

Name of person interviewed: Larry Yacubian [LY]

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September 30, 2012

Interviewer: Markham Starr [MS]

Abstract

With the sea in his blood, Larry knew his destiny was the ocean. Larry gives us the progression of a fisherman from “shacker” to captain of his own boat.

Demographic information

Sex: Male

Age: unknown

Ethnicity: White

Occupation: Commercial fisherman/ captain

Born: Westport, Ma.

Homeport: Punta Gorda, Florida

Key words

Role

Commercial fisherman (captain, crew)

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Sources of prestige, rank, status

Social and Cultural Characteristics of Fishing

Life aboard a fishing vessel

Relationship with other fisherman

Socialization/ training to be a fisherman

Other social and cultural characteristics of fishing

Gear and Fishing Technology

Other gear and technology

Boats, ships, vessels

Trawl

Ship construction, shipbuilding

[00:00]

MS: All set? Okay actually before you, can you shut that off...

[END RECORDING 001]

[00:00]

LY: My name is...

MS: Hang on. Okay. So what is your name?

LY: My name is Captain Larry Yacubian.

MS: And where are you from?

LY: I presently live in Punta Gorda Florida but I grew up in Westport Point Massachusetts.

MS: Are you from a fishing family?

LY: Yes.

MS: And how far back does that go?

LY: It goes back a long way. My...Yacubian's a funny name. It's half Armenian and half Scotch and it's only in the last, I just turned 65, it's only the in the last 10 years I've been able to find out what the two ethnics, how they blended. Anyways my, my father's family all came from Nova Scotia from a maritime family. His grandfather was named Captain Joseph Foster and he was one of my heros when I was a kid. He was the youngest master mariner I think to date in Canadian history and when there were sailing records, which were passages, which were more closely guarded NFL stats. He had the fastest passage from the Lizard which is off of England to Halifax. And they never were able, and they only celestial navigation and they weren't, I think they took two fixes during that period of time. And he hit the mark and you know, they...And my grandmother her name was Jessie Foster. She was a little short Scotch lady, she was born on his ship going around the Horn. So I come from a maritime background. And I...that kind of stuff interested me much more than sports. I played a lot of sports. But I was more interested in those stats of the types of vessels and what they did. So as a kid I ran around the wharf in Westport Point. We lived about two miles up from what was called the mud dock. And before I had a bicycle I used to walk down there. It was a pretty safe part of the world then. So my mother used to let me, it would take me about 45 minutes to walk down there. There was a little store that was half the size of this room where they used to sell penny candy. So I would get, if I had a nickel on the way back, I would buy...it had been, it was called Harry Sole's [ph] store and he was long dead. I think he'd been in the military, a character.

[03:00]

And his wife ran it and it was kind of the hub for all the kids and she sort of kept track of where people were. They couldn't get into too much trouble. If the mothers were looking for anybody, they'd go by Sole's...have you seen Joe or Johnny or Susie, yeah he, he or she was you know northbound, southbound, because it was the way Main Road runs. So it was a very kind of close old-fashioned growing up but very pure. And Westport was occupied by hunter gatherers. There were farmers and fishermen. And you know if, some of them, if there was a bumper bay scallop season, the farmers would stop in the fall, after they got their crops harvested and they would go work the river for bay scallops. And they were hard workers. They are harder workers than most people can imagine. And they could work in conditions they didn't, Polartec hadn't been invented. Split fingers and chilled bones and they just worked through the pain. Because if you didn't, you starved to death. And if, it was a helpful community. If somebody was having a hard time, you know, some lobster would just appear on the door or you know, if there was a little old lady, a widow that was down there and she hadn't been seen in a few days, somebody would check on her. So it was a very caring community. Much different than life is today where everybody is blinkers on and their only concern is whether or not their iPhone or iPad or whatever pathetic electronic device they have is working. They can't think anymore. And these people were multi-taskers. They learned to do whatever it took to get by. And they were very gifted. If something broke they could fix it. If they needed to change something and come up with new fishing gear or farming gear...there were a lot of potatoes growing in Westport. They came up with the original potato digging thing that is now used all over the world, originated at Bone's farm in Westport Massachusetts on Hixbridge Road. There were a lot of brilliant people that MIT people would come down and say, how did you think of that? Well we needed it; we needed a tool so we made it. When out in the blacksmith's shop and, on a cold day, and we started the fire which kept us warm and kept...anyways that's the community I grew up in and I grew up on...The Westport River has two branches. The east branch, the west branch. And I grew up on that river. And it was, it was like a paradise to me.

