

Name of person Interviewed: Leslie Trott [LT]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known)

Sex Male

Occupation Fisherman

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

Home port New Bedford

and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same) New Bedford

Residence (Town where lives)

Ethnic background (if known) European American

Interviewer: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel [JGF]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: Sunday, Sept. 28, 2008

INDEX (minutes:seconds) / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: New Bedford; Nantucket; Ground fishing; Dragging; Whaling; Millwork; Nova Scotia; Haddock; Cod; Flounder; Otter trawl; Lumping; Fish auction; Fish buyers; Skippering; F/V Kilkenny; Newbert & Wallace boat builders, Thomaston, Maine; Boat agent; Navigation and communication equipment; Sounding lead; Barometers; Barometers (cont'd.); Lorans; Storms at sea; How much constituted a "trip"; Trip lengths; Packing fish in ice; Changes in crew size; Insurance costs; Changes in watch hours; Gear changes; Easter rig; Western rig; Fair tide; Head tide; Georges banks; Nantucket Shoals; Hudson Canyon; Veatch Canyon; Fishing families; Sickness at sea; Injuries at sea; Cooking on vessels; Superstitions/beliefs; Women in fishing; Nicknames; Unusual finds; Regulations;

INDEX

[00:00]

Father's family's fishing background; Towns lived in before New Bedford; Mother's family's fishing background; Great grandfather was a whaler; Father's family from Nova Scotia; Father did ground fishing; Father's boat the Victor; Father's next boat the Mary, two-man boat; Getting started in fishing at sixteen; Father skippered the Hazel Jackson; Time in merchant marine, Army; Fishing after Army, fished forty-three years; Lumping as a teen;

[05:00]

Lumping (cont'd.)—names of other people he lumped with; First fishing trip was out of New Bedford to the shoals; Crew shortages due to the war; Didn't have regulations restricting catches when he started; Buyers they sold fish to; Fish auction; Boats he fished on—Eager, Annie Louise, Rush[?], North Sea;

[10:00]

Skippering; Boats he owned shares in—Annie Jackson, Kilkenny; Sold Kilkenny around 1988, it's now in Alaska; Kilkenny description; Boat route from New Bedford to Alaska through Panama Canal; Retired to take care of his sick wife; Sold boat through an agent; Qualities of a good skipper; Navigation and communication equipment changes; Sounding lead; Barometers;

[15:00]

Barometers (cont'd.); Lorans; Storms at sea; How much constituted a "trip"; Trip lengths; Packing fish in ice; Changes in crew size; Insurance costs; Changes in watch hours; Gear changes;

[20:01]

Gear changes (cont'd.); Boats more powerful today; Eastern rig and western rig; Why western rig is more efficient; Fair tide and head tide; Kilkenny net hauling system; Places they fished with the Kilkenny—Georges Banks, Nantucket Shoals, Hudson Canyon, Veatch Canyon,

[24:55]

Places fished (cont'd.); Wife's adjusting to being married to a fisherman; Family events missed while at sea; Sickness/injuries at sea; Cook he had for twelve years—Steve Santos; Superstitions/beliefs;

[30:00]

Superstitions/beliefs (cont'd.)—hatch upside down, not saying "pig" because of hooves like the devil, no "whistling; No women on boats when he fished; Fish Mary from Portugal worked on the docks; Nicknames on the waterfront; McDonald's coffee group of retired fishermen; Bill Krueger[Sp?], possible interviewee;

[35:02]

Bill Krueger (cont'd.); Not many surprise finds in nets; Story of a New Bedford boat, Beckman (?), tossing a depth charge back over and steaming away, losing all the caulking in the boat from the explosion; Increased government involvement during his years fishing; Didn't run into days at sea regulations;

[39:59]

Festival does a good job showing skills like twine mending; Skills he knew for fishing—twine mending, wire splicing, rope splicing, seamanship fundamentals, knots; [End of interview]

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00]

JGF: Today is Sunday, September 28th, 2008. This is Janice Fleuriel at the Working Waterfront Festival in New Bedford in the Harbormaster's house. And I will be doing an oral history interview with Leslie Trott. If you could just say hi and your name, I can hear how this sounds.

LT: Hi, my name is Leslie Trott.

JGF: OK. That's perfect.

LT: I'm a retired fisherman.

JGF: Great. OK.

So normally we like to start off by asking people to tell us about where and when they were born, and your background and your family's background in fishing. So where were you born?

LT: I was born in New Bedford, but we lived in Nantucket at the time. My father was a fisherman. And he had a fishing boat out of Nantucket, called the Victor[?] at that time.

JGF: Oh OK.

LT: And... When I was six years old we moved up here. And then we lived in Connecticut and Virginia for a year or so. And then we moved to Fairhaven.

JGF: OK.

LT: And then when I was eleven we moved to New Bedford. And I grew—the rest of my time I spent in New Bedford.

JGF: Wow. OK. Huh.

So, were you born in New Bedford because that's where a hospital was? Or...?

LT: Yes. And my mother came from New Bedford. My grandfather—my mother's family all were New Bedford people. My great grandfather was a whaler that came to New Bedford.

JGF: Wow. What was his name?

LT: Silvia[?]. [?Manno Silvia?]. And he went whaling. And after the Civil War, sometime, he retired from whaling and worked in the mills. For the rest of his life.

JGF: Wow. Interesting.

And your dad, did he grow up in Nantucket?

LT: My father was—no, my father was a Nova Scotia fisherman.

