is that the one you have now?

EL: Yes it is just more comforting and you have more options.

[26:05]

JF: I imagine you've shucked a few scallops in your day? Have you?

EL: Oh yes. It's like—I don't if... Well, one time I showed boat to friend and you know the people here—let's say during present regulation, you have few closer trips, and



they are like 18,000 pound limit. The people sometimes cannot imagine how much is 18,000 pounds of the scallops. And if you imagine 100-foot long scalloper, which is large vessel, let's say one of the largest the people can see in the harbor, and if you fill up the whole deck with the shells of the scallops up to the wheel, usually only in middle of boat you have the hatches, the spots you can enter inside to the fish hold. If you cover the whole deck up to you cannot even see the hatches, so the whole deck is full. And you clean up, open the shells, you gonna have about 4,000 of clean meat of the scallops. So you need a lot. Eighteen thousand pounds of the scallops, it's thousands, thousands of shells to be cut, clean up. So it's extremely time consuming, and hard work for deckhands, fishermen. Now also now for a mate and for a captain because with the limited crew to 7, everyone on the boat cuts scallops, and everyone have to be very productive.

JF: And they have to go fast I imagine because at some point you can't put more on until those are cleared?

EL: Exactly. It's like, the good cutter can open, let's say, close to 100 shells in four or five minutes.

JF: Wow! How long does it take to get good like that? Do you know? Does it happen pretty quickly when you doing that many? I tried it once, and the thing was biting my thumb!

EL: It's not takes that long. I would say, you know, the people have ability to do kinds of jobs. Some people cannot be good shuckers, shucking scallops people. Some people cannot be on sea at all because they just don't feel good. But the person who can work, have ability, 3 to 5 trips, they have it pretty well down. It takes a year to keep the speed because if present day on a scalloping vessel, the crew member work up to 16 hours a day. You have to get experience of the years on the sea to be able to work that amount of hours. But I would say to keep up the job, 5 trips.

JF: Not too many in the course of a career.

EL: No it's not too bad. And I would say the work itself, it's not very complicated. If someone were to work on a field, because working on the sea, it's kind of harvesting, but you harvest the sea. It's just different because you are out of shore. The water gives the motion and move the boat. It's kind of harvesting. You pick something, you clean up, you wash, you store, you ice good. The scallops before end up on the table of people, it's touched by so many hands, and takes so many hours to get ready.

[31:00]

JF: What's your sleep schedule like as captain? Do you have a regular schedule or does it just vary by what is happening?

EL: The present fishing vessels work 24 hours a day. So it's necessary to keep some schedule. Because it's not like, we decide to take off or we anchor the boat and get rest. We keep working 24 hours, day and night. So usually they watch 6 on 6, 8 on 8, 8 hours. Let's say the captain will run one watch, mate run next watch. So basically you have, let's say, two watches, 6 hours each during 24 hour schedule. But responsibility of the captain is to be on any necessary time if it's necessary.

JF: Always on call?

EL: Always on call or something. You see now seems like the fishermen very well trained. Basically, the mate, the mate, it's training the same as captain because he

also run boat, and steer the boat, makes tows, responsibility for the catch, makes the bags during watch.

[32:29]

JF: It's a lot huh? I guess if you love it, it's just all part of what you do. I had a question about when you're making a tow and you put dredge out, can you tell, can you feel if it's out right or if it's getting caught or if one side—You can feel that?

EL: Mm hm. You cannot see them because on the bottom of ocean. The only time I see the bottom of the ocean was when I went with scientists and they were looking by the camera. I thought it would be interesting to construct some much heavier construction and attach to the dredges so we actually see how dredges work on the bottom of the ocean. The signs or indications that dredge is on right side—they call them like 'bag jump' if the dredge turn upside down. If the dredge turn upside down, you don't gonna get nothing in bag, so when you haul back she gonna be empty. So there is no good, you wanna keep them on the right side. There is a few indication because you cannot see them you cannot tell like the speed. If you tow them on the right side, usually the speed of boat, you have equipment which show you the speed, like GPS show quite accurate speed. And if speed jump, you can feel something is wrong. Because it is supposed to be same pressure on both sides, one dredge and another. So usually that time you haul back sooner, because you don't want to lose the time and get her empty.

JF: Did it take very long to develop that feeling? Or did it, is it pretty obvious?

