

Name of person Interviewed: Shawn Sipple [SS]

Facts about this person:

Born:

Sex: Male

Occupation: Former Fisherman

Home port: New Bedford, MA

Hail Port: New Bedford, MA

Residence (Town where lives)

Dartmouth, MA

Ethnic background (if known)

American

Interviewer: Millie Rahn [MR]

Transcriber: Tove E. Bendiksen

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: September 26, 2004

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Transcribed by Tove Bendiksen

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**Tape 5: Shawn Sipple, former fisherman & past winner of scallop-shucking contest**

576 Rock o' Dundee Rd., S. Dartmouth 02748

interviewer: Millie Rahn

interview time: 41.05 minutes

recorded at HDC oral history station, September 26, 2004

summary: Talks about being second-generation fisherman, father being burned on a boat

and never fishing again, the life of a scalloper, not wanting son to go into fishery.

Talks about old days with fewer regulations and how regs now are killing industry.

Note: there are some great quotes here, mostly transcribed, about the value of the festival showing the life of fishermen, account of close call with storm at sea and bonding of crews, safety and working with inexperienced crews, and the future of the industry.

Born in New Bedford and went to N.B. high school; married 27 years. Got into fishing because father was "ex-commercial fisherman" burned in "tragic fire" on boat; burned from waist down and wore special clothing rest of his life. Shawn started fishing at age 17 ½ after high school. First job with Peter Kilshaw, who owns Northern Edge and "showed me the tricks of the trade."

Father never went back out on boat; couldn't wear rubber on his feet because of burns, but gave advice. Father owned National Social Club.

2:46

Talks about tough life of scalloping and effect of regulations. Been out of fishing for 13-14 years. In his day, fished with 11 men on board for 15-18 days at sea, "which is a very long time"; now 6 men for 11 days and "restricted to less time at sea." Can make \$15K in 11 days, but need to make consecutive trips to make money, which people don't understand. Gave guided tours of boats during festival. Lots of people asked questions and he talked about living quarters and what happens on boat, tragedies (including friend who committed suicide on boat in front of everyone, seen people lose limbs and fingers, etc.)

6:49

"It's stuff like that that people don't understand. [Fishing] is actually the most dangerous job in the world. It is." Now builds boats for Beetle Cats with Laura's husband for 11 years. Went from being aboard boats to building them. .

7:15

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What makes a good fisherman? “Total heart. It takes a lot of heart.” Tells story and shows photo from cover of Barnicle of son, Joshua, born early on October 27, 1988, while Shawn at sea. Didn’t see him for 7 days while he stayed out fishing.

9:53

Son Josh [also at interview] says he’s undecided about being a fisherman. Father doesn’t want son to go through what he went through fishing with today’s loopholes and restrictions. Wants son to go to college and pursue another lifestyle. “ No comparison” with father’s era. Talks about differences between his own father’s generation’s experience and now, such as no regs then, more radio contact then. Recalls old men talking about being caught in storms only with walkie-talkie.

11.25

“That when people should listen...“Festival gives everyone a chance who doesn’t know....When somebody asks you a question, that’s priceless. Where do we come from? They don’t know. They don’t understand. It’s the most dangerous job in the world.”

13:03 – 16:18 **[note: worth transcribing whole account of storm that was closest call]**

Talks about closest call: “One of the scariest times of my life was about 16 years ago about Thanksgiving. We decided to go out....We got stuck in Georges Bank with winds over 120 mph. We did nothing but hold on to the boat for 4 days. I’m talking literally. There was no fishing. We put our drags to the bottom of the ocean to anchor the boat. Luckily the boat was one of the best at the time, that was the tradition...If I was on any other boat, I wouldn’t be here right now. I spent 4 days just gathering with my crew, which was 8 to 9 guys at that time. We never hired anybody. We were all one steady crew. When somebody took a trip off, another family member would come on....It had to be one of the most memorable things.”

Talks about boat being brand new at the time, built in Boothbay, “brother and sister to the Nordic Pride.” Had film of storm taken while strapped to boat. Coast Guard couldn’t help and didn’t have radio contact for 3 or 4 days, when he called wife and said they were “laying,” just staying there and had no idea when storm would stop.

