

Name of person interviewed: Ted Williams [TW]

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September 28, 2013

Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber [MHA]

### **Abstract**

Ted Williams talks about his life long involvement in the New Bedford fishing industry and on the waterfront as a fisherman, lumper, stevedore, fish cutter, tug boat captain, merchant mariner, and today as a safety trainer. He also discusses industry efforts to preserve the working waterfront from development and draws parallels between family farms and family-owned fishing boats.

### **Demographic information**

Sex: Male

Age:

Ethnicity: White

Occupation: safety trainer, former fisherman, boat owner, lumper, stevedore, tug boat captain, merchant mariner

Born: Jacksonville, FL

Homeport: New Bedford, MA.

### **Key words**

#### Role

Safety trainer

#### General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Social networks (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers)

#### Social and Cultural Characteristics of Fishing

Life aboard a variety of work boats

Immigrants on the waterfront

Shoreside businesses

#### Gear and Fishing Technology

Other gear and technology

Boats, ships, vessels

MHA Alright, so can you just say your name so that he can measure the

TW Ted Williams

MHA Ok. And where were you born?

TW Jacksonville, Florida

MHA Oh really? I didn't know that.

TW I was born and raised in Jacksonville.

MHA One thing, other thing, I forgot to mention that I should mention is that they encourage the people that are doing the interviews not to talk a lot so there'll be times when I'll be just nodding and you know encouraging you.

TW I'm used to that.

MHA Ok, so you were born in Florida did you say?

TW Jacksonville, Florida

MHA Yeah. And is that where you grew up?

TW Yes. And then I came here when I was eighteen and repeated my junior high school year to graduate from agricultural school.

MHA Oh.

TW In Bristol Aggie, 'cause I wanted to pursue a career in agriculture. And, which I did for awhile. Actually I was the youngest person in the company that I worked for at the time to be licensed to test milk for butterfat content which was the way that farmers were paid at the time. And I did that for four or five years and then the company, what happened then is what I see happening to the fishing industry today. The federal government got involved in farming and that's when we had the mass demise of the family-owned farms, you know the twenty or thirty cow farm. And it went to the major corporate farms. And that's what we're doing to the fishing industry today. Families like the Avilas, you know, Rodney owns a boat, but all the other boats are gone out of the family. He's the last one out of probably a half a dozen or more. There's was a bunch of them that owned boats. And that's what happened with farming in the 70s. They pushed all the little mom and pop farms out. You don't see any of those, or very few of them. It's starting to go back that way now. 'Cause now affluent people realize that hormones aren't so good for you and educated people. And now they want to go back to the way it was. And it's very difficult to do that because of the price of land, cows, you know, just to set up and process. In the fishing industry is just the same thing today. It's very difficult for someone in the fishing industry to start out on their own because they're not making the

money to be able, and not only that, if you've got that kind of money, you'd be crazy to invest it in a fishing vessel. There's so many other better investments to make, you know. My grandfather's an immigrant from the island of Pico in the Azores and he came here on a whaleship and he made barrels for whale oil. And then he had a 18 foot catboat that all during the depression he was able to support his family with through either scalloping, and of course it was done on a much smaller scale. And there used to be a, they lived in Fairhaven, but he kept his boat, a lot of the time in New Bedford in what was called the Portagee Navy Yard. And he would keep it down there and he had a little shanty down there and he'd go scalloping and then come in at night. And my mother would get out of school and she'd row across the harbor down there and go, she had her own dory and she'd row over and cut scallops after school which my grandmother hated, but my mother loved it and she'd work for my grandfather and then they'd come home at night. And then my mother went to nursing school and graduated from St. Luke's nursing school and my grandfather sometime after that quit fishing. I'm not exactly sure when he quit fishing. But they would tub trawl for codfish. They'd scallop depending on the different seasons. In the wintertime they'd flounder fish in the bay here. And today most people don't even realize the Bay's loaded with flounder in January and February. They'd bay scallop and offshore scallop which back then they went to No Man's in little sixteen, eighteen foot boats and fished and thought nothing of it. It was common practice. But anyway I grew up in Florida and I used to shrimp and oyster when I was a kid after school to make spending money. So I started fishing when I was young too. And then I'd work on the farm. We had a lot of animals. We had a good size chunk of land, we had horses, chickens, pigs, goats, the usual.

MHA How did your mother end up in Florida from here?

TW After World War II my parents migrated to Florida because they hated the cold weather. And then my father worked in a shipyard. He was a boiler maker by trade in Jacksonville. We actually lived outside of Jacksonville. And my mother was a nurse in one of the hospitals down there actually right up until she retired. She worked until her 60s. And then I came up here and I started working in the farming industry and that went belly up so I worked marine construction for awhile, for a dredging company, did some carpentry work, odd jobs, you know in my twenties. And then I started fishing, worked in the fish houses, I stevedored, because in the 80s you could make a decent living on the waterfront here without holding a full time job you could do various things. And then I would fish. Certain times a year I would fish on small boats. We'd get a ship in, I'd go stevedore. And that was like once a month, you know sometimes twice a month. And then I could go lump boats. I used to work on the chute. I worked with Carlos Rafael when he first started. He had a box truck and two scales and it'd be me and him at night and then I'd go hop on a little boat and go fishing during the day. And if it was bad weather I'd go work with Carlos. Because it was becoming bad weather, you'd have a storm coming, that's when he would be busy. He'd call me up. I would be in because I had a small boat. I'm not gonna stay out in bad weather. We'd be tied up so I'd go work with him. Sometimes twenty-four hours or longer non-stop, just unloading boats. So you could fend for yourself and do ok.

MHA So did you own your own small boat?