EL: Like most of the fishing skills it's experience. If you speak with the captain, who are 35 or 40 years fishermen, or most of the boat owners, they were fishing captain before. It is nice to speak with them, because they always have this experience from years ago which were even much harder to find out all these things, because we did not have this modern time equipment. And they knew! They knew so it means they were very good, had very good observation, and the years of experience.

JF: Were there certain ones that stand out in your mind as role models for you?

EL: Oh yes! When went to pick this boat from the shipyard, I had two excellent captains which they are retired now. One was John Isaksen. And another was Kenny Risdal [name – unsure of spelling]. They both were for years fishing captains. I was very happy to have them, and I enjoyed time with them because they tell me a lot of good story about fishing. Interesting and scalloping. How to observe the things. John is excellent engineer. He have the business with the Deutz, which they excellent marine engine. Don't know if people know, but he was excellent captain for years himself. It's good to listen. It's what I said, captain keeps log, puts all information in paper or if someone prefers storing in a computer. There is no best spot to make the trip. You have to look around for scallops. And if more information you have from years ago and you remember them, then more successful gonna be next trip. There is no stars who goes to fishing. And I would say—Most of the people read probably, *Old Man and the Sea*, by Herman Melville, because it's like one of the National—best books of the sea. There is a challenge to catch a fish. You know, you have to be very intelligent to catch the fish, because the fish so quick, so fast, move around. She's inside the water. You can't see.

JF: You can't see. This is what amazes me. I picture this boat, you're out there, and you no reference points. I say you have no reference points, because I wouldn't know

how to make out the reference points, you would know how to make out your reference points.

EL: You have a good imagination. Because sometimes people—place one person in a dark room, just new room, not the room you know. So experience about your room if needed to work during dark. Same goes with the vessel. Every seafarer since 3,500 BC, they start to go out to water. And how they do the first trips? They did the first trips by follow the land. So the marks from the land give them information on where they area. Later, they start to go further off shore. I don't know if they like—let's say I would say great achievement not only in fishing industry but discovering new lands, the Norwegian people, let's say the Vikings, the Vikings in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Let's say the latitude of 75 degrees north, it's about Greenland. Ok? Then they went to the south to 34 north latitude, which is, let's say, the Baghdad. Then if we go to the west 75 west longitude, about Cape Cod of east coast of the United States. Ok? And the opposite way, they went up to 70 east, which is [inaudible, geographic location]. If we look on world's chart, they cover almost entire world, and it was 8<sup>th</sup> century. Ok? This way, give the information that men always have desire to discover something. It's not necessarily was economical, like most people like picture the Viking. It was desire to see something new, to discover this new land. And I think it was some desire to set fishing off the New Bedford harbor. First it was the whaling industry. Then it become the—Many people don't realize but New Bedford is the biggest harbor, fishing harbor in world, not only on the east coast of United States. So I would say we hope it's gonna last longer. That National Marine Fisheries don't put more and more regulations, keep us—

[42:01]

JF: From what I've heard other people say if it lasts it's gonna become more and more corporate, like agribusiness. I don't know if you think that will happen?

EL: I hope not. I hope not because I always thought the fishing was very honest way of living. Because you have on one side the man, and other side you have the fish. By your skills, experience, you are able to get or not. There is not others, different force which can help you to get or not. You deal with the nature. And you just harvest the ocean. There is good years and there are bad years. The same goes to farmers. You have a good crop or bad crop. If, think also another way, the people choose what want to do for living. And I would say if I've in future have the son, and he choose want to be a fisherman. What am I gonna say him, 'Oh you cannot be, because we have regulations, and will be not more boats'.

JF: That would be very sad.

EL: It don't feel fair, don't you think?

JF: No, not at all. I don't think big agribusiness—I'm very much support your local grower. There's something very special there you don't want to lose.