“It’s times like that where it doesn’t become a job. It becomes your life.” Quotes display board Laura made for previous maritime festival: “When the wind blows on land, you hold on to your hat. When the wind blows at sea, you hang on to your life and the boat.”

16:20

Talks about “some of the toughest captains you’ve ever seen in your life.” Talks about fishing with Gabe Miranda on Friendship for 15-17 days at sea, then gear and other work so you’d only be on land for 3 days a month. Talks about ability then to make lots of money to save for a house. Tells of [c. 1984 tho’ dates don’t match with other accounts]

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last trip of his career aboard Harvester with Capt. Tommy Saunders when he nearly broke his back and is *still* being treated for back problems.

20:57

Superstitions: story of guy, Carlos, who made voodoo dolls with shackers' hair--guys who thought they knew how to fish—that he'd cut while guys were sleeping. Would show voodoo doll when weather got rough and threatened to put pin in doll every time guys said they knew what they were doing, but didn't.

23:00

Talks of problems with longevity of industry, with no time to train new fishermen, restrictions, etc. Compares his days scalloping with now and effect of regs. Praises scalloper Chris Wright and talks about shucking contest at festival day before, not having shucked a scallop for 13 years and being cheered on by old captains.

26:03 **[great quote about festival and fishing life, and bonding among crews]**

“[Festival] is a day when fishermen can sit there and laugh together... You're watching each other. You're actually watching each other's life. People don't understand that. Once you go on deck, you are watching everyone's life. You're not watching what's going on. You're trying to protect everybody so no one gets hurt. 'Cuz if one person gets hurt, you're all done. If the Coast Guard can't get them, your trip is over. Not only is the trip over, you may have lost a friend. The safer you become out there-- There is no job on land that can even compare to that. Even when it's dead calm, I'm talking zero wind, it's the most dangerous job in the world. You have the most heavy machinery going on.... You never had to guess what was going on. You always trusted the guys.”

28:12

Even number of crews vs. odd number. He's the first to talk about even-numbered crews. Talks about shackers getting  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a share because they're green and don't know how to shuck scallops. Says never sense of odd or even [numbers] and contracts various make-up of crews at various levels of experience.

29:59 **[note: account of experience and inexperience and safety]**

Account of “smartening up” inexperienced shacker on Edgartown. “I actually saved his life. He looks at me to this day like I saved his life. He no longer fishes. He works on land. You don't tell a veteran fisherman ‘I know what I'm doing. I know what I'm doing’ That's the most irritating thing. We're there to make a living; we're not there to babysit anyone and when it comes to a shacker like that, you always have that on your mind: what happens if this guy ends up getting hurt here? Not only do you have that on your conscience, it's terrible. It is terrible. I was very fortunate to fish all them years with the

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greatest bunch of guys, (Mikey Odette?), all those guys. We were one family. When we came aboard we just laughed together, which made a trip go by.”

33:10

Pranks on board.

33:55 [future of industry; some good quotes through to end]

Advice to someone starting out today? “Don’t do it. Don’t do it. The way things are going right now, it’s not for the beginner. It’s for the professional. This is not something that’s going to be ongoing in the future with all the restrictions. This is strangling those guys.”

34:50

Talks about Hague Line, c. 1970s during Nixon administration, separating US scallopers mainly from New Bedford from Canadian waters, and injustice of Canada being allowed to export scallops to US, thus lowering US prices.

“You quote me now. This is what devastated half of this industry. They allowed Canadians to import scallops into the United States. Why do you allow that? What you are doing is actually knifing your own company. Your own business. You are putting them out of business. It all has to do with the president. It goes up to the big politics. It has nothing to do with a fishing association trying to push, trying to push, because we’ve been pushing for years. I just could never understand that. We would come in with giant trips saying, please, please give us 4 dollars a pound so we could make a good living for our family and not end up working that hard and getting half of what we thought we were going to get.”

39:00

“I don’t ever want to see this place devastated by no more fishing boats and stuff like that. Nobody wants to see that, especially if you grew up as a fisherman. No! I’m an ex-fisherman and I’m going to tell you right now, what I did in my fishing life back then, I don’t turn back. I wouldn’t own what I own. I just tried to provide for my family and I was a good man and I did. I got a beautiful home, a nice wife, beautiful son. That’s what it’s all about.”