[06:00]

And I, I started lobstering when I was 12 which was...I was a fairly good kid. I was involved in sports so I was fairly fit, strong and everything and I wanted to go and they're going, no no kid you're too, you're too young, you're too this, you're too that and I was around there and kind of had passed the test, maybe this kid's okay 'cause he's around the, they called us wharf rats. We were around there from the time we little mucky... "mucking around" in boats. And you either lived or died with your wits which you had learned. So I started and I started commercial fishing at 12. And, and it was...my dream had some true at 12 years old.

MS: Who was that with?

LY: It was with a guy named Jimmy Hollis. Captain Jimmy Hollis. He, he fished out of New Bedford for years and we went over there. He was a hard driver. He was a belligerent, obnoxious, alcoholic but when he left the dock he had already mapped

his...People don't realize, they see fishermen they go, well they don't do anything. Actually somebody that runs a fishing boat or a fishing company is the equivalent of a General Patton because you know, there's an old expression, if you don't have it you don't need it. Now a lot of things you might need you can't afford. So you plan around that. And he was like that. And he was, you know, kid this and kid that. We kind of got along. I grew up fast and I learned and I sort of passed the test. Almost got killed the first day doing something he had told me deliberately not to do so he used to set 15 pot trawls, dangerous stuff. Almost got killed, it was like a wake-up call. This is, this is serious stuff. This isn't playground stuff and it started ringing true. So then I moved on to other boats and that kind of thing, continued to learn and when I was about 20 years old, I started fishing out of New Bedford. I'd been to college, I hated it. I got an athletic scholarship to college. I was a pretty good lacrosse player but I hated the, the fact that it was during Viet Nam and I, I flunked the physical for my induction notice because I'm missing a disc out of my back. I was born that way and they said, whatever you do, don't do any physically tasking labor. So needless to say, I did a lot of it.

[09:00]

Anyways I started fishing out of New Bedford in '67 or whatever it was. I have to look back here. In '67 and actually on a, on a large eastern rig at the time, it was a super eastern rig named the Zibet. Was built right after World War II at Electric Boat in New London and it was built out of Corten steel which is the finest steel in the world and these were, this was submarine steel. And these guys have been building subs so they knew something about how to build a boat and it was built the same way. They built several of them. So I fished on it a couple of years and eventually the way the progression was you started sort of as a "shacker" which was the lowest form of animal life and it was like being a recruit in the army or the marine corp. Where every gag or trick that had been played on anybody else was played on you and it was to try to demoralize you and bring you up. Very effective. Well I was sort of toughened by that. I'd seen the gigs and you know, my thing was to, if there was a problem two hands would fly first and that was the way I grew up and it's not a good way but it was the...it that simplified world you sort of make a name for yourself and you try to do that because it's like professional sports. You know. Say something, say something about me. I mean, we didn't need a press secretary or something, it was a small community. You look at these athletes that get paid lots and lots of money and as long as their names is in the press for doing, a lot of people think they're wonderful human beings which in fact they are not. So anyways I came, I came up the ladder and I ended up getting...the process was you would start on deck and then if you were...

MS: Sorry.

[END RECORDING 002]

MS: ...when that happens, so you came up on deck?

LY: I started on deck and then I eventually, the progression was you would go from being competent on deck and then you would get a shot to run the engine. This boat had a fulltime engineer 'cause it had a great big old heavy duty engine that was, it was about two-thirds the size of this room. It was a 600 horse engine but it was like a locomotive, you put it in gear and went [makes noise] and it was pretty interesting stuff. If somebody yes they would go, I don't know what it is but it makes nice noises particularly if you're an engine person. So I ended up being second engineer and you, the engine rooms in those boats were very complicated. It was like the engine room in a sub. There were a lot of valves, there were a lot of...and if you did this wrong or that wrong or didn't transfer this, or didn't transfer that. And a lot of it was Greek to me, but the concept of the boat concept, this is what it need, I sort of slowly learned it and I become engineer. After a period of time. And I was proud of myself, I said, you know I kind of gone another rung up the ladder. Then I left, I went and got involved with something else and I went and fished on a boat name the Littler Growler which was a 70+ foot eastern rig, wooden eastern rig. With a guy named Captain Freddy Hatfield who was best known as Fearless Freddy and he was. He was, he had the sort of reputation of a Kamikaze. You know if you survived the trip, the boat survived the trip, you got a big trip. And he scared the hell out of a lot of people and I was too green to, to be scared. And he always caught a lot of fish. He was similar to Woody Bowers who was one of the legendary captains out here with the Ellen Marie. And this boat was about half as capable of, because of size and horsepower, as the Ellen Marie but they were in dead nuts competition. It was like the NASCAR teams. And that's what people don't see with these boats. And they go, well they're just a bunch of fishing boats, how complicated can they be? Well I'm, I've never been a NASCAR fan but I love machinery, I love the sound of loud screaming things, that's why I'm deaf here. And I'm still, I lived down south, I'm still not a NASCAR fan but I, I appreciate the competition 'cause in the fishing business it was competition, it wasn't money. I mean, if a guy caught...at the end of the trip, all the trips went out on the board at the auction room.