EL: I see that the scientists cooperate now with the fishermen. But I start in '86 and I didn't see many research trips that time. So we can honestly say that it's quite new. You know, the research, they start with the research. So the experience with the research maybe it's 10 years. You cannot compare 10 years with 50 years of fishing. Ok? So I would like to see them more work with fishermen because the fishermen are the people who can provide the most accurate data. Because they have their own logs with the catch. How many, what months. The scallops emigrate, too. It's not

something you can just keep in a place. If you keep in a place, it start dying. If we go to simple observation, if you place the human, the person, and try to keep in a cage, the person gonna die. Because we can't look for freedom, ability to move. When the person need to spend time in a bed, don't feel good. It's same with all living things. It's the same with the scallops. They make closed area for us. So in other words to explain to people who never hear about, they make the points and place line between points on the ocean, and make the areas you can just harvest in a special time of the year, in special amount of pounds, let's say, this year we had 18,000. By doing this, they can't prevent for overcatch the scallops in these places. And now we have the beds of scallops which start dying. The scallops don't have natural movement. The scallops, it's very, the scallops need the fresh water, need the current. Usually when they compare the scallops from the New York to the Georges Bank scallops. The scallops from Georges Bank always said had much firmer meat, much stronger, because there is much movement of the water here, you have the tides. The much more water the scallop filtrates, and taking food from water, the scallops is feeding all time. So I don't feel it's quite fair, and I don't feel its right. Because you keep in a place and don't even let the boat get the scallops. And now they talking about closing these places because of the fish. Most of the boats were for fishing trips they didn't see any ground fish there. I think it needs be much more done with this research, and the information, the data, from the fisherman because sounds not right. We had the Canyon Creek trip this year and there wasn't much scallops there, and in other places scallops dying. Seems like a little bit mismanagement with this organization.

JF: Well hopefully, the – Are you pleased with what you see happening with SMAST doing? UMass Dartmouth?

EL: They do very good job. I feel like they have right approach. I would say we have to give them ability to do more research trips. But still I feel like National Marine Fisheries supposed to get more information, and talk with fishermen, because they're only ones who can provide the data.

JF: Hopefully it will keep going—

EL: They cannot compare closed area trips to open area trips. It's just, it seems you just have to go out fishing and see how it look. You cannot decide about trip from the office. If we look at the boat owners, most of them were fishermen themselves. It's not like someone just decided to have fleet, and send the boat, and start the business. The fishing business is the business about the living, the people who make living from sea. And somebody who just gather information from scientists, and this is just ten years of the work.

JF: That's a good point too about the owners having been fishermen. If that changes, then it won't be about a living in the same way for the owners, they won't understand so much.

EL: Yeah.

[50:20]

JF: Just one other question. I'm very curious. As a woman, have you had any—was it hard for you to break in? Were there times you feel you had to prove yourself more? Or did you feel very welcomed because of your interest and skill?

EL: I don't know why – I wouldn't say hard. That was tradition. It's kind of the job. It's like the woman is capable to do any kind of the jobs. I remember years ago in school,

one teacher, which was excellent teacher. He said ‘The men are smarter than women.’ And I said ‘Oh really!’ He said ‘Oh yeah! Just go to the library, and look at the books, there are more book in any library was written by men.’ I said ‘Well, maybe it’s true but it doesn’t indicate nothing.’ If the people remember, up to 19<sup>th</sup> century, the women were not allowed to the colleges. So if we think that way, it’s the same in fishing. It’s –They wasn’t allowed because it was kind of tradition. The men took the effort to go on the sea, and make the living, from the sea. And the women stay home, take care about family. Men thing to go, face darkness, and know things, and go for fishing. And the time just change. And I feel like if women able to do same kind of job like the men, then I didn’t find any objection, or they didn’t like, I just became part of group.

[53:09]

JF: That’s great! That’s neat. Well this was fascinating. The only other question that I have that I sort of like to the wrap up with. In a way I feel like you answered, but I just like to ask people. What would they want average festival visitor to understand – What would you like them to understand about the fishing industry or the work you do?

EL: I would say the people need to understand was that all this town was about was the fishing from the beginning. The New Bedford was the richest town at the turn of the century because of the fishing industry. The man went on sea to conquer sea because the ocean always bring the great source. The United States, it’s one of the leading—I would say it’s hard to use word leading, we have this diabetes, which spreads—and people don’t realize that the seafood is the healthiest food you ever can find. I would say the most important thing is to keep up fishing, keep this industry alive, and we gonna bring fresh seafood to any home. And it will be wonderful if it can be native seafood, catch from Georges Bank, from New York. Right? Don’t import because what we bring, we bring very fresh stuff. It stay no longer than 1 week, 10 days on the sea. The people gonna be much healthier, there may be will not be more problem with diabetes. This Working Waterfront Festival is very important, and make the fish industry closer to people. I am quite convinced that most of the people know a lot about fishing already.