JGF: OK.

LT: All the family was fishermen in Nova Scotia. And he came to Boston, and Gloucester. And then he came to New Bedford. Well he went to Nantucket. And had boats out of Nantucket. And then he moved to New Bedford afterwards.

JGF: Oh OK. And what kind of fishing did he do.

LT: Oh, he did mostly fishing for ground fish. Haddock. Cod. Flounder.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: Stuff like that. He had a [?]

JGF: Uh huh.

LT: Mostly net fishing. What you could drag an otter trawl over.

JGF: OK. Yeah...

And he of course would have had wooden boats. Right?

LT: Yes. He had a wooden boat. The last one—the one he had when he moved from Nantucket was called the Victor. He had her for a few years. And then she burned off of Virginia.

JGF: Oh... Hm.

LT: And he bought a little boat after that. Called the Mary. And he fished out of New Bedford. With her. And there's a picture of her in the whaling museum—in Wharfinger. The picture of the waterfront? Pier 3 waterfront? You see the little boat there, the little two-man boat.

JGF: Oh!

LT: The picture is still there.

JGF: Wow. Neat. Oh, a two-man boat.

LT: Yeah.

JGF: We don't hear about those anymore.

LT: No.

JGF: [laughs]

LT: It was a little two-man dragger.

JGF: Wow. So if it was a two-man boat, would they go out overnight or just during the day?

LT: Oh yeah. They'd go out for four or five days.

JGF: They would? Yeah.

LT: Yeah.

JGF: Wow... Huh.

When did you first start fishing?

LT: I started in New Bedford when I was sixteen. My father was skipper of a boat called the Hazel Jackson. And that was a six-man boat. We used to go seven to, nine days. Seven to eight days. I started at that.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: And... I fished about a year. And then I went off in the merchant marine. Then I went in the Army. And then when I came out of the Army, around 1948 or '49 I went fishing again the rest of my life until I retired from fishing.

JGF: Wow... Wow. How many years was that?

LT: About forty-three years I wound up, I guess altogether, fishing.

JGF: Wow... Huh.

So before you were sixteen were you involved on the waterfront?

LT: Yes! I used to come down here and work lumping. Taking out the boats when I was fourteen and fifteen.

JGF: You did? Yeah.

LT: Yeah.

And I took summer trips. You know, just for one trip for the summer. I'd take a trip with my father on the boat. When I was a boy. Just to see what it was like.

JGF: Yeah.... And did you like it?

LT: Yeah.

JGF: You did?

LT: Mm hm.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

Somebody else was telling me they worked as a lumper at about that age. It was pretty good pay, it sounded like. Did you think so?

LT: Yeah, it was pretty good I guess. I've forgotten just how much we made. But it was pretty good for the times.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

LT: And... There was a lot of fisherman's sons lumping at the time. The Saunders boys was doing it.

JGF: You know what? That's who it was. It was Jack, Jack Saunders.

LT: Jack Saunders. I knew him. I worked with him. Him and I were friends.

JGF: OK...

LT: We're still friends. I haven't seen him for a few years. But.

JGF: Oh. He was here this morning.

LT: Mmm... He has his oil boat over there.

[05:00]

JGF: Yes. Yeah.

LT: Yeah. I always say I'm going to come down and visit him someday.

JGF: [laughs]

LT: And his brothers were... Paul Saunders and Albert Saunders.

JGF: Right. Yeah.

LT: And... George Landry was a lumper. Yeah, George, his people were fishermen. They had a boat called the Mary Landry.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: And... There was another young fella from Nantucket. [?Bill ?]. His father was a fisherman.

JGF: Right. Huh.

LT: There was a lot of young boys walking there. Floyd Hansen[sp?] was another one. His father was lumping and fishing.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah. Wow.

That was hard work. Yeah?

LT: Mmm. Yeah. For a young boy it was hard work.

JGF: Right. And long days. Right?

LT: Mm hm.

JGF: Wow. Interesting.

So do you remember very much about your very first fishing trip? Was it memorable in any way? Or...

LT: Mmm... No... We went out of New Bedford. We went on the shoals I guess. We got a trip there. It was hard to get men to go when my father took that boat. Because it was during the war and men were scarce. And we had a few men that weren't too, well acquainted with fishing. And we got by. We got a trip out of it.

JGF: [laughs]

LT: It was a struggle to get a trip.

JGF: Yeah. Was your dad having to teach them a lot while he was trying to be skipper too.

LT: Yeah... Well they had to learn the rudiments of it.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: And then as the summer went on he got more experienced men on the crew. And...
I was the only green one then.

JGF: [laughs] Huh... But you caught on pretty fast do you think?

LT: Yeah.

JGF: Yeah...
And in those days you were dragging?

LT: Mmm.

JGF: For ground fish.
It seems like today there's a lot of law about—you know, you can only catch so
many of this kind.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: And so many—did you have things like that?

LT: No. We didn't have any restrictions in those days.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: Whatever we could catch made a trip. We tried to catch the fish that paid the most
money. But sometimes we'd get whatever we could. You know?

JGF: Yeah... Yeah. So, and where would your dad sell them?

LT: Well..., we—when I started with him we were selling them in New Bedford.
[?Eldridge] used to buy fish. And [?Gulat]. [?Gulat] and Parsons. Frank Parsons.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: There were several buyers that would buy fish.
During the war when I was sixteen—it was during the war then. Mmm.