[03:00]

And you lived or...you lived or died by the hail you put up. And people looked at that like Wall Street.com guys. But the trouble...the thing, the thing that was different, it wasn't done on a quarterly basis. It was done on a trip basis and all went in the paper and people would scrutinize that like they were looking at the racing form. So there was a tremendous element of pride. If it was a bag of scallops and somebody had 212 scallops, you didn't want to have 211. And the gangs would fight over why they didn't...and and and that's what made the system work, was competition. And on a scalloper that you have the two watches, some of the watches that guys on one watch the other hated each other. When they would come ashore within five minutes there would be a knock down drag out fist fight. That was before they went to the bar. And a lot of people would see it and say look, these are bunch of monkey fisherman. And when they step off the rail onto the dock, they are monkey fisherman. They're like the same way as mariners have been portrayed for years. They're like a fish out of water. And that's always bothered me. And then you bring people along and they go, we don't believe how much technology this...when we had no electronics or absolute basic electronics, we used, we used Loran

A, Loran C, that that leftover from World War II. There was a book, in order to run those things, that was about that thick. And you had to be able to read and to think and if you got 10 very capable skippers, there, you have to count 10s, 100s, 1000s, the way you lined up. It was basically a *oscilloscope* [ph]. And if you had 10 scallopers say or draggers, gimme that position right there. There would be a little wiggle fit 'cause it was, there was an estimation involved. If you were on a B-17 going 400 miles an hour, it really didn't matter. So that's the precision we grew up with and the, and the quest for position. Loran C was, was started, invented by Harold Daller [ph] who was up on top of, next to the old Union Hall on whatever street that is, I can't remember. He was a, he worked with Loran throughout World War II and he headed the first Loran C they designed for North Star who was a very good little Massachusetts company, was on a piece of plywood that he had in his shop and it was like...I mean he was a genius.

[06:00]

And he tweaked it and fiddled with it and finally got a working Loran C that would take the adjustment out of it and come up with doing all those steps. It was, it was basically a computer. And that's where all this GPS driven...so that know you can find out if you want a Starbucks or a Dunkin Donuts which...that was all started by this industry. It wasn't started by the government. The government had it and they, they were going, well it's good enough for what we want, which it was. But it wasn't good enough for what this industry wants. And if you tell people that they're going, yeah, yeah, yeah, but it's true. A lot of the gear innovations were started people like, by people like Reidar Bendicksen who was a fisherman like me. The boat he, the last boat he had was the sister ship to my boat. The last boat I had was the Independence. Last boat he had was the Viking. The only difference is, on the Viking the pilot house was up forward, on my boat the pilot house was back aft. Other than that they were identical. Everything was matching. And he invented things for this industry that are not only used in this industry but in a lot of, having to do with technology of lifting things on tugboats and cranes and stuff like that, that he pioneered. He pioneered a safety hook that's used on all scallopers now the guys that have been fishing for the last 15 years, they've never seen anything else. We used to use a wide open hook that was very dangerous. This is a safety hook and the first few were used everybody said, that won't work can't get the hook out. Reidar made one, in his shop, with many many tries and failures and finally he's a, he's a brilliant man. He should be teaching at MIT but he can't, because he loves his industry. So anyways I started with a little, a little boat. I...the first boat I had was a 60 foot Glading and Hearn. Glading and Hearn is over in Somerset, build very good boats. They are...they build in the finest pilot boats in the world. They, they're the Rolls Royce of pilot boats. I, I had saved up \$10,000 in cash when I was 20 years old. That was a fortune, I worked hard, I didn't, I saved my money.

[09:00]

And I was headed to Florida to build a, or buy a larger vessel to go off shore lobstering. I, you know, through the draggin' there were a few people, Henry Clem [ph] there was a boat named the Kim, can't remember the name, from...tied up in Fairhaven. Can't

remember the skipper's name but he was a genius. He knew the continental shelf they way you know your kitchen. And he was able to go get trip after trip of, of big lobsters and that's basically all he lived on. And everybody goes, well I've tried it and I go out there and there's all kinds of bottom you know, the contours...it's not just the contours but in certain places there's coral there. There's benthic things...Woods Hole didn't know they were there. Henry and this guy did it. So I said, I'm going to go set lobster pots there, which I did. I built that boat, and had a little bit of money and I had a couple of partners because I didn't have the money to do it and it got done and they built a fabulous boat for me. And we were one of the first guys to fish off shore lobstering and we were catching a lot of lobsters.