JF: Yeah you think they do?

EL: Yeah I feel that way. With the questions they’ve asked.

JF: The ones that have come and—Oh good.

[56:05]

JF: I know it’s interesting the way you voiced that. It’s sort of – Other people have talked about a sense of, sort of disconnection between general public in some way and what goes on with fishing industry. Some have actually talked about Route 18, and say that sort of made a physical disconnection between – It’s nice to hear you say you think more people are aware.

EL: I think they are. Usually regulations go quick, they ask about opinion, but they don’t count about our opinion. They just put regulation through. And at some point they can be lost in the regulation. Because sometimes the people ask if it’s stressful job to go on sea. It’s stressful as much as many other jobs, the most stressful is you have to navigate with the bunch of the regulations. We have a framework aiding right now, and looks like you need a secretary right now. For make the few fishing trips? I

don't feel it's right to make this stress for crew or for a captains. If you imagine we have 40 days open for our trip. Forty days! We have a monitoring – vessel monitoring system. Vessel monitoring system start when working when you pass demarcation line in harbor. The demarcation line is usually are set like, let's say, a few miles out of the harbor on a special geographical point. So this way when you drop the line you get—You spend the hours preparing for trip, put the ice, put the water, make the [inaudible] work, make sure the boat is ready. Then you pass this demarcation line, and your time start be counting from your fishing. You have 40 days. Forty days you can't even divide for 3 trips. So somebody who said 40 days they didn't understand that you need at least two weeks to make a quite regular fishing trip. So then, let's say, you make certain you go for a third one. And the third one you have just few days left. Let's say you have 11 days left, then you have this pressure to be on a time. And the boat it's not a plane, the boat it's not the car. Do you understand there's so many factors decide how fast the boat gonna go. To meet the line on the time, it's like, sounds for me, what they ask for? What gonna happens if I gonna miss one hour?

JF: So you have to cut off more time to make sure you make the line almost.

EL: Exactly.

JF: That would be—That is very stressful then. That is interesting.

EL: What for to put the pressure like that? Don't have any sense for me.

JF: No.

[59:45]

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EL: So I said the last trip, it's always stressful to make line on time. So the same – I always wonder what gonna happen if I don't meet on time. The boat was bad or I was bad?

JF: And it seems like with all the monitoring these days, why can't they just, if they have to do this, do it from 'Ok, we hauled in our nets and we're heading home' and they can tell by your speed that you're not fishing, you're not dredging?

EL: Exactly. On the first boat, these regulations are not fair because the boats have different speeds. One boat can steam 12 knots an hour, and so it means make like 12 knots per nautical miles during the one hour period, and another boat make just 7 or 8.

JF: So they have to leave earlier and stop? That's too bad.

EL: They count the same way time for them. You understand me?

JF: That's totally illogical.

EL: So this regulation supposed to be different for every boat, because on first boat, some boats have a better ability to steam faster, so they can have 1 or 2 watches more. So it seems not very fair.

JF: Sounds like they didn't consult you.