JGF: Wow... So this—Was the auction, going on at that point? Or no?

LT: Well at first it wasn't much of an auction. I guess they used to—we'd come in, and
the skipper would go to one buyer. And find out what he was paying. And then he'd
go down, he'd walk down to [?Gulat's] and find out what they were paying. And
then he'd walk, and he'd get the best price.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: But then eventually they started buying in the auction room. They'd meet in there
and give them prices. And then they put up the board and they had an auction.

JGF: Yup.

LT: Mm hm.

JGF: Did you used to go to that at all? Or...?

LT: Oh, yeah. Well we'd always go to that when we come in. You know, we'd go in and
see what the prices were going to be.

JGF: Yeah... I heard that was a pretty hectic place when it was....

LT: It was exciting. Yeah. Nice, exciting in the morning. Yeah. Especially if you had a
trip and you was hoping you had a good trip.

JGF: Right... Well that's true.

LT: The prices made all the difference. You know?

JGF: Yeah... Interesting. Huh.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: So... When you came out of the war you went back to fishing? No?

LT: Yeah. When I came out of the Army I went back to fishing.

JGF: OK. And what boats were you on at that point?

LT: I... Well, I was on a little boat called the [?Eager]. My father was still fishing. He was the skipper of a boat called the Eager. I went on that boat.

JGF: Yup.

LT: And there was one called the [?]. Yeah, I went on several different boats. And sometimes I went with my father. Sometimes I went with different men. And then... After I got married I went—My uncle had a boat called the Annie Jackson. Annie Louise. Annie Louise was the name of the boat. I fished with him some. Winters and summers. And then I went on the [Rush?] with Rudolph [Matlin?]. I stayed with him six years.

JGF: Wow! Huh.

LT: Back and forth different boats out of New Bedford. Until the [?Rush] was the longest one I think I stayed on. And... I guess the one... When I was around-in... Sixties, in the early sixties, I went—I was on the North Sea with Jack [?Murray]. Captain Jack Murray had the North Sea.

[10:00]

JGF: Hm.

LT: And uh, he gave me the boat. He'd let me go skipper of the boat and take it.

JGF: Wow...

LT: And I started going skipper then. I had her for a summer while he went on vacation. And then I took the Annie Jackson and bought half of her with James Dawson. Jim Dawson.

JGF: Oh! OK.

LT: And I bought half of her with him. And I went a couple of years. And around sixty-seven we built a boat together. Him and I and [?Mike Griffin]. Called Kilkenny. And we—I ran her for twenty years.

JGF: Wow...

LT: And then... Around eighty-eight we sold the Kilkenny. And she's in Alaska today.

JGF: Oh, is she! Wow.

LT: Yeah.

JGF: Huh.

What did that boat—was it wooden or steel.

LT: It was wooden. She was built up in Thomaston, Maine.

JGF: OK.

LT: By Newbert & Wallace. And she was about seventy-three foot overall.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: And she was wooden.

And she's been rebuilt. She looks almost like the day she was built. The guy that bought her has taken good care of her.

JGF: Is he still using it as fishing? Or...?

LT: Yeah. He goes halibut fishing.

JGF: Wow...

LT: And he... He took her to New Zealand.

JGF: Wow...

LT: And he had her rebuilt there. Lot of work done there. Then he took her back to Alaska. And I... If I'd have thought I'd brought a picture. I have a picture of her in Alaska. [?]

JGF: Oh neat. Wow.
LT: Mmm.
JGF: Now how does someone get a boat from here to Alaska? What's the route?
LT: Well you had to go through the Cape Cod Canal.
JGF: Yeah... And then you'd go up to the Atlantic...
LT: You'd go down the Atlantic through the Cape Cod Canal and up the Pacific. And you'd go up the west coast. All the way up the coast to Alaska.
JGF: Now how would you get to the Pacific from here?
LT: Through the Cape Cod Canal—not the Cape Cod, through the Panama Canal.
JGF: Panama Canal. Oh, OK.
LT: Yeah I'm saying Cape...
JGF: Yeah [laughs]. I know that doesn't work.
LT: They went through the Panama Canal.
He's a smart guy this guy that bought the boat. He's a graduate of Notre Dame.
JGF: Wow...
LT: His name was Tom Hogan. And he's a... A really clever man.
JGF: Now how did you hook up with him to sell it to him? Would you put an ad in the paper?
LT: Well, my wife was sick, and... She had cancer. And she was terminal.
JGF: Oh...
LT: So I had to—I didn't have no one to nurse her. So I had to quit fishing—to leave fishing to take care of her.
JGF: Right...
LT: And uh... I put her for sale with an agent.
JGF: Oh... OK.
LT: And he came along looking for boat. And he bought her.
JGF: OK. Oh, all right. So there were actually agents that would sell boats for people.
LT: Mmm. [?Afrons] I think was the name of it. [?Afron] Agency.
JGF: Yeah. Interesting. So almost like a real estate agent but a boat agent.
LT: Yeah... He's still in business today. He buys and sells boats. Mmm.
JGF: So how many years ago was that? That you retired?
LT: Eighty-eight I sold the boat. And I was all done fishing then.
JGF: So twenty years. [13:04]
LT: Mmm. That was... About twenty-one years I had that boat.
JGF: Yeah...
LT: Yeah.
JGF: Have you missed it? Or...?
LT: Yeah. To a certain extent I miss it. But I'm too old for it now.
JGF: Yeah [laughs]. Yeah. It's hard work.
LT: Mmm.
JGF: Right.
So... What would you say make the qualities of a good skipper?
LT: I don't know. He has to have ambition I guess. He has to have experience. That's the main thing. He has to have experience of going fishing. Usually you get that by being mate on different boats.
JGF: I see.