TW Yes. And a small Eastern Rig that I bought from a guy on the Cape that owned it for forty something years. It was built in 1927 at Twin Galley Shipyards in East Boston. It originally carried a crew of ten, that was considered a big boat, forty-two foot boat. And then I bought it. I didn't want to buy it. My brother wanted to buy it. And we bought it together and two weeks after we bought it, he says, "Oh I can't go fishin' I'm gonna stay where I'm working so I ended up doing a lot of work with it, extensive work on the boat and then got it fishing. And we mostly power dredged quahogs with it and we worked with rocking chairs and different types of quahog dredges and did some scalloping. And I ran other boats and worked on other scallop boats, mostly small boats. And then I was fishing part time, fishing started going down and I was working part time on tug boats and I ended up going full-time on tug boats, obtained a master of towing which is in layman's terms a captains license AB unlimited, I can sail on any ship that is U.S. registered. Then I got hurt actually right here in the harbor, real bad. We were gonna dock a freighter and I was workin' for Charlie Mitchell and I stepped over a rail, I didn't see somebody'd cut a hole in the deck and I walked right in it, fell down, I don't even know how deep it was, down to the bottom of a steel fish hold, broke my shoulder in several places, fractured jaw, upper, middle, lower back. I was out of work for three years and was partially paralyzed in my left leg. They said I'd never go back to physical labor again. 'Course I had to prove 'em wrong. 'Cause that's what I did all my life. When you work on the water you work. You don't sit back. And so eventually overcame that and I went to work in New York for about eleven years on ferries. I worked for Steamship Authority here going to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. Been around the water. I spent probably close to four years, three and a half, four years working for Eastern Fisheries in the fish house in the fillet room and on the unloading dock. So I know my way around the business pretty well.

MHA Yeah it sounds like you've been in every aspect of the business.

TW Yeah quite a bit. But if you talk to a lot of these guys, a lot of guys did it to, you know. They'd fish for awhile and then for whatever reason they'd want to stay home and they'd go to work in the fish house. Or if fishing slowed down, I mean today scalloping is the number one, that's where all the money is. Guys are making obscene amount of money. Back in the 80s, they could come work with me on a small boat and actually make more money. They were making 12, 15 day trips if they came in with a thousand dollars, twelve hundred dollars, they were a highliner making huge money. And they used to come work with me and I'd pay 'em a hundred dollars a day, or a portion of the catch depending on what we were doing and it would always amount to at least a hundred dollars a day. So that was big money. And they were...so I could get scallopers who were used to picking up rocks and throwing 'em over the side and quick short tows which is the type of fishing we were doing in the 80s and the draggersmen were used to sitting down for two hours. So it was more advantageous to stay with the small boats a lot of the time. And there were a lot more small boats around at that time. Coal Pocket Pier over here, that was all small boats. The Cement Pier was all small boats. Boy that was a wooden pier and then they made it cement. And the bigger boats started coming over and there

was a big hoorah over that so then they extended it. 'Cause if you drive down that dock you'll find that it's so wide and then it narrows out and goes out for several hundred feet further. Lindberg Marine did that. And that was in the mid-80s probably when that was done. But that whole corner over there and over here behind the restaurant was all small boats.

MHA So what do you see as the future. Do you think that the, there are gonna be small boats are gonna be able to hang on despite what changes...

TW I see it becoming more and more corporate if you look on the west coast you see that. if you look at Alaska you see that. You look right here in the harbor, you know, the scallop industry's a good example. There's, if you look at the number of scallop boats and you look at percentage that are fleet owned, you know, more than one boat, there's very few single boat owners left. There are some, but eventually if you look at the fishing industry and you talk to some of the old timers, a lot of their, like Knut for example, he owns two or three boats, Norwegian immigrant, started with nothing, worked his way up, he's become very successful. His son is fishing. His other children are all educated and were going into other fields and I think you see that more and more, especially with the dragger fleet. Very few draggers left because of the restrictions and they just can't make a living at it. And it's very similar, the government got involved in farming in the 70s and that's what happened to dairy farms here. Now they've made a little bit of a come back, but it's so cost-prohibitive for anybody to get started in for example the dairy industry. Even farming in general to get started, the price of land has gone up so much that nobody can afford to do it so they lease land and rent it a lot of times. And now if you notice we have conservation groups that all of sudden want the farmers to come back and are renting the land to them very cheap here in Dartmouth that's happened and they've rented it very cheap and to offset the costs they've taken, there's one place for example which was a dairy barn that was built, I wanna say probably early 80s, something around that, late 70s, that today they have functions. So the fields are still hay fields and some vegetable fields 'cause vegetables aren't profitable now, but there's no more cows and that section there has been used and then one of the hay fields, they cut the hay this summer I noticed and they had a wedding and people parked in another hay field down the road and they had a little tractor with a wagon bringing the guests back and forth for the wedding so they'd get that country feel. That's not real country. It's not traditional American farming. It's a pseudo American farm that people can feel good about themselves 'cause they're helping support it, but it really isn't what farming is about. And if it wasn't for subsidies, that'd probably be condos or very high end housing 'cause it has a beautiful view that looks down to the Slocum River. And that's what's happened to the rest of the property.

MHA Yeah so do you think that the marketing system now where they're trying to develop the Community Supported Fisheries and the Community Supported Agriculture helps at all?

TW It does because it helps keep people employed in the field and it helps keep the field going in the New England area especially. But you know in the 80s we had a big battle

over here at Coal Pocket Pier, I tied up over there for a long time to keep condos out. You know this building right here, this was a company I worked for. This was a freezer plant, this was a fish processing plant, today it's a hotel. This isn't good for the waterfront. I mean I like the fact that the hotel's here, they've done a good job with it. It's not that I'm against the hotel, but in reality, if you go back to the, what was it, the Redevelopment Act in the 70s, everything east of Route 18 was supposed to be fishing industry related. Bourne Counting House, they put a restaurant in there. It was a big hoorah over them putting in a restaurant so they opened at five o'clock in the morning to serve the fishermen. Now it's fishing related. And this does serve the fishing community, I understand that, but it really wasn't the intent of when they redeveloped this waterfront. And I think the biggest problem is we have too much government interference in the industry.

MHA So when you were at the, did you call it Coal Pocket Pier, is that what it is?

TW Yeah.

MHA What were they trying to do? They were trying to build condos there?

TW This parking lot right across the street here where they're having, there's a tent set up with music and stuff, they wanted to put condos there. And they wanted to put in a marina so that you could buy your condo and you'd have a dock space for your boat. Have you seen what they've done to Portland, what they've done to Portland, Maine? It's a sin. There's no fishing left in Maine. And it's funny because yesterday I met a couple from Chicago that went to Maine to look at the fishing industry and they couldn't find the fishing industry so they ended up at a fishing festival this weekend and they're having a ball. They loved it, they couldn't believe it. They're coming back again next year, an elderly couple. They said, "We went to Portland, you couldn't get close to the boats." They said, "it's all yuppies." And they're right. It's all condos, it's businesses that are not, nothing is done for the fishing industry but a lot is done to get rid of the fishing industry.