- EL: Exactly. I feel like every fisherman deserve the same. So I said when I first spoke, why make regulation at all? The nature regulate the fishing. Why make a regulation at all? If one year, the boat can make better trips, then the two years it's much smaller. The fish emigrate. There are so many factors. You cannot make the fence a place and store in a place. Because otherwise you make the scallops dying, if dying disappear too. So actually you work against. You know I spoke about the feeling how this look from observation. I understand idea, because we always want to be better for next generation. But now it goes to nature. You cannot just put something aside, because you feel you will have more next few years. You can store the bank account, but not store something which requires—
- JF: Like they're trying to conquer nature and it's not gonna happen or something?
- EL: Exactly. So this way it doesn't mean if they're gonna make a closed area then the next year we're gonna have more. We can lose.
- JF: This is so interesting for what you said even in the beginning, it's like this whole thing man with nature. It's like this is getting in way of that.
- EL: Exactly. Because let's say you have flower which grow in the garden. It have some cycle of life. You cannot keep for 20 years because you think grandchildren can enjoy same flower. You have to plant new one.
- JF: Think this whole society thinks that we just—I mean when you look at medicines and everything, we think can live forever and control everything. People don't want to accept that we're human and, I don't know.
- EL: People think, we think that men develop skills that are able to control and regulate. But then the history show the life goes better if goes just natural way. If the men don't use the power over the nature. Because the life show that sometimes you cannot go over nature, she's stronger than we.
- JF: This is making me think to about we will often ask people do they remember like with the older-time fishermen, and the beliefs they have for luck, and things like that. It's almost like maybe those kind of systems were better at least for nature in terms of people felt sense of control, but not in a way that is disruptive or trying to disrupt.
- EL: Mm hm. It's even hard to say 'old-time fishermen', they fishermen, the fishermen because as good as present time. They use word 'fate' or 'the belief' because way of describing things which actually happen. And it's happen same way in the present time. The good fishermen, they can tell about the weather through the observation of sky. Because experience gives ability. You can tell by the sunrise what weather to expect. But our minds tell us that if you gonna get modern technology, fax machine information, then we gonna just have more information. In beginning I said as much information we have the better trip you can have. But it doesn't mean old-time fishermen—he got exactly same information, but the information came from his experience. And it's now, like I said, modern time, we have ability to prepare someone to do a job in a much faster time, because we the tools and to teach. If goes years ago, it took long time when the father teach his son how to become a fisherman. But he was exactly same good like the present day captain. I even feel like this was the very good school of learning because the father could pass all his experience to the son. It was the most honest way.
- JF: And if it all gets too corporate, and you start seeing lots of turnover, there won't be that either.

EL: Exactly. And there is no, in the present day—you know like, the fishing gets better now. I feel like the way regulation are presented to fishermen, it make more complicated, and not necessary it's gonna save the fishing industry. Because the history and life show that the nature can regulate. Or it's gonna be the scallops the boat don't catch now in next fifty years. It's gonna be gone. The scallops gonna be dead. The whole this mess not even about the scallops. It's about the ground fish. They accuse the fishing vessel, they destroy the bottom of ocean. And I don't know if anybody observe ever garden. Most of the women like garden around house, you enjoy the flowers. And try do not cut the grass for five years, what are you gonna have? I don't know if the people realize that. You need this movement and kind of sorting of the sediment on the bottom of the ocean, to allow the better circulation of the water otherwise you have something which is dying.

[10:07]

EL: The way the gear is set now for scallopers, it prevent catch of the fish. We have the large meshes on [twine top] which prevent to catch fish inside bag of dredges. I believe we can even take off, for chain across and we can even go without [twine top]. Because I don't know if you remember, years ago, we got the chafing gear which were on top of the twine tops, kind of the extra lines. This chafing gear was not used to prevent fish to escape, it was using to keep the dredges open. Kind of the floating. But they don't allow us to use chafing gear anymore. And they keep the bag open from the top on the dredge so you can catch scallops, and also they keep gear floating so it less possible to get gear upside down. They didn't allow. Ok, so we didn't use. Then they changed the size of the meshes from 8 inches to 10 inches. And I would say if they so afraid about the fish, then let them do even bigger. But they cannot do more restrictions, because—I make those trips in these closed areas and there is no ground fish. It's so much dying scallops, there's no room for fish.

JF: So the scallops are taking over.

EL: The scallops took over. So if we think that way what can happen with regulation like that? Some species can take over another.

JF: It's like they're not thinking ecosystem? Kind of? Yeah.

EL: It's so complicated thing. All regulations or restriction supposed to go very slow. Because any time we integrate in nature, we can make mistakes, we just human. Yeah?

JF: And you're never gonna see the big picture, because we don't, we're not capable.

EL: And sometimes you make a mistake, and you cannot just get back, because this mistake was too serious. And it happens in many countries, they destroy fishing industry by the not right regulations. It happens in my country, in Poland, we don't have a fishing industry right anymore. Because the regulation wasn't right. Wasn't nothing wrong with the fishing itself. I would say it's a serious decision they make. And I feel like by the letters we receive, they just keep going one after another.

JF: They don't give anyone a chance to figure out how it's working?