MS: What was the name of that boat?

LY: The Susan Y. And that was built in June of '70 and I had that boat 'til...I have to look now it's terrible getting old you can't remember anything. I sold that boat in '76 or something. I had it 'til 1978 and it got so congested that everything that had a deck on it, they put lobster pots. The permit thing, if you wanted, if you wanted a permit they used to send you a blank and you just checked as many boxes as you wanted. You could go, if there was...I'm being obnoxious but if you wanted to catch mermaids and there was a box that said mermaids you just checked it and you got a mermaid permit. So there was no, so consequentially everybody checked every box. So the Commerce department really had no idea how much effort was going in, and they really didn't you know, we were really resource dependent. If we, we were like farmers. If you ate too much, your animals ate too many hay or feed down in a certain thing and you didn't move them in a rotational manner, shame on you.

[12:00]

And, and people realized that life is, if you boil it down between the Bible and elementary laws of physics it's fairly basic. There are some rules that can't be sort of tweaked. Unfortunately we're in a, a tweaky world. So did that, I went scalloping with that boat, I couldn't stand the lobstering anymore. I was a lobsterman and lobsterman are the most, as are all fishermen, they are the most possessive, jealous people that have ever...and they're very competitive and they're very proud. Which is a good thing but it's also a double edged sword. So I was, I had gear out there and it took, it took me about a year to figure out a pattern on how to do it. You know, the trawls are a mile and a half from the bottom. It's not like you're parking cars in a Walmart parking lot. And then you have 10 people that come and set on you, and I finally said I can't do this anymore. We had problems with the foreign boats which we got through. Gerry Studds got involved. We had all the Communist block countries going through that, in the early 70s the S.A.L.T. Talks were going on. They were going through my gear and I was losing, I lost all my gear a couple times to the point where it got pretty ugly. And the Coast Guard was around there and they were, they would come through like a herd of locusts and if you were in the way, you'd tell 'em where it was and they go ya, ya go right through it. So I had something to do with getting the 200 mile economic zone in there. I went to Washington a bunch of times. I was a green kid, didn't know my way

around but all I had to do was tell your story. If it was true, that's very naive. But I had to take things into my own hands and if you have a 60 foot boat versus a 400 foot factory ship, there are methods I used 'em. It got some attention and they said, this guy's a nut. And I said, I am. I'm very competitive, I'm good at what I do. And if you can't defend me I'll defend myself. And finally that had something to do with getting this through and that was the beginning of fisheries management which was sort of opening up Pandora's Box. So I had something to do with that. And I think back and wonder what would have happened if it didn't happen. I, you know, when you get to be an old man you look back and wonder what or if.

[15:00]

And it straightened things out you know. There was an economic zone and the, the fish boats and not so much the scallopers 'cause they were up inside but the fish boats were having they...they couldn't compete. They'd be towing along and all of a sudden some...they just about get towed up, they didn't really care. There was a lot of frustration which finally...and then the banks got into it and said, oh well we, for the first time in our life we, we're aware that we have a domestic fishing industry. I heard that in the bowels of the department of commerce in Washington. Said we weren't ever aware of the fact that there was a domestic fishing industry. I said, have you heard of New Bedford Massachusetts. Yeah. I said, whaling industry? Yeah. I said, New Bedford used to be the richest city in the world. Oh I didn't know that. I said, you don't know a lot of things. Open your eyes, look around. Don't look down the pipe. So anyways then I, I fished with that boat for a while and we were bringing stuff from the shelf. And there was nobody on the boat who didn't know how to open a scallop. I could open a bay scallop in the, the mechanics of opening a bay scallop or a seas scallop are...you open a bay scallop upside down, sea scallop right up side so. We were like a monkey on a race car, we didn't know what to do. We had all the scallops but we didn't know how to open 'em so we were bringing them in in the shell. And at the time we were fishing up off of Pollock Rip. The whole scallop fleet was there. The hard bottom fleet, from this side of the harbor, the soft bottom fleet from the Fairhaven side. And they might as well have been 10,000 miles away. There was a lot of competitiveness, jealousy which is always been part of this industry. And it doesn't matter if you're in Adak Alaska or you know Biloxi Mississippi. Fishermen are fishermen. They're competitive, you know they say the hardest thing to do for a fisherman to do is tell the truth because they're all liars. Some are bigger liars than the other, whether you're fishing in a pond trying to catch pan fish or 12,000 marlin. You're all liars. You wouldn't tell your brother. So I started fishin' with that little boat and I didn't know how to put a scallop dredge together. So we tied up at Kelly's and Jens Isaksen and Arnie Isaksen were building the Huntress up in Maine at Gamage. Which to me was like the Titanic it was so big. So I'd been around there for a while and I used to...Jens would come over and he was a brilliant, brilliant man.