LT: And then eventually if you go mate long enough, you learn the different places to fish.

JGF: Oh... OK. So the skipper shares that information with the mate.

LT: Yeah.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: Or the skipper would sleep and the mate would charge of the boats. And he would bring in the tows, and the spots. Mm hm.

JGF: Yeah.

And you must have seen a lot of changes in like, navigation equipment and communication equipment.

LT: Yeah. When I first went when I was sixteen, the only thing we had was a sounding lead. A piece of lead with water in the bottom of it. And they'd throw that overboard to measure the depth of the water. And they'd look at the bottom of the lead and see what color the dirt was. And they could tell where they was. The old timers could all know through the color of the bottom.

JGF: Where they were?

LT: Where they were.

JGF: Isn't that interesting!

LT: Yeah.

JGF: No one has ever mentioned that, that I know of.

LT: That was pretty popular. And that's all we had, in them days.

And they had... Some had direction finders. And most of them didn't have that.

JGF: Wow...

LT: And during the war, the last part, when they started getting radio telephones they could talk on the phone. But we didn't have anything like that.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: All we had was the sounding lead. And a barometer. [?] weather.

JGF: Wow...

[15:00]

LT: We got no weather reports or anything like that.

JGF: So you knew how to read the weather pretty well? Do you think?

LT: Yeah. Well, it's [?]. That helps. And the barometer was—they went by the barometer a lot. The pressures. The highs and the lows.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Wow.

LT: When I got out, then they... When I left fishing they—we had automatic. Lorans.

JGF: Mm hm.

LT: And they were a big help.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: They told you right where you were all the time.

And now, they've got even better. They've got plotters and [?] a big help.

JGF: Yeah. Today' it's really...

[Interruption for someone coming in]

JGF: So. What was I going to... With the weather, did you—I mean, ever get caught in any memorable storms [chuckles]. Or...?

LT: Well, sometimes we'd get caught in storms. If the weather was bad, sometimes we might go into Nantucket. For a few days while the storm was going by if we were close to Nantucket. Otherwise, we'd have to just stay out there and, and lay—what I liked on the Kilkenny, we'd go down to the east, and—we got weather reports then. But still, if the weather got bad in the winter time, we'd just let the boat lay and drift. We'd jog up to the edge of the [?'shoal] water, where it wasn't quite so rough there, and let her drift off. And we'd stay there, and, jogging back and forth, until the storm was over. And then we'd start fishing again.

JGF: Yeah. Wow [laughs].

Did it make you too nervous?

LT: No... We got used to it.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: You know, well you weren't very happy to be caught in a storm. But. Mostly the economical part of it was you would lose time. You'd be laying so long you needed the time to go fishing. Sometimes—usually you got out of it somehow or other. Maybe the fish would bunch up after the storm, and you'd catch more.

JGF: Oh...

LT: Catch up with it, you know?

JGF: Oh OK.

LT: You had to try to get a trip.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: Most of the time you'd get a trip one way or the other.

JGF: Right. And would the trip be defined as having like a full hold or something? Or...?

LT: Well... At first you had to have a full hole. But fish were getting scarcer by the time I got through. You wouldn't have a full hole.

JGF: No?

LT: Maybe thirty thousand would be considered a trip then.

JGF: Wow... OK. Huh.

And about how many days were you staying out?

LT: We stayed about seven days. Sometimes we might stay eight or nine. But we only had fuel enough, I think nine was about our limit.

JGF: Oh OK.

LT: And... The fish would start to spoil after nine days.

JGF: Oh alright.

LT: We had to ice them you know? And... We had some good men that knew how to ice fish well that we could keep the fish seven or eight days without any problem.

JGF: Well that's good.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: That's a skill I understand to stack it just right? To stack the ice and the fish in a certain way?

LT: It's quite a skill. You need a lot of experience doing it to get it just so. Yes.

JGF: Huh. Because you don't want to damage the fish either, right? In the process?

LT: Yeah. And you want them to be in good condition when you take them out.

JGF: Right.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Right. Interesting.

How many people would be on your crew on the Kilkenny?

LT: There were six of us on the Kilkenny. The *last*, last couple of years, three or four years, there was only four. The insurance got so high we couldn't go six anymore.

JGF: Oh...

LT: So we had to go four. Because we couldn't afford the insurance. It was quite expensive. Probably four years or so. I forget exactly how many we had to go four men.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: Yeah.

JGF: And did you end up catching less fish or staying longer, or doing something to make it a full trip that way?

LT: Well the fish weren't as good. When I first got the boat we'd have her full. She'd carry about seventy thousand.

JGF: Hmmm.

LT: And we'd have seventy thousand every trip. And the last, we'd be lucky if we'd have thirty. Sometime you might have twenty-five, twenty thousand and still get a trip.

JGF: Wow... Right.

LT: But the watches were a little harder, too. Because four men would have to work nine and three. Work nine hours and sleep three.

JGF: Oh [laughs] yeah.

LT: But with six men we could work eight hours and sleep four. We'd start the watch the minute we started fishing and work eight hour watches.

JGF: Yeah... Wow.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Huh. That's interesting.

Did the change—Did you see many changes in the gear for how you caught the fish over the years? Or...?

