

TAPE SUMMARY INDEX FOR
LONG ISLAND TRADITIONS FIELDWORK PROJECT:
BAYSHORE TO PATCHOGUE

TAPE 001:
DON BEVELANDER
JULY 1, 2000

Don started working in the Great South Bay when he was very young, around twelve years old, and he learned to clam alongside his father and brother. Don was a tonger from the time he was fifteen years old and worked with his father during which time they were on the boat for a week straight. They would leave out of Bay Shore early in the morning and would work sometimes until 8:00PM. They would live, eat and work on the boat and don would do a lot of the cooking. At 9:00AM they would break for a Dutchman's Lunch--a break from the workday when they would eat a sandwich. Don's father came directly from Holland but does not recall exactly when he arrived or started working the bay. Don and his father never spoke the Dutch language but his grandmother kept the house and spoke only in Dutch. The Bevelanders also went to the east to do oystering. During the winter, after his father had retired from working the bay, don worked for Bluepoints. After he returned from the war Bluepoints did not have his boat for him and could only pay him thirty-six dollars a month so don began working with his brother. Don and his brother began to fish using fyke nets that they had made during the winter. During the years together they also clammed in the bay but were well know for their fyke nets. They would make the nets in the cellar. Don then explains the design and use of the fyke net and one fyke net would easily hold a box of fish. They would get anywhere from three to five dollars but if times were tough and others could not get out into the ocean they would make up to fifteen dollars for a box of fish. Don claims when they delivered them to market they would jump out of the box. They never tarred their nets but would take them out of the water and store them in the cellar when not in use. Don expresses that he learned a lot from his father and older brother. His brother was somewhat of an innovator who was always thinking of ways to make the job easier.

Don states that the bay is now in ruins. When Don worked the bay he recalls that the bay was always kept in good shape but pollutants are now destroying the bay. He also believes that Bluepoints is responsible for the destruction of the bay by using the dredge boats. When Don was clamming there were so many boats on the water that you could almost walk across the bay to the beach. Don worked the "lead", West Island, the "flats" and they also worked near the bridge. Don never saw the Brown Tide when he worked the bay. They use to buy their tongs from a man in Patchogue and after this man died they found another person who would repair the tongs overnight--he was their right-hand man. Don and his brother were the first baymen to use a metal oyster tong--designed by his brother. The independence of working the bay is what don liked and this he acquired from his father. Working the bay made Don rely on himself much more than working for someone else. Don relates a story about working on the bay when the hurricane of 1938 started to blow in.