

Frank Cona
June 7, 1987
Interview by Nancy Solomon

5th generation fisherman from Italy – Sicily – southern part. Small town – 35,000 population – Macata. Father taught him – had 3 boats. Dragger boats. Originally sailboats. Were 50-feet long. Big brother and father ran them. Started working on them when he was about 6 years old. Cleaned fish. When he graduated from high school he earned a full share. Became captain. No shellfishing. Haul seined. Caught sardines and anchovies. Used lights to attract fish and purse seine net. Tried it in the US to catch mackerel.

Came in 1949 and he is 58 years old. Knows how to make his own nets. Cotton nets. Made by hand, not machine. Learned from father. Women made the material. Not hard to make. He made little boats when he was young and raced them. Also made little nets. Was 7 years old.

Father was “one of the best.” Caught more fish than others. Had the best gear. Everyone knows me and the Apache (his boat). Left his mother when he was 15 years old. Went to South America to see the world. Lived in Venezuela. Earned enough money to buy a boat – set lines. Brought in 3000 pounds of grouper. 300 hooks for each line. Less than a mile. Seine, draggers, purse seine nets. Father made purse seine nets.

How the nets work. Lived in Venezuela for 2½ years. Left and worked on a ship. Marine ship. Jumped ship when they reached the United States. May 5, 1949 arrived in US. Got married. Came to NY, Pier 41 next to Fulton Fish Market. Went to see his uncle – had 5 uncles all over the US – one in Kansas City. Was asked to open a restaurant.

End.