MHA So how did you manage to keep the condos out?

TW Oh we fought like hell. We went to every City Council meeting. We were all very active. Rodney Avila was a big one. I used to be a lot rougher than I am today back then and I told him "I'm not goin' in there, it's not gonna do any good." "No you guys gotta go, we gotta go to the whaling museum" One of the first fisheries meetings they had was at the whaling museum. And a whole bunch of us went up there and Speedy, this guy Speedy, John Gonsalves, he's dead now, he had the fishing vessel Speedy, it's a small forty-two foot dragger. He gets up there and he was a Portuguese immigrant so had a little accent and he was very animated and he's yelling at 'em and he takes his hat off and he throws it down and then he steps on it and then he stops and he looks at 'em, "You see what you made me do? Step on my brand new hat." And he was all upset and he stormed off. And it got the crowd worked up. But it got the fishermen involved. And really Rodney was the first one. He's like, "We gotta stand up for ourselves, nobody's gonna do it." And Rodney's been here all his life. His father was a Portuguese immigrant who came

here to fish. And I know you know Rodney well. So he got us all involved with it. So when they tried to put in the condos we did the same thing. We all went there and we raised hell. You know, this isn't what it was designed for. It's not, nothing to do because as soon as someone pays, I think at the time it was a hundred thousand dollars you were talking about the going price for these condos, which was big money when you consider people were making \$20,000 dollars at the time the average income. If I paid a hundred thousand dollars at that time for a condo and I didn't want to smell fish, you know I'm politically connected, you know I have powers I mean to be frank, people with money have their political connections. And we're gonna put a stop to this. And at the time there was a gurry plant right on this site right here was a gurry plant and a freezer plant. And all these buildings out here in front of this were all active working fish houses. It was Frankie Silvia, it was Parisi's there were all these fish houses here working. And there is an odor from the bacteria in the summertime. And these people tying up their however expensive yachts and paying big money for a condo coming down from Boston, it would only be a matter of time before they'd be forcing the fishing industry out. So we all stood together and fought and I think it created a political hot potato that none of the local politicians wanted to get involved with so that ended that. That was the beginning. You could already see. You have to hand it to Rodney, he was very, he had a lot of foresight. He could see the writing on the wall, what they were trying to do. And I don't blame the developers. It's a great waterfront. It's too bad this is [inaudible]. This area's beautiful, a beautiful area. The whole Buzzard's Bay area. It's gorgeous. So it would make a great place. You know I'm sure if you go upstairs in this building, you look southeast, you're gonna get a great view of the Bay and the river going out and all. It's spectacular. But this is where the fishing industry is. And it supports the local economy. And in the long run it supports the country. There's not many fishing areas. The United States used to feed the world. And they fed the world with their fishing industry and their farming industry. And today all of that's gone corporate. There's less and less of it. Everything is farm raised. I have a real problem with farm raised stuff because of the diseases that are developed, the mutant strains that come off from these diseases. The antibiotics that they're feeding these animals to stop and using on plants, the different chemicals that they're using and hormones that they're using in plants to develop 'em. My daughter's allergic to penicillin and all the sulphur drugs. I tell her all the time, "Don't eat anything farm raised." Plus all the foreign farm raised stuff, their really growing it in open sewers. If you went and looked at these places, you'd be horrified. I love shrimp. I grew up in the south. I love shrimp. I just ordered some today. It's domestic, gulf caught shrimp or I won't buy it. And I'll pay twice as much for it and eat half as much. But at least I know where it came from and I'm supporting United States fishery and I'm gonna get a good, top quality product. But there's gonna be real, I see a lot of issues in the future. I mean we saw it already with, in the farming industry with cattle, the hormones, in the piggeries. You know they started feeding all these animals chemicals. Or chickens you see.

MHA You saw it with cows.

TW The cows right. You never had mad cow disease before right? So what kind of a disease are you gonna get that's gonna pass on to humans? We know tuberculosis will pass from cow to a human to different species. It's gonna be other strains of diseases. And

I hate to see them doin' it with seafood. And the science that they're using for all these regulations is so flawed, it's so blatant. The country really doesn't understand what's going on because if they did I think they'd be people that was against it. NOAA builds a ship to study fisheries, they can't even go into the port it was designed to go into.

MHA [laughs]

TW You drive up to the ship, the first thing you see is a big chock that says "Made in China". What does that tell you about what's goin' on in this country? And then the science, they're saying there's no fish, they're usin' trawl doors that were takin' off a confiscated Russian trawler in 1965. I mean it's ridiculous what's goin' on. I mean if you have any knowledge of the industry and you look out there and see what's goin' on, you know they tagged Cod Fish in Cape Cod Bay, they're catching them off Iceland and they're saying there's no Cod Fish. There's Cod Fish. The Cod Fish has just moved. They migrate with the feed. I have a friend who's a very successful fisherman and he would catch fish when other people weren't. And they, other people were chasing the fish. He never chased the fish, he chased the bait. Because the fish have to eat. And he became very successful fishing, you know, by chasing bait, not by chasing fish. NOAA's chasing the fish. Chase the feed. See where the food is. Big boon with Tuna. Tuna's in shore, why? The bait's in shore. Several years ago the bait went a hundred and forty miles off shore and you had guys in twenty-four foot boats goin' with fifty five gallon drums of gasoline strapped to the deck going a hundred and fifty miles off shore, crazy. You know, "We're gonna catch that big dollar fish." But NOAA would tell you there's no fish out there. We've got a limit. So there's a lot of, the biggest problem I think with fishing and with any industry in this country is you get the politicians involved and then there's money involved and it skewers everything.

MHA So do you think that there really is no overfishing or has not been?