[18:00]

He was one of the innovators of a lot of the scallop gear that had come along and a very quiet but powerful man. And if you asked him a question he would think about it and then he would...so I said Jens, I'm going to put a scallop dredge. Ya, why do you want to do that? I said, 'cause I want to go get some scallops. Okay. So there was a thing called an airplane drag which was, had been out-moded in the scallop fleet for years. And it was kind of this funky, and it was very light. So I bought an old 13 foot airplane drag which probably you and I could pick up together. And I didn't know how to put anything together and I, I said well, what do I need for gear. Well, I'll find something. He got some gear that they had leftover. Now when the Isaksens get rid of gear, believe me is when I tell you there is nothing left at all. So he cut it, showed me how to cut it and couple of the gang and threw everything out and you know, showed...made a schematic and showed me how to hang a sweep. I didn't, I knew the principle of it but it...We spent more time cutting out the old hangers, that are called hangers 'cause everything's worn so much that they [laughs]. Anyways his son, Arnie, came over and shook his head and goes, what are you doing. Anyways, I'm going to go catch scallops. Okay. I mean, you could catch scallops off of Pollock Rip than with a 5 gallon buckets. Everything that could float was out there trying to take advantage of this "bonanza" which it was. It was close, the boats didn't have to run offshore in the winter time. If the weather came they could get up under the Cape and cut and all that stuff. The highliners of New Bedford were some of the boats from the other side, or Myron Marder's fleet. Myron Marder had five scallopers. And they were as competitive amongst themselves as a NASCAR team is. I mean, if they needed something all they had to say was Myron I need this. Okay, but you never asked him for something that didn't improve the performance. And if you didn't improve your performance, there were 10 guys behind you that were. So they lived on it, which was a great...the gang's were all the best of the best. So at the time, there were union boats. They had 8 days fishing from the first time the drag went over the...off the rail. They had 8 days fishing, not 8 days and a minute.

[21:00]

And, they were all 13 men. The boats were fishing up there and one of Myron's boats or one of the Isaksen's boats or one of the other good boats with, with 13 crackerjack men. In a, in a 8 day period would catch 30-32,000 pounds. And I just, I couldn't imagine it. How the hell did they do it. You know, they weren't, they were probably 40, 42 count scallops, not big. And I just couldn't imagine how you know by then, we were cutting, you know, going 1, 2...the numbers just absolutely boggled my mind it was like...So we'd listen to the fish news and go, Bill, Old Bill Brennan would be there. Good morning, WBSM and everybody, every boat that was out fishing listened to WBSM you know between 8 and 9. Got all the local news. Who was born, who died. What this...communications we had were basic. We had big AM, you had to go through a marine operator. It was a big rigamarole. And if you ever got a message that said, call home it was always somebody's dead or dying or it was a grave, you know, maybe you would miss it and somebody would say, by the way you got a call through Boston or... So I used to remember that. So we would just bring them in in the shell into Nantucket and we had, it was a poor bay scallop year. We had 40 women cutting scallops for us. I say mostly women, there were probably two-thirds women. So it would take us two days

to unload the boat. It would take us 18 hours to load it. We were four men, that's a lot of work. It was like shoveling coal for...and we ran it through, eventually, we ran it through kind of a grid thing that we built to keep the sand out so it was clean. And make sure that there were no empty shells in there. So we started bringing it in there and we were making a lot of money. For me, at the time, I was just saying, how long can we do this?

MS: What year was this?

LY: This was in '75. And we were making two trips a week and the way it was, was the cutters got, I forgot what they got, X, 50 cents a pound or something to cut it and the scallops were only \$1.50 or we were happy if we could clear a buck a pound.

[24:00]