“[Fishing] is my life. I live for that every day and you could see it on my face yesterday when I was shucking scallops.”

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## Interview

[00:00]

MR: Today is Sunday, September 26, 2004. My name is Millie Rahn and I am starting a day's worth of interviews. Right now I am here with Shawn Sipple, who's a former fisherman and a past winner of the scallop shucking contest. So tell me a little bit about, Give us your name again for the tape and where you live.

SS: My name is Shawn Sipple; I live at 576 Rock O' Dundee Road, South Dartmouth.

MR: And were you born in South Dartmouth?

SS: No, I was born in New Bedford.

MR: New Bedford, and how did you get into fishing?

SS: Well, my father was an ex- commercial fisherman, who ended up in a tragic fire on the boat and got burned from his waist down and had to wear special clothing for the rest of his life. From there...I pursued high school, I went to New Bedford High School. After New Bedford High School, I met my wife, which I have been with her 27 luxurious years. I decided I needed to make enough money to try and get us into a home instead of an apartment and I started young. I started fishing at seventeen and a half. I got my first job with Mr. Peter Kilshaw, which owns the *Northern Edge*, which is a great gentleman from around here. He's done a lot, him and his wife, have done a lot with Laura, stuff like that...but that's where I actually came into play and he showed me the tricks of the trade, him and a few other people. And that's where is all began.

MR: And your father, after his terrible accident, was he able to kind of give you advice?

[02:04]

SS: Yes well...

MR: Did he go back out on the boats?

SS: No, he didn't...it was an ongoing thing, he was going under treatments, you know like skin grafts, stuff like that. He couldn't wear rubber on his feet; because of the burns and stuff his shoes were specially ordered and stuff like that. He went from there to owning the National Social Club right here at the end of Union Street.

MR: And what kind of fishing have you done?

SS: Scalloping, I've done scalloping.

MR: And I was interviewing a scalloper yesterday, sounds like things are getting kind of tough at the moment

SS: Oh it's very tough at the moment.

MR: Can you talk a little bit about the regulations and how they are effecting..

[03:48]

SS: The effect of the regulations and what people do not understand is that I've been out of it for thirteen to fourteen years. When I fished, we had eleven men aboard and we would be gone for anywhere from fifteen to eighteen days at sea, which is a very long time. Now, because of the strong hold on regulations and stuff like that, its turned into six men at eleven days or to fifteen, and your are restricted to less time at sea, you know? You can actually go out with six men and make \$15,000.00 in eleven days, and everyone goes "Whoa, that's a lot of money", not

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if you can't make consecutive trips, that's not a lot of money...it's not, even if you put everything together for a whole year, you are still just getting by, and people just do not understand that...you know? I've been talking to a lot of people at this festival. Me and my son were aboard the brand-new boat on Pier 3 and trying to help people understand...not only living quarters and stuff like that, but what happens...I've also given them a few stories and hopefully today I'll be able to touch base with a lot of people. That's what I'm looking forward to, cause there's a lot of people who just go aboard and they see a nice the bathroom, a nice galley, but they don't understand what happens out there when it gets hot and heavy.

MR: And that's really the purpose of the festival. Most people, unless you've grown up in a fishing family, you don't know the stories, you don't know how things have changed, you don't know the danger, the whims of regulations, the whims of the weather...

SS: You know, I spoke to one woman yesterday, and it was a gentleman at the shucking contest...I've been retired for that many years and I decided...I looked at my wife and child and said, "I'm going into the shucking contest just for the fun of it" and all my friends were cheering me on, you know...even though I didn't come close to winning. It was all about fun and they all cheered me on and shook my hand and said "Thank you Shawn." It was just for the fun with the guys and it went over big, everybody loved it and stuff like that, but I spoke to two or three people who had questions at the scallop tent, which were asking me how many days this and that...I came upon them people again on that vessel and they asked me further questions, because I was there by myself, and I told them by going a little further into it and what happens on the boat and stuff like that...there's a lot of stuff that happens out there that is tragic, I mean tragic. As far as, I had one friend, I will not mention, who committed suicide on the boat in front of everyone and we never found him again. I've seen people loose limbs right in front of me, I had one guy loose three fingers, and it's stuff like that that people don't understand. You know, it really is the most dangerous job in the world, it is.