LT: Yeah, there was quite a bit of change. Like, we went from cotton twine to nylon. Sisal, we had sisal. And [?manila]. And we went to nylon. And the rope was probably propylene.

[20:01]

LT: And... The nets changed a little bit.

JGF: Yeah...?

LT: They had a semi[?] net. It was... We always used a fifty-two seventy-two quarter trawl.

JGF: And what does fifty-two and seventy-two mean?

LT: The headrope was fifty-two foot. And the sweeper was seventy-two.

JGF: Seventy-two feet?

LT: Yeah.

JGF: Wow... Wow that's huge! At least to me [laughs].

LT: Yeah, well today they use bigger ones.

JGF: Yeah...?

LT: And the boats have a lot more power.

JGF: Right. Right.

LT: We had a V12 General Motors 250 horsepower I think it was.

JGF: Yeah....

LT: Now they're all a thousand horsepower and whatnot.
JGF: Yeah... Wow.
And... Oh what was I just going to ask? Well I have to change, I can't think of what my question was—Oh I know. Was your boat—they talk about eastern rig versus western rig?
LT: Mmm.
JGF: Which was yours?
LT: We were an eastern rig.
JGF: So the house was in the back?
LT: Yes.
JGF: OK.
LT: It was a pretty popular rig at first. The eastern was the popular rig. But today the western rig is the best rig. It's more efficient.
JGF: What makes it more efficient exactly?
LT: Well, the eastern rig when you haul back the net. You have to lay, stop and haul the net in. And you're drifting with the tide.
JGF: Oh... OK.
LT: And you drift down. Takes you maybe twenty minutes, you drift down quite a ways with the tide. Whereas on a western rig you could steam against the tide while you're hauling back. And you're up against the end of the tow, and be able to set out fair tide. The eastern rig you have to set out way down the other end of the tow and go head tide. And you don't catch fish when you're towing head tide.
JGF: Right...
LT: You only catch fish when you're towing fair tide.
JGF: Fair tide?
LT: Yes. *With* the tide.
JGF: Oh... OK. OK.
LT: Now like if the tide was going to the south, you'd be way down to the south and you'd have to tow all the way up to get there. But on the other rig you'd be up there already. And you'd just set out. So that way you got a lot more fair tide tows in.
JGF: Yeah. Right.
Why—what would—why wouldn't you catch fish the other way then? It just...?
LT: I don't know. But it just doesn't—the net doesn't work good going against the tide.
JGF: I see.
LT: I seen her set out against the tide and go. Forty-five minutes, and hang up. And we'd have to haul back, there'd be nothing in the net.
JGF: That's interesting.
LT: But if you make like an hour and a half tow on the same tow and the other part of the tow was fair tide, you'd have a lot of fish in the net.
JGF: Wow....!
LT: It made all the difference in the world, which way—fair tide and head tide.
JGF: Huh!
Well you said you weren't sure if you'd be able to tell me anything. But you've already told me like five things I've never heard before from anyone. This is great.
LT: Mmm. I'm surprised. You know?
Reidar Bendiksen did all that kind of fishing. He could tell you about it.

JGF: Yeah. He might have—it might have come up in his interview. But I wasn't the one to interview him. So.

LT: Oh I see.

JGF: But. In my five years nobody's explained it quite that way. It's really sort of fascinating.
So I had another question about your boat. Was the—the net powered by like a winch or something? How did you get it up and down?

LT: Well, we had a winch to haul the net. A wire. We towed with wire. And we hauled back... We towed from the stern, we had a hookup block. And the wire was tied up, like with the hookup. We'd knock the hookup block out. And she'd come out sideways. We hauled back with that.

JGF: Huh. And was the hauling back done with just, mechanically? Or...?

LT: Yeah. The winch would haul in—the drums would wind the wire up, on the drums. And the net would come up alongside the boat. Then we had quarter ropes and haul in the net.

JGF: Oh, alright.
But what would power the drums to get around?

LT: The engine would power them. Yeah.

JGF: The engine. OK. Huh. That's fascinating.
So you must have had over the years then like your favorite spots that you used to go to?

LT: Yeah, I had places that were, you know, we had better chance of getting a trip. And, you'd try different places. Whatever you thought was the best.

JGF: Was it like Georges Banks? Or other?

LT: Yes. Well, we fished, like... In the Kilkenny we fished on Georges. And the Nantucket Shoals. Georges Bank. And sometimes in the winter we fished around, the deep water around the gully off of New York. Hudson Canyon. Veatch Canyon. Those were mostly the places we fished the whole time I had the boat.

[24:55]

JGF: Yeah. And as the skipper you liked being the one that made those decisions?

LT: Yeah... Well, you had to... You had to try to make the right decisions. We—some—occasionally we fished up in back of the Cape, too. Mostly the shoals and Georges were mostly the places we fished. The southeast part of the Georges and the southwest part.

JGF: Yeah... So how did—Was your wife from a fishing family originally?

LT: No. She was a Fairhaven girl.

JGF: Yeah...?

LT: It was hard for her to get used to being married to a fisherman.

JGF: It was? Yeah. Yeah.

LT: It seems like if they marry a fisherman, they do get used to it eventually. But if a man is married for like four, five years, and then he goes fishing his wife never gets used to it.

JGF: Oh! Interesting.

LT: I had uncles that tried to go fishing. And their wives could never get used to it.

JGF: Oh... Interesting.