And we were, in our expenses were almost nothing, not much fuel, a little 871, the boats here have bigger winch engines now that we have main [ph]. We had one dredge which I finally got rid of because the thing fell apart. We were the first boat to every tow a scallop off the stern. Quite proud of that. I didn't know any better and we did it and Arnie Isaacson would come over to me every trip and look and was like, I don't believe you did that. I said, well I don't know any better. I did it and it made sense and it worked. So they designed the Huntress with the gallast on the stern which were the, which was the first western rig scalloper to have gallast on the stern. If, if you built an eastern rig today with gallast up forward, these guys would go, this doesn't belong and why. So we did that, it was, it was kind of interesting. And we, as a, as a...we went to two dredges. We went to two, heavier 10 footers. The boat only had enough to tow, we end up, we ended up in the spring, it got warm we couldn't bring scallops in in the shell and the big problem was getting rid of the shells and the, and the guts and we finally left in like April. We went to Menemsha until a month before Memorial Day you know we gotta get ready for the "touristers" summer trash, whatever you call 'em that are coming down here. And they had all this stuff to get rid off that in the winter time wasn't a problem. There were only fishing families in there and the seagulls were taking care of it and you know, they were used to the smell 'cause the smell of 'em was money. Because they all learned that years ago that if you don't work, you starve. There is a very cause and effect thing. Nobody's going come bail you out except maybe your friends or people you grew up like you did. So we stopped and said, alright what are we going to do now. Now we gotta go cut scallops. So I bought, I started with one dredge, one 10 foot which the boat towed quite nicely but there was a few scallops around, we moved down off around shore [ph] there were some bigger ones that were like 35 count scallops which to me seemed like they were basketballs. The more the scallops, the bigger the count, the less in a bucket, less to the pound, it's pretty basic. So we started going that and I knew some people that fished and the scallop business and they kind of took me along and said, well you gotta put rock chains. Well rock chains to me are like...no no no you gotta do it if you're gonna fish there.

[27:00]

We eventually put a dredge on each side. So we would put one dredge up into the tide with the engine, with the foot on the throttle and then turn around and kick the other dredge out and come back down fair tide. Almost with the engine...that was the only way we could do it. 'Cause if you put three, three tows on deck you had a...if you've ever been on an airplane you understand metacentrics and things like that. Well fishermen learned it long before they ever took a Coast Guard exam where you had to do the calculations but they do 'em in their head quicker than...so we did it that way and it worked quite well. I mean you made the best of what you had, that was it. And, but I was kind of limited where I could go. The boat couldn't carry much fuel, we only had four bunks and we were eight men so we were "hotbunking" it. Running the two watches. And my big goal is if I could get 1000 pounds a day, if I could get 22, 25 bags a day which would translate into 1000 pounds a day we would fish 8 days, and come in with 8000 and I was like, yes. We have made the quota that I had set in my brain. And the big boats were trimming us which was to be expected. They were set up for it, they had men that had been cutting scallops for years that were, and believe it or not a scalloper or a dragger is like a NASCAR thing. And one guy can make all the difference between success or failure, or one little gadget. Is like the horseshoe nail that lost the battle with Napoleon. It's the same, and people don't realize it, and they go, well how could that happen. Everything, it's so technologically. It's so competitive and everything, it's full tilt boogie all the time. And if you can't, if you've got an engine that you need to nurse or you've got hydraulics that are leaking, you, you could modify that but it's, there's a fine balance in there 'cause you're trying to finish the trip. You've trying to get the trip because you're worried about your reputation, you're worried about paying your own bills and the gang's bills. If you're a nutcase, the gangs are going well, he might do well for me this trip but I'm probably gonna get killed next trip so, maybe I oughta move on and the gangs were, they, they were hunter gathers too. So there was no, kind of fooling each other. You were all in the same...And the liked to be driven. They liked to...If somebody, the thing for years was the slowest guy goes. Didn't care whether he was related to Aunt, Mother Theresa. Didn't matter. It was that competitive, it still is.

[30:00]

And that competitiveness has been used against us and that's why we're in this, kind of situation we are now with the United States Government. So anyways I bought a bigger boat named the Zibet in 1978. I was familiar with the boat, I was familiar with the engine room. It was made out of Corten steel with is pretty tough stuff. She was old but she was still, you know, a mini battle ship. She didn't have the best power when I was on there but she'd been repowered with a, with a 12 cylinder Caterpillar which was you know, talk about tug boats the thing yesterday. That would be the equivalent of huge power for the time. So I converted that boat into a scalloper in '78. Took me about eight months and took as long and twice the amount of money.

[END RECORDING 3]

LY: ...money as usual with any boat project, house project or anything. It's a lot of work. Did it at Kelly's and they did a great job. And went fishing with the boat. The boat had a couple of inherent flaws that every once in a while would show up but we made it work. And when we were good, we were good. When we not so good we were still in the running. And that was what it was...I looked at it from my point of view, 'cause when I was on deck I didn't want somebody who was going to kill me. Even if he was going to make me a lot of money and they were guys like that so you had to kind of keep it in balance. You know, when when the weather was a little better, you know, you drove 'em like you drove yourself and you know we still ran it as a kind of a basis as the way the union had. Six hours on, six hours off. Two watches a day, there were 13 men, there was a cook. Way, way, way more civilized than it is today. So scallops got a little scarce and as they had many times before. And the boats cut back on men, they didn't need the 13 men. They cut back to 11 and the first, for the first time the word concerns started to appear in certain black and white literature. Concerns. Concerns. I said, I never knew anybody who was concerned about me. When I was on Georges in February and it was blowing 90 miles an hour and I was trying to keep my gang alive in a storm that made the Perfect Storm, that I was out in, look like a Mayday day or the 4th of July. Said, there was nobody concerned about me. I was concerned about myself and my gang and the safety of the vessel. And those, those were you, you, you focused your concerns on that. And I said, I have government people who are concerned about me? And I, being the pain in the neck that I am, I questioned things. Anyways I had that boat for a number of years and I sold it. It was a good old boat, we kind of got some of the bugs out of it and it had a problem, it had a bronze [ph] shaft in it. And it had the otterboards driven in to 'em many times and bent wheels and bent shafts. That problem came to haunt me with scallopin' and finally I put up...