MR: I don't doubt it. What do you do now?

SS: I build boats for Beatle Cat. I'm with Laura's husband. I've been there for eleven years and it's the best thing in the world. I went from being aboard boats to building them.

MR: And you know what goes into being a good boat.

SS: Yes I do, yes I do.

MR: What do you think makes a good fisherman?

SS: What makes a good fisherman? His total heart, it takes a lot of heart...growing up, being a fisherman...um my son was born, if you want to look [*Barnacle*] this is from Gary Golas, from when he was born, that was 1990 the Dr. said he would not be born for two weeks. So my wife said, "Go, you have to go on this trip", and he was born...

MR: I'm looking at the cover of the *Barnacle*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1990 with Shawn holding a sign on his boat, "My Boy Joshua", who's sitting right here with us, was born

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weighing 7 pounds 2 oz, on October 27<sup>th</sup> 1988. Very cool...this is the *Barnacle* serving the New Bedford fishing industry and maritime interests, bi-weekly news magazine. It was the greatest moment.

[08:44]

SS: I spent another seven days without seeing my son, knowing that he was born. My captain, I was on the *F/V Friendship*, which is Gabe Miranda, which is one of the greatest captains there is. He came...I had just worked twelve hours on deck, I had ate something and I had tried to go to sleep and read a little book anticipating my son's arrival. I got woken up and looked at my captain, was about two feet from my face and he looked at me said, "Shawn", I went "Gabe?", and he goes, "Shawn", I goes, "What's the matter?" he goes, "Guess what?" I goes, "What?" He said, "You had twins." I looked at him and said, "I had twins?" We had already known it was just a boy, and I went, "What do you mean, twins?" He said, "You had twin boys." I went "No Gabe! Don't tell me that." He goes, "No, I'm only joking. We just got a phone call from your wife, your son was just born." And that's when I made that sign and then went right back out and I didn't even go to sleep. Went right back out with the guys.

MR: And you didn't see him for seven days?

SS: Seven days!

MR: Wow. That's pretty cool, that's a great story.

SS: Look at him now; he's even bigger than me.

MR: So Josh, you grew up in a fishing family and you said you've done some fishing. Are you going to be a fisherman?

JS: I'm not sure, but I know that if I do, my dad would help me through with everything that I need... if it comes to that point, then I might, but I'm not looking towards it right now, but maybe.

SS: We are looking forward to college. The fishing industry right now with all the loopholes, and all of the restrictions, it's not the way to go. I wouldn't want to see my son do what I had to do. I want him to become a very strong, energetic person and to go to college. I want him to pursue another lifestyle.

MR: Did your father talk to you about the differences of his generation of fishing and yours?

SS: Yes he did. There was no comparison...back then there was no quota, there was no day limit, there was nothing. But then there was no- like they have now, the major radio activity... ya' know, when a storm hit back then, you really had no radio activity and it all came into play when I stood there and listened to one or two of the older gentlemen who fished way back then, and who were caught in a storms. Literally they said they had nothing but a walkie- talkie, and that's when people should really listen, because you know everybody should- a lot of people think the fishing industry, fishing industry... they don't understand until they come to the festival, which I thank Laura [Orleans] for this, because it gives everyone a chance, who doesn't know, when somebody asks a question that's priceless, because that lets them know where we come from. They just don't understand that it's the most dangerous job in he world. You know, I participated

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- in the last two maritime festivals shucking scallops and stuff like that. Chris Wright, who donated the scallops for the shucking contest looked at me yesterday and said “Hey, that picture that’s on the pamphlet for the waterfront festival—that’s my kids with you!” He goes, “Man, I couldn’t believe it when I saw it...I looked and my kids were there” and you know, that’s actually priceless.
- MR: You know, I’m also a folklorist and I’ve done a lot of work with Laura and what I always tell people, is the nice thing about the festival is that you meet real people—no matter what their doing...whether its building boats or working on boats or making nets, or cutting lumber, whatever it is they do as an occupation...
- SS: That’s what it’s all about
- MR: To really talk about it, you never really get the chance in this day and age unless you grew up on or near the waterfront.
- SS: What you’re doing is priceless.
- MR: I know I grew up in Newfoundland, so I know all about fishing and regulations and all that.