TW I wouldn't say that. I think quite possibly in the past there was over fishing. Why did we institute a 200 mile limit? Right? We had all these foreign fleets in here overfishing. That was obvious. But we, you know, there's no bigger conservationist than fishermen. Fishermen know that if there's no fish to catch, they're out of business. They want to conserve. A perfect example is the fluke fishery. There's more fluke around now than there ever has been. But you can only catch a hundred pounds so you make a tow to catch your hundred pounds and you catch a thousand pounds, there's nine hundred pounds of fish that are killed. Talk about conservation. Where's the conservation there? There's no conservation there. It's just waste. But they don't care because there gonna get more grant money to study it. They need a bigger boat to study it. Why don't you go ask the fishermen? Why are they spending, why is the government spending millions, or billions of dollars to build these ships, this fleet of ships to study fisheries when we've got fishing boats tied to the dock that they could charter for a hell of a lot less money and put fishermen to work and there's enough room on these boats to bring the scientists also. Not only that, you know I was a merchant marine, I fished, and nothing against the merchant marine, I have nothing but respect for them, I hold them in the highest regards, but a merchant marine officer does not know how to catch fish. And you have NOAA



merchant marine officers running these ships and you have somebody like Rodney Avila or Jimmy Ruhle and these guys tellin' them this is the way to do it and they're "No we're not gonna do it that way." These are guys that have been fishing, know between the two of them, you've got a hundred years fishing experience. They fished all their lives. They've been very successful at it. And you have some officer who's got his head up in the clouds because he's the captain of the ship saying "No." It's just, there's just no sense. This country's lacking common sense today. And I really believe that the biggest problem with the fishing industry today is government regulation. If government got the hell out of it, you know, if I'm gonna go cod fishing and I make a trip cod fishing, I just had a friend of mine that made a tuna trip. He's never been tuna fishing before. It cost him four thousand dollars to make this tuna trip. It was a broker. They didn't catch enough fish to pay their expenses. They're not goin' tuna fishing any more.

MHA Right.

TW So those tuna are not threatened by that boat and that gear anymore. That's all sitting in the garage in Gloucester right now. It's like anything else. If there's no money in it, they're not gonna continue to do it. If you couldn't make a living with your degree, you'd go back to school for another degree in a different field so you can make a living. It's common sense, right? Everybody has to eat. There is no common sense with our government. And they'll count that boat as going out there and catching fish and part of the problem, this guy's out of business now. That part of the business. He's goin' back to what he knows and where he's made his living. But he just thought, you know, hey, he sees all these people getting in the tuna industry, "Maybe I'll try it." Didn't make any money at it, he's out of the tuna business.

MHA So what made you decide to go into safety training? How did that come about?

TW When I fished we had no safety training. First time I went out on a boat it was a wooden dory and there was tree growing out of it. And I said, "Hey what, this boat's got a hole in it, what are we gonna do if the boat sinks?" And I was told very bluntly, "Well bend over, put your head between your legs and kiss your ass goodbye 'cause you're dead. Put on a life jacket so they can identify your body." And to this day I call life jackets "body identifiers" you know because that's the way I was introduced. Nobody even thought about it. It was a very defeatist attitude as far as that. You knew it was dangerous, you didn't think about it and just go out and did it. I lost a lot of friends over the years. And I got into merchant marine, especially on the passenger vessels, you drill every eight days. You do a man overboard drill every eight days. So you're constantly drilling, constantly drilling. And I was like everybody else on the ship. "Aw, this again!" you know. "Let's get this over with so we can move on to what we, the day's work we have at hand". And then one day we were goin', the day before had been rough has hell on Long Island Sound, you know like ten, fifteen foot seas running in there. We took a beating all day. I was mate, I sailed mate that day. The following day, one of the boats, and this boat I was on was a new boat, the boat went into the shipyard. So the captain of that boat came over to the boat that i was on 'cause it was a new boat and he wanted to learn all the little idiosyncrasies of the boat and get used to the boat. So he went as mate and I went as what

they call, AB number one. They don't carry bosuns on those boats if you're familiar with the pecking order. You know it starts with captain, mate, then it would be bosun. It was more or less has different assignments, different duties. So I was AB1 which meant I was in charge of a high speed rescue boat that was on this ferry and this was one of the first ones that had been introduced on what they called at the time a high speed rescue boat. What you had to do is you had to swing away from the ship while it was underway, free fall about three or four feet off the quarter, I mean you're dropping probably forty feet. It's a different feeling, queasiness in your stomach.

MHA Yeah.

TW And especially after falling and getting hurt severely a few years earlier, it took me a long time before I could even watch somebody falling in the movies you know. So the guy who was assigned to the boat with me that day had never done it, very good friend, we're friends to this day, he lives in Florida. So him and I get in the, and as we were going across, we were almost to Orient Point, Long Island, going through Plum Gut, we hear a big bang and the boat vibrates. Well I was steering the boat with the captain. It was just me and the captain. It was the first trip in the morning, nine o'clock in the morning, flat calm day, beautiful sunny day, and we're sitting back and just talking. So as soon as that happens, we take the boat of gear. We think TW And this is a three hundred, three hundred and fifty roughly foot ship so this is not a little small fishing boat. So at that time the sound phone rings from the freight deck and the guy on the freight deck another friend of mine, he calls up and says "Hey, tractor trailer's goin' over the stern." The captain says, "What?" He says, "You heard me, there's a tractor trailer goin' over the stern." About that time the ship shook again.

MHA Wow!

TW It was continuing that was the final as it went over. So the captain looked at me he says "He says there's a truck going over, you see what's going on." So I run as you came out of the back of the wheelhouse you went down this long corridor where all our rooms were through the mess and galley and out into our open sun deck, passenger sun deck. I get out in time, just in time to see this lime green, mack truck do one of these and go over the surface of the water. So I ran back. I says, "That tractor trailer that came on just went over the stern. I just saw it go under the surface." I said, "Do you wanna launch the rescue boat?" He says, "Yes." So now he's got the alarms going. He's calling everybody on deck. I run down and this guy John Dexter who's assigned to the boat with me, he'd never done it before. Well we both get into immersion suits, Mustang suits where our hands were free and all. And a lot of this equipment was new to us. We hadn't worked with this before. So we get in the boat, they swing us out. We free fall. I start the engine, I say to John, and with that type of boat you release it just the opposite as you would a life boat. Life boat you release the aft painter first and then the bow painter to get away. With this one it's just the opposite 'cause you're under power. You're powered and you could swing away. I said, "Just do what I tell you." I said, "It'll work good." So boom, boom, boom he did, we get away from the ship coming back around, we find the guy that was in the tractor trailer.