[03:00]

Hathways had a, had a slug which is a, it had to be a certain diameter, and a certain length and they had machined one end that would've fit my propellor but the other end...somebody had ordered it and...Saletti Matta [ph] who was the machine shop guy who was a genius. He was one of those guys that could basically keep everybody happy which is a tough nut to crack. He said, well I've got a, 'cause we had that shaft in there and the wheel in a bunch of times, and the whole from the engine back through the propellor, there was some wear and older age and bends. We had it in there a couple times and they tried straightening and straightening a 7 inch shaft is an interesting. After it's been done a few times it has a memory and it comes back. I mean they straighten 'em bigger than that but they still, they're never the same. They may be within a couple of thousandth's but it's not right. And I mean turning that many times and eventually you're gonna have problems. So we finally straighten it out, put all new...had 'em make the shaft up and put it back in and did everything right and it knock on wood took care of that problem. And so I sold the boat in, I, I operated the Zibet from '78 to '85. In 1985 I bought the Independence which had been, was called the Vito Sea [ph]. It was built in Newport shipyard in Rhode Island. And they did a lot of contract work for the Navy. It was a John Gilbert design who to his day, still the finest designer of fishing vessels that ever came down the pike. I mean there's a lot of knock offs of Gilbert but he was a

genius. He knew what it took and there were other people who did but if you had a Gilbert design boat whether it was wood or steel you really had something 'cause he was not somebody that was going to compromise his principles for you. If, if you wanted a little bigger or a little shorter or a little fatter he would work it out but he wasn't going to change anything that would jeopardize the integrity of that vessel. And that's what it's called, integrity. And so he had designed those two boats. Originally the one I had. I saw it when it was being built. I was over there, I was looking around to buy a new, build a new boat and at the time you couldn't, there was a boom going on and all the yards down south. I had kind of mixed emotions about that.

[06:00]

Said, all right if I gotta build a new boat what I gotta go down and sit there while they're...it's like building, having a guy put a kitchen in your house and you're, you're working and you come back and the sink was supposed to be there and now he's got it on the... So I didn't want to do that and I looked at it, and I said, what if I walked in there when they were building the boat and the shell was done and I walked around it for about an hour and I said, what a beautiful thing. I mean it's, it's...I couldn't imagine how perfect it was. And it was named the Vito Sea and it was owned by the finest dragger/skipper in Gloucester Massachusetts named Vito Seamatera [ph] and Vito Seamatera could get a trip of fish in a Walmart parking lot. And the choosing of, he could tell you if you wanted haddock go here, if you wanted cod go there. He was a genius. His English was pretty basic but he knew Georges Banks, Browns Banks, Sable Island like he...he had a better concept of that than most people who have gone to oceanography school for 50 years did. And in the blizzard of '78 which I remember very well 'cause I went fishing the day of the, of the blizzard of '78 on an Isaacson boat. Little boat was tied up, we were leaving and I got there, took four hours to get to Westport to Fairhaven but I made it and we went fishing. And a couple of days later there was a big news splash in one of the Boston newspapers about the fishing vessel Vito Sea. I said, I know that boat I saw that boat being built. He was in Gloucester with I think 125,000 pound of haddock, all haddock. And he came home in that blizzard of '78 which was similar to the Perfect Storm. It was just a collision of some weather systems and you know what it did here. And he got that boat home and she was stuffed right to the deck. Scared everybody but him. And he came in, and it was the record trip of large haddock and it was like, how did he do that? 'Cause he had designed, he built the boat. He went to Gilbert and said you have to build me the boat. He knew as much about engine rooms as I know about how to design a system on a Boeing 767. He never went in the engine room. As long as it ran, they had backups for backups for backups. If something broke, they just went to plan A or plan B.