[13:06]

- SS: Yep, you actually one of the scariest days of my life was sixteen years ago, Thanksgiving day or there about and we decided to go out and we decided not spend Thanksgiving with our families, it was something we needed to do. We got stuck in George’s Bank with winds over 120 miles per hour and we did nothing but hold on to the boat for four days. I’m talking literally, no fishing...we put our drags to the bottom of the ocean to anchor the boat. Luckily enough, the boat was the best in he world... it was brand new at the time, which was the *F/V Tradition*. Roy Enoksen owns it and its the brother/ sister to the *F/V Nordic Pride*. It was a top of the line boat, built in Booth Bay, Maine and if I was on any other boat, I would not be here right now. But you now I just spent four days gathering with my crew, which was eight guys at that time...eight to nine guys, we never hired anybody, we were all one steady crew, when somebody took a trip off-another family member would come in. It was no people that we didn’t know. That had to be probably one of the most memorable things and I’m in the process of still trying to find the film, it’s at home. I was on the boat, strapped to the back with a camera and you could see 5-6 story waves coming toward you from the rear, wiping the whole boat out and there was nothing we could do. There was no Coast Guard, there was nothing...it was beyond that...even the Coast Guard could not come help you. You just wondered when it was going to stop and finally after, I think it was after the second or third day, we were able to get radio contact and I contacted my wife, which was very concerned, and she was ecstatic to hear from me. I said, “We are still laying” that’s what it was called- laying, you just stayed there, I said “I think the worst is over...we still haven’t heard anything because we lost our radios and everything.” You know it’s times like that where it doesn’t become a job anymore, it becomes your life...you know? Like I told Laura, she made me a display when me and my son did the maritime festival which showed me shucking scallops with all the kids and everything it

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said-*When the wind blows on land, you hold on to your hat. When the wind blows at sea, you hold onto your life and the boat...* you know, that's really what it's about.

[16:06]

MR: Wow! One of the things we talk about it the whole way of life. When you're out at sea, even on a good voyage, you know the affect on family.

SS: Well actually, I was with some of the toughest captains you've ever seen in your life. I fished for Gabe Miranda, which I give all the respect to in the world, I made the most money with him...but we spent the most time at sea. We would spend 15-17 days at sea and by the time you came home, did gear work, you were on land only 3 days out of the month. Back then, you were making good money, you didn't want to take a trip off for fear that guys would come back in and laugh at you and say, "We made ten grand!" and you would say "Oh!"...we can't do that. So he [Josh] was young enough at the time, when I was on the *F/V Friendship*, that he didn't know what I was doing on a fishing ship. So I figured I could make the most of it, you know what I mean? Build up my own money to buy my own home, before he gets too old and realizes that's what it's really about.

[17:46]

In 1985 or 1984, I was aboard the *F/V Harvester*, with a captain named Tommy Saunders... that was the last trip of my career. We were, I believe it was six days into the trip and I was working in the hole- so I was down in the hole [fish hole]. We were ending out watch and we had to cut all the fish, all the scallops, everything...and they were handing it to me and it was blowing about 35 mph, and the boat was being turned around- once they pull the drags, they turn around and go back to where they were [for another tow]. As they were turning around the boat took a major sea and I fell about 25 feet backwards into the hole and just about broke my back, which ended my career. I went through about two years of extensive back procedures, epidermals, nerve root blocks...I've been through it all and to this day I'm still being treated...now this is fourteen years later, I still have major back problems. You know, that's the long term of this industry. It's devastating, it really is, because I have in my mind that if something were to happen to my job now, maybe I could make a few trips... I could never do that because of my back and I still can't believe fourteen years down the line that my back is still killing me. I've been through everything, Brigham and Women's Hosptial, I've been through everything, luckily enough with good help, I'm gonna try to get better here, but you know- I'm gonna keep working at what I'm doing now, boat building, because we are a big family over there and keep going, you know? I'm not the type of person, who takes time out of work, but I will work in pain, but you know nobody should have to work in pain. I'm just trying to get thing together now and hook up with a doctor to try and figure our what we can do besides surgery, I'm not one for surgery. I'm walking, talking, looking good and I come home every night. Plus, I can't be away from my job, I love my job

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too much...I can't be away from there for four or five months because of surgery. I would rather look into other venues and see what we can do.