LT: My uncles that were fishermen all their lives, their wives were all used to it. My mother was used to it. She married my father, he was a fisherman, and she was used to him being gone.

JGF: Right... Right.
And did you go through the thing, where, you know, you had to miss like certain things that your family...?

LT: Oh, you miss a lot. You miss all the baptisms. And confirmation. Even funerals. You miss funerals. And weddings. And things like that.

JGF: Right... Right.

LT: You have to—Because you can't... The economics of it is you don't have any chance to take the time off. You have to go steady.

JGF: Absolutely.

LT: To make a year's pay.

JGF: Yeah... And you certainly couldn't steam in and out, with all that fuel. For a day of...

LT: No... You could never give up a trip for any reason. Even if you were sick you kept on fishing. Unless it was a matter of life or death. Then you'd have to give it up.

JGF: Right.

LT: But otherwise you didn't give up. You kept on going.

JGF: Did you have times like that when you were sick and....?

LT: Oh, you'd have colds. And flu. And, whatnot.

JGF: Wow... Wow. Flu's miserable enough when you're home in bed. But boy.

LT: Yeah, it was miserable on the boat. Flu was miserable. You feel every draft. It really felt great to get home and go to bed [laughs] when you were sick like that.

JGF: [Laughs] I bet. Yeah...
Did you ever have to play doctor for any of your crew? I had someone else in here this weekend that talked about, he occasionally had to stitch up a small cut, and...

LT: No, I never—I never stitched anybody up.

JGF: Hmm.

LT: Sometimes we might help wrap up or bandage up a sore, or something like that. Even before I was skipper we might help each other out with a bandage. But nothing too serious that I can think of.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: One time I broke my ribs. And I had a—a friend had a..., one of those things you wrap around your ribs for broken ribs. And he put them on for me and I finished out the trip that way.

JGF: Oh God [laughs]. How did you break your ribs?

LT: I fell down.

JGF: Was the deck wet or something?

LT: I was running down into the engine room. And I slipped on the stairs and fell down.

JGF: Ouch!

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Oh man! Wow.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Yeah. I guess you don't end a trip for too much then, do you?

LT: No. No. Because everybody—you know, everybody else would get nothing either. No one would have any pay.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: And it was important to get the trip, because if you took a trip off, there was no money for that trip. And that would be a week gone. And you wouldn't get any *more* money until you had made another trip a week later. So there was at least two or three weeks before there was any pay that came into the house. So you had to try to keep money coming in to run the house and your family.

JGF: Wow.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Did you ever have any crew that had to be, like, lifted off the boat or anything like that.

LT: No I never did.

JGF: That's good.

LT: I was lucky. I was lucky that way.

JGF: Yeah.

Did you—over the years, did you have certain crew that were with you a lot of the time? Or...?

LT: Yeah. I had some people stayed quite a while. I had one fella was cook with me for, twelve years. And then he had a heart attack, he had to give up fishing.

JGF: Oh. What was his name? Do you remember?

LT: Steve Santos. It was twelve years. And I heard he just died a while ago, out in California. He retired, he had a son out there and he went out there. He was a good cook.

JGF: Yeah?

LT: He was a good man?

JGF: What makes a good cook on a fishing boat? Part of it must be planning.

LT: Yeah. Well, some people seem to have the knack. It's like every other thing. You'd think it would be easy, but it's not. Some people have a knack for cooking. We ate well. We always had good food.

JGF: That's good.

LT: Some people were better cooks than others.

JGF: Yeah... Yeah.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Did you have any, well we'll say, like, superstitions? Or did you know any captains that did? About things like the hatch cover upside down or anything?

LT: Oh, yeah. That was common on most of the boats. There was some, would never turn the hatches upside down.

JGF: No?

[30:00]

LT: And the Nova Scotians would never say "pig" on the boat. They had the worst kind of luck if you said the word "pig." Some of them would—That was, *terrible*, to hear somebody say that.

JGF: Really? And do you know why or anything? Or no?

LT: No, it was just a superstition. I guess, pig has pointed hooves like the devil is supposed to have, pointed hooves.

JGF: Oh!
LT: That's what brought the super—way back, that goes from *way back*.
JGF: I see. Yeah.
LT: Generations back.
JGF: Huh. Interesting.
LT: Mmm.
JGF: What about whistling? Was that one that—That might be d—
LT: Some people didn't like it.
JGF: That might be Norwegians' one. I'm not sure.
LT: Well, yeah. Well my grandfather was a retired whaler and they tell me—my uncles, and my grandfather told me he'd never allow whistling in the house.
JGF: Oh, in the house?
LT: No. He hated whistling. He was very superstitious about it. He'd say, "Put a button on that whistle." [Chuckles]
JGF: Oh. Interesting. Huh. Wow...
And in your days of course, there probably weren't women really going on the boats at that point.
LT: No. There was no women going. Yeah.
Not until later I guess. I don't really remember any women, fishing. In them days.
JGF: Yeah. They were probably involved on the shore side of things, like they are today.
But...
LT: Mmm. There was one woman who used to work on the docks. Name was Fish Mary. They called her Fish Mary.
JGF: Huh!
LT: And she used to work on the docks. Taking out fish and whatnot.
JGF: Like lumping? Or...?
LT: Yeah.
JGF: Oh really!
LT: She carried—She came from Portugal I think. She used to carry a basket on her head. Whenever there was a parade in the center she'd be walking with a basket on her head.
JGF: Oh no—What was in the basket?
LT: I don't know...
JGF: Oh, OK. Oh, that's interesting.
LT: Mmm.
JGF: Huh! So that's another thing you mentioned—Fish Mary. Did you know—did people have a lot of nicknames? I've heard about that, on occasion.
LT: Oh, there was loads of nicknames. Yeah.
JGF: Do you remember any of them?
LT: Yeah... Gee, if I could only think of them all. There used to be a guy called Scarface Jack.
JGF: Uh huh.
LT: He was a Norwegian. And..., Blondie John. Big Ear Mike.
JGF: [Laughs] Huh.
LT: Uh... Geez I knew an awful lot of them. I can't think of them.