[09:00]

The boat was, the engine room had way too complicated a...which they had no clue of. Clue. Anyways, I said, that's some boat. About a year and half later the boat was for sale. I went up and looked at it, it was, didn't look anything like what I had last seen it. I hadn't seen it because we were, we were going to Georges or fishing in the channel and

they were going to up on the edge or up in the deep water and it was, we might as well been in another planet. So I sold the Zibet to a buy named Herman Bruce who I've known for years. He's still involved in the fishing here in New Bedford along with his son Mark, they are fine people, they've worked hard. Their family came from Newfoundland and they were all fisherman. And they, fishermen are a community that people don't realize that you know if somebody's going through hard times or there's a death in the family or there's some anomaly that presents us all as we get older or health issue or something, they all rally around and it doesn't have to be a basket of flowers or a bottle of rum or whatever. There's a sense of well being. So I bought the Independence and I changed it over which was, it was twice as much of a project as the other boat had been. And people said, why are you doing that? I said, I, I'm asking myself why you know, goes back to if it ain't broke don't fix it. But I wanted a new boat that I had designed so I bought this hull that was as far as I was concerned to this day, the finest designed deep water, all weather scallop boat. Now everybody, everybody puts sticks on it which are great, I always thought well if they need sticks they don't belong here. I was wrong. I was on boats later on that had 'em and I got wow. Shows you what I know.

MS: I'm sorry, we'll have to just soft of kind of wrap it up.

LY: Okay.

MS: But so you ended up rebuilding that?

LY: I rebuilt that and I fished until the early 2000s. And it was a great boat, I ran it myself 'cause I didn't want to, I didn't want to stay home and get a phone call, this happened, or that can't...

[12:00]

I was always kind of the hands on guy. Ended up repowering it. It had a 398 Cat, 850 horse which the boat was marginally horsepower for scalloping so I upped the horsepower with a 3512 which was 1100 torse [ph] and it, it did everything I wanted. I fished it until the early 2000s and I was a happy camper. And so it's been an interesting life. I've met, I have some amazing people. I still have some amazing friends, who were amazing people when they were 18 years old. They still are. You've going to meet one of them in a few minutes. And I saw him the other day for the first time in about 10 years and I walked right by him, I didn't recognize him. But inside that kind of strange looking man that's going to come in, is an amazing people. He and I, along with a few other people are the reason this bonanza that is fallen upon the scallop industry along with, we started the fishery survival fund. Marjorie Ormand who I've sure you know of or have heard of and she...her language would make a truck driver or even a fisherman like myself blush. And she pulls no punches, she has a heart of gold. And she has connections, if you...so she finally said, I'm so goddam sick of listening to you guys. Are you gonna do something or are you just gonna whine. Like, if you want to cry in your beer, go somewhere else. I don't wanna listen to it. And there were a lot of ifs and buts and she said, well I don't...so we started it with Marjorie Ormand who was the

center of the spoke of the wheel. There was Bobby Bruno who'd been in this scallop industry for years who was a fine, fine man. Melvin Kvilhaug, Norwegian, been around, just built a new boat that was built at Kelly's. Kind of neat, a brand new scalloper was built here in Fairhaven, it warmed my heart. Hans Davidson, Herman Bruce and myself, Captain Larry Yacubian. And we did a lot of things, we started it and it was difficult. We didn't know what we were doing. It was like, to us it was rocket science, we were in all business that if there was a problem you went at it with hammer and tongs. You cannot go at the government with hammer and tongs. First of all, they say you're a bunch of baboons and we are a bunch of baboons. But we're hard working, we can outthink 'em, we can outwork 'em and if, if a contingency plan arises we've already done that.

[15:00]

We don't need a committee or this, 'cause at sea if you've got a problem by the time you come up with a contingency plan you're dead. And that was all made well aware to me when I was 12 years old and it's very good life lessons you know. Irregardless of degrees you know, I went to did this or did that, but I did this. Well don't tell me, show me. That was the school we went to. And it was, everybody was accorded the same. It wasn't like you were given an easier task than he was or I was, everybody was held to the same level and you either could make it or you know it was like the military. Hey no problem, you wanted to join the Seals, you got very fit and ran around and you don't have the right stuff. You may be very well, you may be able to do 1000 pushups and 400 pull-ups but you don't have, you're not the complete package because your brain cannot deal with pain, endurance, discomfort. Fishermen learn that when they were a kid, the old timers went to sea and they're...you can tell a fisherman by his hands and years ago, Woody Bowers was missing a couple of fingers. He lost his finger offshore rolling a belt on a pump. And what did he do? There was a bucket of Kerosene that they always would put a wrench before they put it back in, they dunk it on 'em it had oil or grease. Put it on, wipe it off so they were kept clean. All the wrenches were on a board so they were available quickly. What did Woody do? He dumped his hand in the bucket of Kerosene, took some black electrician's...long before there was vinyl tape. Never said a word and finished the trip.

MS: We're gonna have to finish. Sorry, but thank you very much. Next time you're out this way we'll have to do some more.

LY: Yup.

[END INTERVIEW]