[20:29]

MR: We were talking...I went to the session earlier this morning about "superstitions" and I was interviewing some people about some of the things they do when they are on land- some things families do on land as well as what you do out at sea...what are some of the things you do? Do any come to mind?

SS: No, not as far as any superstitions, but I fished with this one gentleman who...this would be very weird, probably, to a few people, but his name was Carlos and whenever we had someone who thought they knew how to fish, they were called "shackers", okay... it was almost like me and him would take charge of them so they wouldn't get hurt...I'm talking physically- like lose a limb, a lot of the newer guys would play it off like "We know what to do, we know what to do" So, this is the best superstition I can tell you...Carlos would actually, while they were sleeping, cut of a piece of their hair and when they woke up he would actually have a little voodoo doll with their hair on it. He would go out once they started working on deck and the weather started getting rough, he would look at them with the voodoo doll and say, "You don't know what you're talking about, because I have control of you." And they would look at the voodoo doll and he would stand there with little pins saying, "Every time you tell me you know what your talking about I'm going to stick a pin in you." And they would look and he had an elastic with their hair on the doll... and believe it or not, it worked the two or three times.

MR: Wow!

SS: But there are a lot of guys who go out there and who are very green who don't know what they are doing and try to play it off.

MR: Somebody was saying it's really hard now to break in anybody, no matter how, because of the luxury of time or you don't have anyone to train these men.

[22:52]

SS: That's right, that's right, how are you going to train these men when you only have 6 men? There is nobody.

MR: What will that mean for the future of the industry?

SS: It's actually, I don't know. With all the restrictions I don't know how long the industry will last, which is a shame. If you look at some of the pictures out there...look at the scallops we were shucking yesterday, you are not going to tell me there is nothing out there. I can see restricting ground fishing as far as cod and stuff like that and see what's actually going on. SMU has already gotten together with the whole fishing industry and gone down there and looked at the bottom of the ocean and said, "What are you guys talking about? We have scallops on top of scallops." I could show you pictures of when I fished back then which we would actually make two or three tows and the boat would be so loaded with small scallops, it wouldn't even be funny. I'm talking about a weeks worth of scallops. We would ice them in the hole and then we would mix them with the large ones and then make a count. These days they don't do that. These days

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they just go after the big ones, as many as they can get and they are doing great. Except that they are restricted to so many days and I don't feel that is correct. I just don't. It's the downfall of the whole industry, because you're putting these guys out there who make their living out there...Chris Wright, which is the greatest guy in the world, I participated in the scallop shucking contest yesterday-

[24:46]

I had the greatest time with all the old guys I used to be with. It was the greatest thing! I looked at my son and said, "What do you think? I'm gonna go into the shucking contest." He said "Go ahead Dad, you can do it man!." And my wife went "NO! DO NOT GO THERE." and I didn't even listen at first. I wasn't gonna go and then I looked at my son and he said "Yeah, Go!" I went there, I borrowed somebody else's knife and said "This is for the fun of it" and they all shook my hand and laughed and I hugged everybody. My wife; "Hun I can't believe you did that." That's what it's all about. Giving something back, you know. There were ear to ear smiles when I came in last. But hey, I came in last but at least I finished but it was all good. It was just for the laughs. I wasn't there to prove anything, it was; hey you haven't shucked scallops in thirteen years, how do you like that? All my old captains were there cheering me on...It was just great, just great to be with all your old friends and just have a good time. You know that's aside from fishing, a day where fishermen can sit there and laugh together.

MR: Well you know the bonding is astounding, so dependent on each other all the time.

SS: Exactly, you're watching each other... you're actually watching each others' lives.

MR: Yes, exactly.

SS: You know, people don't understand that once you go on deck, you are watching everyone's lives...you're not watching what's going on, you're trying to protect everybody so no one gets hurt; because if one person gets hurt you're all done. If the coast guard had to come get them, your trip is over...not only is your trip over, you may also have lost a friend. You know, the safer you become out there, the better you are. There is no job on land that can even compare to that. When its calm weather, even when it's dead calm...I'm talking zero wind, it's still the most dangerous job in the world.

MR: Oh yeah, Right, right.