JGF: I think—Was it last year maybe? Somebody said, the lumper Jimmy... The one that everyone knows I can't...

LT: Jimmy Dwyer. Yeah I know him.

JGF: Yeah. Him and I think, one other person were collecting them. Were collecting the nicknames that had been on the waterfront. They had a huge list apparently.

LT: Oh... Oh, gosh, I can't think of his name. Isn't it awful.

JGF: Swain?

LT: Yeah. Paul Swain is the one I think had the list. I'm not sure.

JGF: That—Maybe that's why I could think of it.

LT: I think Paul Swain has the list.

JGF: Yeah. OK. So that's good that they're doing that.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: There were an awful lot of names. Sometimes if there's four or five guys sitting here talking, one guy will remember a name and it will make another guy think of another one.

JGF: See now—I'm going to suggest that next year for Laura. That she should have some interviews with like, more than one person at once. To do things like that.

LT: Yeah. To make the other one think of things.

JGF: Exactly.

LT: I have coffee every day, with two or three retired fishermen over at McDonald's in Fairhaven. And they'll start talking about boats, and skippers, and nicknames and fishing. And you'd be surprised—One guy'll say something that makes the other guy think of it. You can't think of a boat's name, and they'll think—the other one'll think of the name and it'll bring back memories.

JGF: Yeah. Who are the other guys? Because someone else told me—I know I heard about this.

LT: Oh Randy—I think you interviewed—I don't know if you did, but somebody did. But Randy Hillier. He got interviewed.

JGF: That might be. That sounds familiar.

LT: And there's another one called Ole Andersen[?]*—Arne Andersen[?]. [?] Ole. Have you done him too?*

JGF: I either did him or I transcribed his. Because that name is very familiar to me. Yes.

LT: He's there every day for coffee.

JGF: Huh...

LT: Oh, we lost—we lost one of them about a month or two ago.

JGF: Oh...

LT: He was fishing all his life. And he just died. He was ninety-three. He had a terrific memory.

JGF: Who was that?

LT: I can't think of his name right now. I should know it.

JGF: Hopefully we got him. Because they've been very good about getting some of the, you know, very older people.

LT: Yeah. I don't know if you got him or not.

JGF: Oh, OK. Wow. It's a shame if not.

LT: Yeah. He started fishing after the war. He knew a lot of the names of boats.

You know who would be good for things like that? Did you ever interview Kruegers—Krueger, Bill Krueger that has the ship supply?

JGF: Oh I don't think so. I don't know. I'll mention it to Laura.

LT: Mention it to Laura. If she can, try to talk to Bill Krueger. She could walk in the store any day at Krueger's Market up there. And he's usually sitting by the window.

[35:02]

JGF: Krueger's Market?

LT: Yeah.

JGF: OK.

LT: And if she talked to Bill Krueger, he's got a terrific memory. He can remember—And he had a lot of experiences with the different boats and things.

JGF: OK! Great. Thank you.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: That's great.

I have another question about your time on the sea. Did you ever have any unusual finds in the net that you remember?

LT: No... Sometimes we'd get a dead fish or something. A big fish or something like that.

JGF: Huh!

LT: But I was lucky, I never got anything—I've heard of people getting a torpedo or things like that. But I never did.

JGF: You never did?

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah. Wow...

That could be—I would think that would be scary [laughs].

LT: It would be.

JGF: Yeah... Right.

LT: When I was a boy, there was a boat in New Bedford, the Beckman I think. My Uncle Al was on that. And they got a depth charge.

JGF: Wow.

LT: So they decided to steam the boat and throw the depth charge overboard. Now the boat couldn't go very fast.

JGF: Yeah...

LT: They got away from it, but it blew all the caulking out of the boat. They had to recaulk the whole boat [chuckles].

JGF: Oh no!

LT: Yeah.

JGF: So they—How far from shore were they when that happened?

LT: I don't know where they were when that happened. I remember hearing about it.

JGF: Wow! They would have had to scream home for shore before they sunk, right?

LT: Yeah. They had to keep the pumps going [chuckles] that's for sure.

JGF: [Laughs] Oh, man. Wow. That's funny.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: What about, regulations while you were still skippering? And did you see many changes in the regulations?

LT: The government became more involved. You know? And then we had certain kinds of fish we couldn't catch. Or we could only catch so many of a certain kind.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: And..., we had to tell the government when we were going out, where we were g— There were areas we couldn't fish in anymore.

JGF: Right.

LT: We had to keep track of that. And it got so, kind of complicated, I used to go to the government—the custom house, and get the information before I went out. I used to go up—the..., government had men, government men up in..., the Hastings Keith building. They had an office there. Fish and Wildlife had an office there. And I'd go up there to find out for sure where I could go and where I couldn't go. Because you could get fined if you went in the wrong place.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Did that affect how much you were able to catch, do you think?