EL: I don't know what example I can give. The example – Let's say about how the people find out about the, let's say, the national sickness or something, let's say, some countries develop some sickness they don't know. The scientists find out already Eskimo people don't develop any coronary heart diseases. So they find out that the seafood is pretty good food, because it is rich in omega-3 oil. And I am very glad I



always liked the fish. Because by, even I didn't know, but I like it, at least I was in the right spot, eat a lot of fish and the scallops because it's rich in omega-3 oil. So it takes about 100 years of the research, collect the data, to find out that whatever we buying in food market maybe have affect on our health. It takes 100 years to make decision, this kind of food maybe it's not right. So it's the wrong research. From my observation, the scientists are to work with fishermen about 10 years, it's so fast, we should make more observation, we should wait, put some time.

JF: And see what cycles happen anyway.

EL: What happens? What is result? Because they go too fast. The letter after letter. Close this letter, open this. We're gonna have 40 days. We gonna have – And it seems like we don't have time to look to what point this regulation bring us. What do they save, by doing this? If the scallops was lying there, is gonna be good next year? Or what gonna happen in that area they send us there is no scallops at all? So the people can be surprised. And it's also much wider aspect of all this regulation. When I came –My decision to immigrate to United States. I was young at the time, I was seeking freedom. I thought it is wonderful to live in a free country, very democratic, that you can choose what like to do in your life. So I had this belief, that it's very free, it's very open. It took me a few years because I start on the deck, but during this few years, I realize that the fishing is most regulated industry I ever saw. And I said I never expect with the country who has so great constitution, and this freedom for all the people, very democratic, can put so much regulation in just one kind of the business. It doesn't sound that fair. So it surprised me very much.

[17:59]

JF: I even think that with everything going on in our country, some people in the world see us as a democracy and therefore they think we have such easy say in government, and I found that's just not true.

EL: The fishing industry give example. I try to find out what is the clue to save fishing for a next generation. You cannot put something on aside, and think you saving for next 50 or 100 years.

JF: It will – Like you said, it will rot and die or whatever.

EL: Exactly. And it's like – The people who never went out fishing, they didn't see this. The scientists see the photograph of the bottom of ocean, and they see scallops in the shell. But they never open shell to see the size, to see how the scallops looks. They make a few trips with the scallop dredges. But the research trip, they don't have this information because they not necessary are in good month, in good spot. In other words, in June you supposed to be just stop fishing New York and go to channel, because the temperature of the water. I don't know if people realize too that the scallops can live in the water, so shallow water, you can find the scallops in few fathoms, and you can find the scallops 500 fathoms of the water. So the scallops can be on that shallow water to the very deep water. I believe the vessel in this fishing industry is just fish from, let's say, commercially, we fish from, I would say, 18 fathoms, which is shallow water up to 56, up to 60 fathoms. 60 fathoms is just top most the captain ever send gear. So what about rest of ocean? We never even set the gear there. How did National Marine Fisheries can think that they cover, by this small area. And I said, to make decision to—I don't know how many tests are done on, any drug tests, that people can use or not. I said it takes about 100 years to make

decision, which would mean we're supposed to take off the shells in the store and just throw away because they are not healthy enough for us. And it seems, I am quite fresh in the fishing industry but so many regulation already that I cannot believe it.

[21:39]

JF: That's true! When you look at the bigger picture it's such a small span of time to have so much.

EL: I had the luck to fish with the older captains. And I was always interesting how scalloping was looking years ago. So I have this wider picture. That it's not just how to get one trip. Because, you go and you always have this trip. Better or worse. But seems to be not difficult, but what to do to just keep this harbor, keep fishing. Don't put the scalloping aside which I am speaking about the scalloping. I am not even familiar with the draggers, but I know that much even more restrictions. I have a hard time to make the living. All this fishing, it's nothing about more than just make the living. For all these people who just choose to be a fisherman. I would like say that, I would see a much younger people, let's say, even my son, if he choose to be a fisherman then why not? Why the limited entry? Why somebody who decide to be a fisherman cannot be a fisherman?

JF: And it's like you say, I would think nature would take care of that, in that not that many people are going to stay in if they can't make a living, so let them try, and if they stay, they stay.

EL: Exactly. Limited entry, it seems to be not very democratic way of approach to the fishing business. Because how they can cannot, decide that they gonna be issued that many license, not more? I would like a license myself, so my son can be a fisherman. If he likes the boat. And if anyone look at the picture of New England. There is a beautiful, they probably still have the movie, it's like documentary movie about New England, in the Scientific Museum in Boston. They have this huge and grand panoramic—

JF: The omni theater place?