SS: You have the most heavy machinery going on.... See, I've fished for Roy Enoksen for 11 years, which I can actually say was a drug free crew and everything like I said. We never hired anybody, like I said...if somebody took a trip off it was like a family member came on to replace them. So you never had to guess what was going on. So I told the group they were the best bunch of guys in the world. My son told me today, "Gee dad, didn't you ever want to fight with anybody?" You know I said, "Things happen once in awhile", but you are there with the greatest bunch of guys and friends...its all fun. You try to laugh all the time and stuff like that...there is no arguing. The only time you had an argument

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was when someone you didn't know, like I said, would come along and play it off as if they knew what they were doing and you would try and protect them so they didn't get hurt.

[28:07]

MR: You are the first person to mention even number crews, most people have talked about odd numbers, is that usual or unusual? .

SS: Well, normally it didn't matter, odd or even... it would be with how many the Captain wanted to go with. Sometimes we would go with nine full share men and one shacker, which means the shacker only makes a quarter of what everyone makes. Depending on how hard he works, he could possibly make half share. Normally, when you start off as a shacker you make a quarter of the share, because they don't know how to shuck scallops and they end up mainly digging for the scallops [picking the pile]...it is a waste of time to put them to cutting scallops. When there is nothing else to do, that's when they start shucking scallops, so they can practice or do whatever. When you the guys who are professionals shucking scallops, they shouldn't be out there picking the scallops-the more you shuck the more you make. But it was never; you know it was never a sense of odd or even. Sometimes ten and a shacker, sometimes eight and a shacker. Sometimes 9 full share with no shackers...you know you'd go a lot of trips without seeing a shacker. Whenever we took on a shacker it was usually someone who was trying to get their cousin or son into the business or stuff like that, but then there are a lot of the guys that you have to correct like that.

[29:47]

I unfortunately could tell you one quick story with all kidding aside. I was on the *F/V Edgartown* with Tommy Saunders and Hans...Hans owned the boat, and I had this one shacker that would not listen to me and I was running the winch... I kept telling him "You need to get out of the way or you are going to get crushed" and he kept telling me and I went "No, I know what I'm doing" and it's the end of July and its sweltering out there and there was no wind. We had a square fan that was in the back of the shucking house and when we shucked, and the fan blew we had no shirts on us...and I bumped into it with my elbow and I got electrocuted from the dampness. I know this sounds a little crude, but its something I needed to do period. I looked and there he was again, as I was running the winch, and he was all over the place and I yelled at him, "You need to get out of the way until it's on the ground!" Let the drag get on the ground, I mean I'm talking heavy tonnage in the air and he kept going there...I said, "You've got to get out of there or you're going to get crushed!" "Oh, don't tell me what to do." Okay...I told that captain, "I'm going to need to take care of this" and the Captain said, "Shawn, whatever you do, just don't hurt him." I said, "I'm not going to hurt him, but I am going to smarten him up in about two seconds." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "No. Don't worry about it." I brought him down in the back, where we shuck the scallops and I looked at him and said "Ya' know something?" and he looked at me and said, "What are you going to tell me now?" I said, "The Captain is furious at us." He

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said, "What's the matter?" I said, "He's gonna load the hole right here, we need to clean up this up, do me a favor, take off your gloves and grab that fan." And he grabbed the fan and got electrocuted...he never fished again. To this day I see him... and you know something? I saved his life, just by an incident like that. I know it may sound a little...

[32:01]

MR: Well that may seem like...

SS: When you don't listen, I actually saved his life and he looks at me to this day like I actually saved his life because he no longer fishes and he work's on land. But ya know, you don't tell a veteran fisherman, "I know what I'm doing, I know what I'm doing." That's the most irritating thing okay... 'cause we're only out there to make a living, we are not there to baby-sit anyone and when it comes to a shacker like, you always have to have that in the back of your mind. If this guy ends up getting hurt here...not only do you have that on your conscience, but it's terrible, it is terrible. That's why when you fish, uh- I was very fortunate to fish all them years with the greatest bunch of guys, Mikey Audette, all those guys...we were one family and when we came aboard we just laughed together which made the trip go by faster.

MR: Did you pull pranks on each other?