MHA Wow.

TW We got him into the boat, took a major effort. And we got him into the boat. In the meantime I see flashing lights about a mile away at a boat ramp, so I just make a b-line over there and we've got this guy he's laying like this with his legs, his head between my legs and I'm running this outboard and the other guy's up front and he, this guy's like staring at me so I just kind of cover him. And there's nothing really we could do, 'cause he says "Do you want me to start CPR" I said, "No" because if we start that we can't stop and there's no way he's gonna do it long enough to get us, I said "We just gotta get him to help." So we got him over there. As we pull up the fire department, the fireman's just launched a boat they tell us to get out of the way they've got to go after it. I said, "No we've got him right here." And they couldn't believe it. So we got the guy on the dock, they defibrillated him, and it didn't take so there was a pulse and he was still alive and they hauled him off to a hospital. He later passed away. But that showed me the value of doing drills because here this guy had never done a drill before yet we pulled it off flawlessly and got to the guy. So I came back home and in the meantime fishing boats are supposed to be doing safety drills, nobody was doin them in reality. So Rodney was workin' for HDC. And I'll never forget this, I came and told Rodney and I had wanted to get away from the ferry boats because my daughter was growing up and I was missing her growing up. And so, it's a problem with going to sea, you miss a lot. So I went to Rodney, I said, "Listen, I want to start doing safety drills." I said, "I can do it with my coast guard licensing, get qualified with the Coast Guard to do the drills. I'm used to doing drills. These guys need to do 'em. I said "I'd like to do it. " And Rodney just laughed and he says "Well" he says, "I don't know what to tell you, you can try, but you don't know, these guys aren't gonna do it." I said, "Well I was kind of looking for a little help." 'Cause I've always respected Rodney, you know and his opinion and he's like, "I don't think they'll do it, but not to say, stop you try" So I had tried on my own a little bit and nothing. In the meantime I was contacted by a company from Philadelphia, Tom Dameron at the time owned the company, he was a fisherman. He's actually still fishing today, he went back fishing. So he ended up hiring me as like the New England rep. I used to go up to Maine, down to Rhode Island, back and forth and started doing drills on boats and some of the boats I still do drills on to this day. 'Cause he wanted me 'cause I had fishing experience, I had the merchant marine experience, I was certified by the Coast Guard. And so I started doing drills on boats. And that's how I got started doing it. Then while I'm doing this, different boats are sinking, guys are dying, people I know are dying. And then once we lost I think it was 27 men, and that's when we started doing the safety, that's when we said, something's gotta be done. That's when Kaliz went to Washington and you're aware of what happened. So that's how all that started. And then the company I was working for I wasn't really getting along with, but they had changed the way they did business a little bit and it was, I'm still friends with them today. I sit on SIVAC which is advisory board to the Coast Guard on fishing vessel safety. We just had a meeting in Washington DC and I'm still friends with the owner. I have a lot of respect for him. But that's when we started safety training program and then it went on from there. And then I changed companies to where I work with Hercules today. I think I've been with them nine years, whatever it is. And that's how I got started with safety

training. And I'm still doin' it. In fact I gotta go jump in the river this afternoon. And that's basically it.

MHA Yeah. And I assume, you've probably saved lives. Have you heard stories of people who've...

TW Yeah we've had guys come back. One individual he went to our training program here at Fort Rodman, I'm half Portuguese. Portuguese kill us sometimes, they don't listen.

MHA [laughs]

TW He went through the safety training program, and I believe it was less than a month later they were south of Long Island in a storm and the boat sank. So they did a lot of things wrong, but he did enough right things that everyone survived. For example they didn't turn on their EPIRB right away. They waited till they heard a helicopter. They made their mayday call correctly. The life raft inflated and also helps us learn about our training.

MHA Right.

TW The life raft inflated but the canopy, there's a tube in the canopy, what holds it up, it stayed collapsed. Well all they had to do was reach inside and push up on it. No one ever told them that. We never even thought about it as part of our training.

MHA Yeah, yeah.

TW It hadn't come up before. And now I include it in part of my training. So they got on top of the raft, three guys, they held onto the raft, had their EPIRB, they heard the helicopter and they turned on their EPIRB. They got in the survival suits properly, which is what saved their lives. And the next day, they were in our office crying, thanking us. The boat is right over here, the guy still fishes, ties up right over here, small boat, obviously a different boat, but they're still on it, the same guys, I see them all the time. I wave at 'em. So yeah, people come back. And it's not just him. There's been other cases too. But that's the one that comes to mind that's somebody local that I know personally. I know the boat owner, I've probably known him for thirty-five years. I've known Sammy a long time. And it shows why this safety training is so valuable. And I use that as an example for guys that come back for more safety training. 'Cause you don't always learn everything the first time. And we're always learning and we're changing things. The training program we have today versus the first one we did is totally different program. It's a whole different animal. We approach it differently. We teach a lot of different stuff. There's stuff that we've dropped and we've found that we don't need to teach and there's stuff that we've found that yeah we do need to teach this, you know. And we've picked up new things like that canopy. It takes me, what ten seconds to say, "Guys, if the canopy's collapsed, just reach in, push up it'll pop open." That's all I have to tell 'em.

MHA Yeah.

TW But it's something that you didn't, it just evolved your training. I'm sure, you're a teacher, correct?

MHA Not exactly, I do the research, but

TW But you understand the concepts and a lesson plan and you know you have to change it as things progress, so yeah it's a very valuable. I don't do this for the money. If I wanted to make money I'd activate, re-activate my license and go over to [?] Sit on the deck of an oil tanker and make a thousand dollars a week.

MHA So did you go to Mass Maritime?