EL: Yes. There is a beautiful movie about New England. If you look at this movie, you can see that you have the water, you have the harbors, you have the boats. And it's kind of like a spirit of the Massachusetts. You cannot place, any other place on this picture, because it becomes so familiar for all the people. It was about what New England was. It's how the immigrants immigrate here and set this fishing industry here. We cannot just erase this and put something different on the docks. It's gonna be not same, we'll all gonna miss it very much.

JF: Yeah. Well let's hope the positive pieces will take over and people like your son can make their choices, right?

EL: Yeah.

JF: Well this has been wonderful. It's been a pleasure to meet you.

EL: Very nice

JF: Thank you. Do you have – I'm gonna shut this off unless you have anything else?

[25:55]

EL: No, it's fine. It's like, all these fishing trips. Every one it's interesting. It's just—

JF: I wish I had you on tape because every time you mention actually being on a fishing trip your whole face lights up and your dimples show.

EL: Yeah. It's something. It's very interesting. Even hard to present to the people because it's like—

JF: They cannot feel what you feel.

EL: Yeah, they cannot feel. We are supposed to allow them enter to the boats, like they go and look *Ernestina*, just on the fishing boats. Maybe next year's Festival we can ask few boat owners just to make possibility for people just go.

JF: You mean to go out on the boat?

EL: No just, at least on the dock.

JF: This year they could go on *Pacer*.

EL: Oh yeah? Oh, I didn't know.

JF: Then another boat above it that may be a clam—I forget, but there's another boat they were able to go on.

EL: Oh wonderful. Because they go out, it's difficult, because it's an insurance matter.

JF: I was really impressed that he was letting – Yeah, he'd be in one place, and we'd all be wandering in other places, I know! But yeah it was great to be get to see it.

EL: So you work for Waterfront every year?

JF: Well this was just the second year that they've done it. And my friend, Laura, I'm a colleague of her's in the folklore field, and she's the director, so she's had me do the oral histories both years, and another woman. I don't know what will happen next year, but so far—

EL: Do you, your husband is a fisherman?

JF: No, I live in Western Massachusetts actually.

EL: Oh yeah? So it's interesting for you?

JF: It's very fascinating! You'd never catch me out on one of those boats! But I admire all of you who will. It's very fascinating to me! My dissertation in grad school was on farming, and changes in farming, what did people like, what changes did they like and what changes didn't they like. So it's a similar thing, it's a similar thing. I'm very—I like to see communities stay small and local.

[28:06]

EL: You know, honest, what is the feeling—the fishing die out in many countries already, because of the regulation. And it seems like they starting in the same direction. All these boats, they set councils for fishing. And they set the, do you have a next person after me?

JF: No. This is it.

EL: They also set the attorney to represent. I don't feel it's necessary. The most, I kind of afraid from the position that you so attached to the picture, plus it's my job, my work. But I feel like for many boat owners it's really headache. They invest [inaudible] years of their life. It's not something you go to store and decide on something else. It's the life. It's like, let's say, I saw those beautiful photographs of the beginning, all those people, these black and white photographs. It's the same with my father, when he become retired, I never imagine he can do something else in his life.

JF: This is who he was—it's like people have said 'What I do is who I am.'

EL: Exactly. It's like you cannot just take them and place—

JF: Have them become a different person in a different setting.

EL: Exactly. Or just offer them to sell the boat or something. What they gonna do?

JF: Well I was talking to one man earlier, and he said that he bought his first fishing vessel, I think was a scalloper, and he bought it, and then the times got very sparse. And I was like 'Well did you ever think about changing?' And he goes, 'Well what was I gonna do. I had this boat that I owed money on, I had a mortgage.' And no one was probably – He really felt that he had no choice but to stick with it.

EL: With the present regulations, nobody new can enter into fishing. You can just revive the old boat or take the license and build based on this license, another one. Limited entry, in a way, I didn't want to go that far with our story, but limited entry creates the black market. If it's something not very common, the nit becomes expensive, it's just like the precious jewelry. You know what I mean? So it means not the regular person cannot afford. So if my son wants to, I'll say 'No no, we'll just gonna for a tour in the harbor'? It doesn't sound fair.

JF: Well thank you so much.

EL: You're very welcome.

[31:15]

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