LT: Sometimes it did.

JGF: Mm hm.

LT: Yeah. Sometimes certain areas that were good, you couldn't go there anymore.

JGF: Right. Wow...

LT: If fish was plentiful in other places it was all right. But if fish weren't there, then you couldn't go to that place either. So it kind of shut you down.

JGF: Yeah... Yeah. Huh. Interesting.

There was something I was going to ask along those lines... Oh. When you were still fishing before you retired, did you run into the days at sea numbers? Or, did you ever not have that?

LT: No, we didn't have any trouble with the days at sea. They have that now. But we could stay as long as we wanted to.

JGF: Right. Right.

It sounds like the draggers now are having a really hard time.

LT: We had to keep a log, too. That's right, too.

JGF: Oh yeah?

LT: We had to keep a log of everything and turn that log in every trip.

JGF: Wow. To... To the um... Marine Fisheries people? Or...?

LT: Yeah. It wasn't... There was a different name. It wasn't the regular Marine Fisheries. Maybe it was. I can't remember now. Paul Swain worked for them. I don't know if we gave him the log or not. He used to interview us every trip.

JGF: Did he?

LT: When we came in every trip he'd interview us.

JGF: Yeah. Huh.

It seems like—I remember I did interview him. And it seemed like, when somebody who's sort of from the community and understands the industry is in the position, it goes a little better than if it's somebody who's just really outside and doesn't get it.

LT: Yeah. That's probably true.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah. Huh.

Are you very up on what's happening with the draggers today?

LT: Not really. Not really. I hear a little bit from different people. But most of the people I know have retired. And I don't know many people that are fishing. I only know one or two. I don't see them very often. They come in and they take out at four o'clock in the morning now, and things like that. So you don't get to see them. And the docks are closed off where they're taking out.

JGF: Oh really?

LT: Yeah.

JGF: Is that because of security?

LT: I don't know.

JGF: Huh!

LT: They tell me they're not allowed down on the waterfront anymore.

JGF: Huh! Oh that's interesting.

LT: I haven't been down here. I just—This is just word of mouth things. You know? I don't know if that's right or not. They tell me you can't go down on the docks anymore.

JGF: Huh!

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Wow. That's interesting. Yeah.

[39:59]

JGF: I don't have any other specific questions. There's two that I always like to ask people towards the end. And the first one is, is there anything I didn't ask that you would have liked to share? Like a memorable experience? Or something else about the industry or your work in it?

LT: Not that I can think of right now.

JGF: OK. OK.

And then my only other thing then I would ask you is, what would you like to see the visitors to the festival understand about the industry from having come here? What do you think people who are like, not in the industry, need to know about it?

LT: Gee, I don't know. I think you do a very good job. You have the twine mending. And you show them how the nets are made, things like that. I think that's good.

JGF: Uh huh. So the skills that it takes to do the job.

LT: Mmm.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

What kind—You must have had a lot of skills then. Like, you must have known how to mend nets.

LT: Yeah, well, to be a fisherman, in them days, you had to be able to mend twine, and splice wire. And splice rope. And all the fundamentals of seamanship.

JGF: Right. And knots? Did you have many knots that you needed to know?

LT: Yeah. You'd have a certain amount of knots you had to know how to tie.

JGF: Right. Right. And you just would learn those from going on the trips?

LT: Yeah. You'd learn from experience. People would show you how to do it.

JGF: Uh huh.

LT: And... It was hard to learn how to mend twine.

JGF: Wow.

LT: That was very hard.

JGF: Yeah.

LT: But you learned after a while. You kept trying and trying.
JGF: Yeah. Was it very hard to splice wire? It sounds like it would have been hard on your hands.
LT: It wasn't easy.
JGF: Yeah...
LT: It was hard to learn. You know? But, once you knew how to do it, it wasn't so bad.
JGF: Right.
LT: Mmm.
JGF: Right. Right. Interesting. OK well thank you very much.
LT: Oh good.
JGF: It's like I've said you've men—Every time I talk to someone, they bring up at least one thing, that it hasn't been said in quite that *way*, or the term hadn't been used. So this has been helpful.
LT: Probably when I leave here I'll think of five more things I should have said.
JGF: Well and you know what?
LT: I can't think of it right now.
JGF: Then you note them down and tell Laura that you want to come back next year and we'll do the follow-up.
LT: Yeah [laughs].
JGF: [Laughs] Yeah.
Well, and like you said, if there were people—If you were with your coffee group, we'd...
LT: Yeah. Probably more, more names would be mentioned and more boats.
JGF: Do you think next year your coffee group would be willing to come and have a cup of coffee here?
LT: I don't know. I had to drag them out... I don't know if they'll be here next year.
JGF: Yeah. Well, that's true too. In fact, one of the—We had some students helping us over the course of this weekend that are film students from Dartmouth High School. And they were my tech assistants and they would wear this headset. I told this one kid—he asked a couple questions, and he had *very* good questions. And I said, "You should tell Laura that you want to do a documentary film on something to do with the industry." And maybe he should do a documentary on your guys' group at McDonald's because...
LT: [Laughs] Maybe he could go to see us anyhow.
JGF: Yeah! Maybe when he has school vacation or something, and you're there. That might be—I might have to mention that. That would be really great to get on tape, I think. [Chuckles].
Good. Alright. Well, thank you so much. I'm going to shut this off.
LT: OK. You're welcome.
[End of interview]