TW No. My step-father did. I worked down there for awhile. And I had, I wouldn't, if I wore a Bud Light t-shirt today or a Harley Davidson t-shirt, you're not accepted, you know. It's not nautical. I don't have a lot of nautical clothing so. I don't know what it is. But yeah, so that's how I got involved in the safety training and why I do it. I don't think anybody does it for the money, there's been a few people getting in, that have gotten into it thinking they were gonna make a lot of money at it and found and some stayed for the right reasons, and some moved on to other things. But it's not a, for us it's not a profitable, a highly profitable business. And i don't think anybody does it with that intent. It's something that was needed and this program that we have here in New Bedford is the most successful one in the country. The Coast Guard recognizes it. We've had people go through it from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Florida, all over come to this program. And its affected people, believe it or not its affected people worldwide. Because of the number of immigrants that are in the fishing industry. One example is a friend of mine is a Portuguese immigrant. He's a captain of one of Carlos Rafael's boats, great guy. The boat is in tip top shape. And he has family that fishes in Portugal. And it's a very dangerous fishery that they're in, it works on tidal motion and as the tide, the sea runs out they have to run down and pick, I don't know if it's [?] or some kind of mollusk they're going after but whatever it is a lot of guys get trapped with the tide coming in and they drowned. So because to him taking safety training and he's going all the way through and he's a drill conductor, he conducts drills on his boat, he's come in and he's bought safety equipment, inflatable vests and some other things, and when he goes home to Portugal to visit his family, he's brought it there and given it to all his family that are fishermen. So that now even in Portugal there's people who are benefiting from this program.

MHA Oh that's great.

TW So it's really turned into an international program. It's not just local New Bedford, Chatham or wherever we go in and do this. It's actually gone world wide. We've had Vietnamese immigrants, people from Mexico, Central America, South American, all over the world. Other than the, and we've had some Cambodians. But other than the Cambodians and the Vietnamese, we haven't had a lot of Asian people do the training. We certainly have a lot of Hispanic, Portuguese. We've had some Canadians.

MHA Which brings up the question, do you see the population of the industry ethnically changing here?

TW Oh yeah. A couple years ago Carlos Rafael put a perfectly, when he was doing a fillet contest and I don't know if you know Carlos, but he's very animated. He talks while he's working, and he's got a cigarette hanging out of his mouth

MHA [laughs]

TW And like he said something about the Guatemalans. And somebody made a derogatory comment about the Guatemalans. And in a joking way, it wasn't meant bad about Guatemalan people, it was something about it will it's all going to the Guatemalans, or something. And they were right in that respect. Like Carlos says, you know what, and Carlos is a very large employer of people on this waterfront. It's not like the days when it was just me and him. That he says, that the Guatemalans remind me of the Portuguese in the 70s, 60s and 70s. He said, they had to leave their country. My ex-wife is from Faial in the Azores and they immigrated, her family immigrated here in the 50s because of a volcanic eruption and they all came here because half the island was wiped out. And great people, her father worked in the shoe industry, he was a shoe maker over there and he worked in Brockton for years. Her and her sister are both college educated, my ex-wife has four degrees, speaks five languages, very well educated people. And they've done a lot for the country. In that respect they've become productive citizens. None of them are on welfare, none of them are on unemployment or any disabilities or anything. They're all hard working people and I see the same thing with the Guatemalans, like Carlos says. They remind me of the Portuguese back then because Portuguese came and they took jobs nobody else wanted which I don't understand. I do understand it, because I think a lot of it has to do with the political situation in this country today because it's so easy to get on disability and welfare. There was a statistic out recently that 85% of the people in the greater New Bedford area of workforce age are on some kind of disability or welfare or unemployment which is a shame. I mean ride around the City during the day and you see all these young people just hanging around the porches in the summertime you know, unemployed. And there are jobs available, they just don't want 'em. It's not profitable enough. It's more profitable to be on welfare and disability than it is to work for a living and I think that's wrong. So they wouldn't take the jobs. The Guatemalans have immigrated here because of the problems in their country. And the horrors that these people have seen, they come here and they get offered a job in the fish house, they don't care how hard it is, they're gonna work. So they've taken the jobs. And they're good workers and they're loyal employees. Hercules, the company I work for, we have six of them that work for us. And these guys are hard working, they build nets, gill nets. And these guys are hard workers. They're there at six o'clock every morning. And they'll stay till four or five o'clock in the afternoon. And the job that they do is an extremely hard job. They don't complain and they work. About ten o'clock in the morning they all stop for half an hour and they eat and joke around. They're pleasant people. And they're back to work and in the afternoon they take a short break and back to work. Great employees. So yeah I do see the ethnic groups changing in that respect. But its not a bad thing it's just the way of the country, you know. You go on these boats you see people

from Mexico, Vietnamese, all over working. And a lot of these guys when they took these jobs, for example the scallopers, like I said before weren't making any money before and now they are. And we can thank SMAST for that. I really believe in their research because the government was saying "No there's no scallops. Gotta pull everybody's permit, get rid of em." SMAST said, "Wait a minute." They went out, they did a study and found that yeah, there is scallops, you're wrong. And Rothschild [Brian Rothschild] did a great job. So I think it's just a natural occurrence seeing these immigrants. They don't see a problem with that. Can't begrudge anybody as long as they're legal. That's another thing, you know. Like I said we have six Guatemalan immigrants that work for us. They're all here legally. They raise their families, support their families. We have, actually we have seven in the company, Guatemalans, we have one Mexican immigrant, we have a girl who's Portuguese but immigrated, her mother's Portuguese, her father is Argentine and she immigrated here when she was a baby. They immigrated to the United States. Our other secretary is my niece. Her father immigrated here from Portugal as a young child. He was like four years old when his family came. My boss is Irish. They weren't born here, they came here. So a couple generations ago, it's the same thing, just different. So I mean Rodney works with me. His family immigrated from Portugal. I'm half Irish and half Portuguese. Well my father's three-quarter Irish and was one quarter American Indian so other than my grandmother, everybody else in my family immigrated here at some time. So you know, I don't see an issue with that. I see an issue with just opening the borders and letting people run rampant. My grandfather was extremely proud of the fact that he was an American citizen. He came through Ellis Island. His citizenship papers were framed and mounted on the wall and he would speak Portuguese to my mother because when my mother was young, he didn't speak English. And they spoke Portuguese at home. So my mother was bilingual. As he learned English, you know, he spoke English. He would speak Portuguese to my mother, especially if he didn't want kids to know, the kids that you went and teach. I remember telling grandpa "Teach me Portuguese". He'd slap me on the back of the head and say "Hey boy you're in America, you speak English" he'd say, "You see that", and he's point to his papers. He was extremely proud of it. So I'm a big believer that we should allow immigrants, but we shouldn't just open our borders to anybody. We should keep the criminals and the child molesters and the rapists and the drug dealers and all them, keep them the hell out of here. We've got enough of 'em here as it is. We don't need anymore, you know.