[33:00]

SS: Oh yeah, no we did it all. Are you kidding me? I would go from being out on the outriggers, which is way up in the air, which pulls the drag up. I would be dropping eggs as they were picking the pile...okay? Because they would eat first, breakfast before they'd come out...so I'd climb up there and they wouldn't see me. When the drag came aboard, they still wouldn't see me, because nobody looks up and as they the picked the pile I would drop eggs on them and then they finally looked up and figured out it was me. I mean its small stuff like that. I mean it's priceless, just priceless, it really is.

[33:47]

MR: So is there anything we haven't covered? What advice would you give to someone starting out today?

SS: Don't do it, don't do it. The way everything is going right now, it's not for the beginner, it's for the professional, okay, who is making a living for his family. This isn't something that is going to be ongoing in the future, with all the restrictions...they're strangling these guys and its going to go from them restricted to days and times at sea...who knows what's going to happen.

MR: So does that mean that the people doing the fishing now will be from other countries? Are they not restricted?

SS: Well, you know it's kinda unfortunate, which I could never understand. I fished for so many years and I could never understand, the United States...I don't know when they signed, I'm trying to remember the date when they made the Hague Line, which separated us from Canada. Now, if we ever got caught in those Canadian waters, which alot of guys have, only about a 1/4 mile over, the trips get taken, the boats get seized, this and that and they end up coming back. I could

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never could understand why the American Scalloper, that comes mainly out of right here, New Bedford, Massachusetts. We would have a hard trip of 17 days and come back in and bite our nails wondering what the price was gonna be, that they were gonna give us. Low and behold that price mainly had to do with Canada. If we weren't allowed to fish in Canadian waters, why can Canadian Scallopers import to the US and lower our price? Ok, if we can not fish in Canadian waters, Canadians should not be allowed to import scallops to the US. By importing and... this is what has devastated half of this industry, you can ask half these guys and they allow Canadians to import scallops into the United States. Why do you allow that? What you are doing is actually knifing your own company. It's your own business and you are putting them out of business and it all has to do with the president. It goes up to the big politics. It has nothing to do with the fishing associating because we've been pushing and pushing for years. I just could never understand that. We would come in with giant trips and saying, please, please give us \$4.00 a pound. So you know we could make a good living to feed our family and not end up with working that hard and getting half of what we thought we were gonna get, you know? I researched it a little bit but came to find out, importing scallops from Canada was actually okay.

[37:25]

MR: Why did that happen?

SS: I do not understand, the Canadians cut us off from that line, ok, which is from that line on flourished in scallops ok. But yet the U.S. did not pursue anything as far as not allowing them to import scallops. That should have been part of the agreement. I believe Nixon was in office when the Hague Line was done. When that was done they said, "You can not cross this line". They should of, one of the answers to me and I would love to hear from some of the other guys ok. You are not going to let us cross that line, then you will no longer import scallops to the US. Which our price right now we come in and get \$7.00-\$8.00 a pound and we would have 11 guys on the boat there would be no restrictions period. That is what my opinion is. I've asked a few fishermen and they've said that's exactly it. It should not be like that. How can you close us off at that one line and not export scallops to Canada? They're importing them here. Now in Canada, scallopers work six months out of the year and take the other six months off. That's how many scallops they catch, six months off...then they import their scallops to us. So while they are sitting at home we are out at sea and getting \$3.00-\$4.00 a pound because of them shipping scallops to us here. Nobody realizes that but that should have been shut off a long time ago, which would have made the New Bedford waterfront still flourish. As far the fishing industry, I would never want to see this place devastated by no more fishing boats and stuff like that. Nobody wants to see that especially if you grew up as a fisherman, you know? I'm an ex-fishermen but I'm going to tell you right now, what I did in my fishing life, that I would never turn back. I would not own what I own. I just try to provide for my family. I was a good man and I did, I've got a beautiful home, nice wife, beautiful son and that's what it's all about.

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MR: That's a great way to end, if there's nothing else. As an ex- fishermen, but it still defines your life.

SS: It is my life. It's my life. I live for that everyday and as you can see it on my face yesterday when I was shucking scallops, I was the only one standing there last and still laughing like crazy. It's all good being able to laugh with all the old guys afterwards. It was a riot; it was a riot to give everybody a laugh, a way of life. It shows us old guys can do it too.

MR: Do you have anything else you want to add?

[41:02]

SS: No that's it.