

Fishtales, Sunday September 29, 2013  
Working Waterfront Festival

Interviewer – Markham Starr  
Interviewee – Skip Barlow

SB So is this gonna be question and answer?

MS Well I'm just gonna start with what's your name?

SB My name's Skip Barlow

MS And where are you from?

SB I'm from Bourne. I'm a coastal inshore fisherman, have been pretty much my whole life.

MS Alright and you have a story you wanted to...

SB Yeah, yeah. I'll give you a story. I have a lot of stories, but you know, I'll give you a true story. I don't usually give you true stories. And I have to think about 'em. You know and one particular story was, I was involved in the clam fishery in Bourne for at least thirty, at least twenty years. And during that period of time, we hydraulically harvested clams so we'd get you know, ten to fifteen bushels of clams every day. But we had a certain procedure that we went through every day. Every, I guess I'm kind of obsessive compulsive, I would, I was in charge of the boat, the boat, I got the fuel, I made sure everything was in the boat that we needed for that particular day. And I would plan in my mind where we were gonna fish that day. And we made very good money. And my friend Diane who fished with me all those years and our children collectively, all had their little specific duties that they would do. And Diane's duty usually was to, she kept the boat pretty clean, she packed all the clams, and made sure we had a good lunch every day. And my job was to make sure we had gas and make sure all our hoses, 'cause we used like fire hose lay flat plastic hose to channel the water when we clammed, make sure we had plenty of hose. And make sure all the life jackets were in the boat, and a whole bunch of paraphernalia that the kids, because we had eight kids between the two of us. So they had blow up toys and they had surf boards and they had goggles and they had all kinds of crap. All this stuff had to be kept in the boat and we kept track of everything.

So, one day we were fishing on this place near Tobey Island and I would have it all planned out in my mind every day how things were gonna go. 'Cause I am obsessive compulsive. I knew just how it was gonna go. And I knew that as the tide got down really far, it was a moon tide, I would need more fire hose because the boat would have to be out further because it would get really shallow. And we couldn't get water for our pump. So we needed the extra fifty foot of hose. And I had packed that up in the bow and I always knew where that was and I had that. And on this particular day, you know as the tide went down and we had all the kids and all the kids were playing and, the tide got

down and I said to Diane, "Get me out that fifty foot of hose, I'm gonna put it on in a couple of minutes 'cause were gonna need it." And she looked at me kind of funny and said, "I think I took it out when I cleaned the boat." And I said, "No, no. You didn't take it out, it's in the boat. I know where it is. Get the hose." Well, she had taken it out.

And because I am so controlling and obsessive/compulsive whatever, I had it all planned out and every day we had to get our limit of clams. I did not go in 'till we had our limit which was usually around nine boxes, which was about six hundred pounds of clams. We had the license to cover that and that's what we, and I just knew that, I had it in my mind and we always did it and I couldn't believe that she didn't have this hose. And I went in the bow of the boat and kind of flailed around looking for everything and it wasn't there. It just wasn't there. And I got really, really angry. And I made, I can't believe it, I made everybody get in the boat. And really, and I didn't usually, I'm usually pretty mellow guy. I got really angry.

And one of the kids had come to work late so she had driven down close to where we were fishin' so I went in with the boat really much faster than I should have, sent her and one of the kids to get that hose. I couldn't, could not finish that day without that hose. And they had to drive, you know this was in Monument Beach. They had to drive over the Bourne Bridge to Buzzard's Bay, get the hose, come back, you know. And we're on a time schedule. We can't, you know we have to be off the water by four thirty because that's the local regulation. And she came back with that hose. But I couldn't believe how angry I was just to make her go get it. She came back with it and we got our limit because I, I was so compulsive I wouldn't go home unless we caught all our clams. But that was the one time she forgot that hose, or she took it out of the boat. She never again took anything out of that boat that we might need. But you know, and I, it was years before I realized the impact it had on our kids. The kids saw me do this. The kids were all talkin' about it. And now they talk about to me like, "Do you remember? It wasn't even you. You were totally nutso!" [laughs] So that's an unusual story, especially from me. But you know it's not somethin' I'm proud of, but looking back I can't even believe that I did it. But I just was so driven to catch those clams every single day, it was nuts.

MS Yeah.

SB Yeah so what do you think of that? [laughs] And I'm not a shrink or anything guys [laughs]

MS Good. Yeah, great.

SB You know I had to think about it to come up with something.

MS Yeah.

SB We're not all proud of stories, but it's a true story. And it had a real impact on my children. And I didn't realize the impact it had on my kids till years later. 'Cause we had a lot of fun, we had chicken for lunch every day. We had all these good things happen. But

that one moment that I got really angry, they always have waited for it to happen to them. I've never gotten that angry at anybody else or anything. But that one day, and it was really me, you know it was all me. It was nuts.

MS Yup, we've all had those days though.

SB [laughs] Yeah but as you grow older and you find out your children, "Holy Crap!"

MS Yeah, yeah.

SB So they all have a good work ethic and they don't forget much [laughs]

MS [laughs]

SB Alright so that's my story.

MS Great. Thank you.

SB It's different.