MHA Right. If only we could tell by...

TW Yeah. And I don't think people in the whole industry, immigration isn't, immigrants working on these boats aren't a big, big problem. Maybe to a handful of second and third generation fishermen that have been here and they're "Oh I can't get a job it's all Mexicans." No you can't get a job 'cause you're a bum. That's why you can't get a job.

MHA So what would you like the festival visitors to know about that we haven't already talked about?

TW Oh gee, I don't know. That most of these people are hard working family, good people. They're not the drug addicts and drunks that they're portrayed to be. I think one of the worst things is that, it's good and it's bad, it's a double edged sword is, and I don't watch TV so, but that show from Alaska with all the crab fishermen.

MHA Right. Most Dangerous...

TW Deadliest Catch or something

MHA Deadliest Catch, that's right.

TW You know, you look at these guys. This guy Sig is an idiot. He showed up at the Whaling Museum to give a talk and I got a couple of calls, "You've gotta come see..." "No I don't like the guy, he's a moron". He shows up down here, hammered, shit-faced, drunk. And every other word was F this , F that. And there's little kids. This was a family orientated thing. The people who put it on were so embarrassed and aghast. That's not a proper representation of the fishing industry. I'm sorry. These television programs they dramatize everything. They did one out of here. I got into a beef with them down here on the dock. "But we're from the movie." I said, "I'm working for a living, get out of my way." You know. "What do you want from me?" You're not gonna come over here and ...you know "This is my turf, get the hell outta here." There was a local boat did it for one trip and then he threw 'em off the boat because all they did was instigate. And everybody on this boat, I know. They're all friends of mine. The boat owner's a friend of mine. These are people I see on a daily basis. I see 'em in the grocery store, at church, wherever, at the festival. They're my neighbors. And they're making them look like they're all fighting all the time like they're a bunch of idiots on national TV. The captain told 'em "Turn the cameras off." And they guy said, "I'm gonna refuse to." He says, "You turn the cameras over or I'm gonna grab the camera and they're gonna be overboard. It's up to you, what do you wanna do?" So they shut the cameras off and he threw them off the boat and that was the end of it. Because they showed them how it really is, it's not dramatic enough to sell to TV.

MHA Right.

TW And the unfortunate thing is, people living in Oklahoma think that's the way it is. And it really isn't you know? It's a lot of boredom. It's hard work. You're constantly there, you're sweating, you're dirty, you're hungry and you just keep, like a machine, you just keep working, working working. It's not this glorified thing where you look out at the beautiful sunset, yeah you do get to see beautiful sunsets, but most of the time you're lookiin' at it, you're working. Scallopers are cutting scallops. You're bent over picking fish or the clammers are dumping clams in the cages or whatever they're doing. Fishermen are working.

MHA So what do you think it is that makes people wanna go fishing?



TW I think a lot of people initially, it's the money. They watch movies and its romantic, Down to the Sea in Ships, you know. And then they get there and a lot of people find out it's not really like that. It's the independence. Fishermen are very independent people. Just like farmers. They don't wanna be told what to do. All we wanna do is, all fishermen wanna do is be left alone, go to work. If the fish aren't there, they're not gonna make money, they're not gonna go after it. And they want a little respect. And I don't think the government shows them any respect at all. But today, the big thing is respect and don't bully, anti-bullying is a big thing. Well all the government is doing is bullying the fishermen and they're showing them no respect. Everything that they're preaching about, they're going against when it comes to the fishing industry, from what I see it. And people go, the money. I mean I know an individual who made over a hundred thousand dollars last year, he's got a third grade education. He's been in prison. Where's he gonna go get a job like that? He's a hell of a fisherman. He just, when he gets on shore, he has some issues. As he's gotten older he's overcome that. He's actually a great guy. But he's in his late thirties. To go out and get a job, making a hundred thousand dollars a year with a third grade education. It's not gonna happen.

MHA I've often wondered about that actually. About what's gonna happen to those people who's formal education isn't....

TW On the other hand, I have another good friend who's a CPA. He's fishing, managing the family business and fishing. He doesn't have to go fishing. He still fishes. So you have, you know I've worked with guys who have master's degrees, right down to you can't read or write. I used to have a guy fish with me, great guy, he couldn't sign a check, he could print the check, he couldn't sign his name. I taught him how to sign his name but he couldn't read or write. And today with the education system in this country, I see it right here in New Bedford high school, they get people who graduate, they're graduating people who are functional illiterates. I have a real problem with the education in this country. I'm an advisor to the engineering department at Vocational Tech. My daughter graduated from there, my ex-wife's a guidance counselor there. When my daughter was a senior in high school she worked for Chris Electronics installing electronics. She knows almost as many fishermen as I do, installing electronics. And they came out with [?] these different computer programs and they didn't know how to use it, she showed 'em. The kids today...she lives in Austin Texas "Ann, how do I do this?" "Dad press this button. Is it working?" "Yeah." "Ok don't bother me." Click. She hangs up. "I'm busy." But here's my daughter and she continues, she's working in the fishing industry. She did out of high school for her work study program and she made decent money doing it. And we were talking the other day, she, I don't know what they call it, she has a degree in geography and mathematics and she was doing something where they lay out grids and they lay out all the utilities and where every fire hydrant and telephone pole and that type of stuff. She was working for [?] down in Austin and they had a big layoff and she got laid off. So now she's working part time for an artist making some kind of stained glass because she knows how to solder because she learned at Voke. And it built back her experience when she was working on the fishing boats. And how she got this was, the guy, through a mutual friend, needed someone to set up his computer program on line for Ebay or

something so she went in and did that, took her like two days to do it. His orders quadrupled overnight. And he's like, "I don't know how I'm gonna get this out. I got to find people who can solder" She said "I can solder." And he's like, "No." She says, "Yeah." So she sat down with him and he showed her how they do it and she...so she's doing that part time. She said, "Yeah it's fun Dad." But it's an indirect spin off from the fishing industry.

MHA Right, yeah. I've always been amazed at the number of skills that fishermen have.

TW Right. And it carries on. I mean when my daughter was little she used to go fishing. I mean she couldn't even see over, "How am I doing Dad?" "Doing great, keep going kid" Her mother would have a conniption every time I was doin' dock, work on the dock, she'd wanna come down and be with Dad. And she'd pick up shells and throw 'em over and junk that was on the deck and throw it over the side. And she'd be runnin' around and there were other kids back then. There used to be a boat here, the Wanderer, and it was Rodney's best friend. The boat sank, lost Carl and another guy, we used to call him "Junkyard Mike" 'cause he used to work part time in the junk yard. He was a nice guy, he had a little girl about my daughter's age. So he'd be working with Carl, his daughter would come down. My daughter was there so a lot of times they'd come over on my boat 'cause I had a lot, it was an Eastern Rig and there was a lot of forward deck space and I could be working and kind of half keep an eye on 'em and I could hear 'em runnin' around up on deck and the kids would all play. Plus you didn't want 'em playin' in the parking lot for obvious reasons so you'd just let 'em run around on the deck. The kids would play so they were all used to it. So my daughter grew up, she didn't think anything of boats. She has her own float coat when she was working for Chris Electronics. She would always wear a flotation climbing from boat to boat. A lot of the guys knew here because they know, "Oh yeah, you're the safety guy's kid." And they knew her as the girl from Chris Electronics. The electronics girl. That's just the way it works. And you'll find other families where their kids may not be fishing now, but they're doing other aspects of the fishing industry. They could be working on the hydraulics. One person father quit fishing, started a hydraulic business, the son took over the boat. He did that. he got rid of the, sold the boat, got out of it 'cause of regulations forced him out of it. So that got rid of that family boat which the government was very happy about. He went to school to drive truck, did that for a little while now he's back working with his father and most of the hydraulic work that they do now, or quite a bit of it is for fishing boats, 'cause they know the fishermen and the guys trust him so...even though they're no longer fishing, actively fishing they're in a support industry which is a huge part of the fishing industry. People think fishing is just the people getting on a boat and going out to sea, that's not it, there's a whole host of other things, you need fuel, food, boat carpenters, welders, mechanics, electricians, and the thing with fishermen, as you said, they're very adaptive, 'cause when you break down off shore, you can't pick up the phone and call somebody. There's no fire department, there's no ambulance to come help somebody, other than the Coast Guard, you don't have, you're on your own or another boat come along side. So you learn to make do. You learn to half ass weld and blow a few fuses and take care of yourself because no one else is gonna do it. And then over the years you see as the economics go

up and down, there's time when the economics are down, people can't be doing it. They have to do it themselves because they can't afford to hire mechanics to come.

MHA Is there enough training. There used to be a lot more like URI used to have a fishing degree.

TW But there's no fishermen left in Rhode Island so why are they doing it, you know. No New Bedford Voke used to have a fishing training. They have somewhat of a maritime program there, but it's really not what it should be. And the, and the other thing that, this country has a real problem with the merchant fleet today. There aren't enough merchant men. So a lot of the merchant men that you find are people that are going into the industry today other than college graduates from Mass Maritime and these places which are great school, but not everybody can sit in the wheelhouse and steer the boat [phone ringing]. Where are they coming from? The fishing industry.

MHA Yeah.

TW The captain, one of the captains of this tug boat over here the Sabine, former fisherman, I was with him yesterday, one of my best friends. In fact I'm trying to get him involved, he's getting involved more and more with the safety aspect of the fishing industry. He knows all the fishermen. He fished most of his life. Fishing was on a downhill economic sweep. He went to school, got his captains license, went to work for a tugboat company and he's been doin' that for a good number of years now to where he's captain of this tug boat here. And I know a lot of guys that left the fishing industry and as, with it's demise and have gone to New York and they work on tug boats. And the tugboat companies love 'em because they're used to, they can do anything and they're used to long hours. They've worked hard all their life. They're used to long hours. They can weld, they can do mechanic job if they have to. Whatever needs, they can splice, they can do whatever. They don't have to train them. Their training time is cut down considerable versus somebody comin' in off the street who knows nothing.

MHA Yeah.

TW Fishing industry supports a lot more than just fishing.

MHA I think that's a really important point.

TW Because it's providing skilled laborers in other fields. Like I said, my daughter, she worked in the fishing industry, she learned to solder real well by working for an electronics company. Now she's doing that, earning part of her living. Our merchant fleet is in desperate straits. You talk to the Coast Guard they'll be the first to tell you that. And you look at the tug boat industry in New York, a lot of those guys come out of the fishing industry. Guys have gone on to get licensed to be electricians or plumbers or whatever, gone into other fields. So it helps support other industries. And I don't know any industry that doesn't welcome fishermen with open arms because they know they're gonna work.

And they're not gonna complain or if they're gonna complain, they just complainin' all day long anyway.

MHA [laughs]

TW it's just part of their nature. But if something happens, you gotta work overtime, they work overtime.

MHA Yeah, yeah.

TW They don't think anything of it. Saw a friend of mine yesterday down here at the festival, comes from a fishing family. The only one left working in the industry is his brother. He's working as a shore engineer. And he had quit fishing. And he says, "You know I've gotten soft." He says, "I spent the last ten years working for a, I won't say which one, but for a golf ball company. He says "I've gotten soft." He says, "But it amazed me. I watch these guys come in, they're, you know new guys come in, they don't wanna work. Nobody wants to work." And he's done well with the company because he's a hard worker.

MHA I hate to cut this off, 'cause I could talk for longer, but I know you have to go too.

TW Yeah I gotta go jump in the water.

MHA Yeah. Great. Well thank you so much Ted this was great and...

TW I hope that's what you wanted.

MHA It was wonderful. Thank you.

TW I don't know what you guys are tryin' to do, but

MHA Well

TW I don't think I could be too much help

MHA No you were perfect.