

Fishtales, Sunday September 29, 2013
Working Waterfront Festival

Interviewer – Markham Starr
Interviewee – Dominik Ficek

DF I live in Fall River Massachusetts and I'm fishing on Fearless and Beth Ann.

MS And Where are you from originally? Are you from...

DF I was born in Poland

MS Huh. And did your family fish at all?

DF Yes. My stepfather is a captain. He runs three boats: Atlantic, Beth Ann and Fearless.

MS Huh. And that was scalloping or trawling

DF Scalloping

MS Scalloping oh yeah. And when did you get into fishing?

DF About ten years ago. The story I'd like to share with you was one of my first trips I went on an old boat, Concordia. Not the new one, the previous one. That was a boat from I think as far as I can remember from 1918. And it was wintertime. And we'd been fishing in sixty five miles wind and thirty feet waves. That's when I realized how small a human being is out there on the ocean. It was very cold. The waves were comin' in and the boat was very long so it was a very seaworthy boat, but I enjoyed that trip because of the rough weather, you know?

MS Really. So first trip. Did you get seasick?

DF I was really seasick back then. But my first trip I got seasick yeah.

MS Yeah. Yeah that's miserable. But you decided even despite that you'd stay in fishing. You enjoy it?

DF Yeah. When I started fishing I was goin' to college and I got one trip by the accident. A friend of the family got injured on a boat and they needed somebody so I went on the first trip. I told myself I'm never gonna come back after the first trip. It was only four day trip, you know. That was a closed area, it was very short trip, but it was rough on me. The first trip, like on everybody else who's starting you know. And I did another trip, my first trip was the fishing vessel Atlantic. Second trip I think it was on the fishing vessel Atlantic. And I think in 2005 I did already twenty-five trips, that's a lot you know? One of those trips were on Concordia at that time in rough weather so...

MS And are you general crew or what's your position on the

DF I'm a general crew yeah. I'm a deckhand.

MS How many, what kind of poundage do you come back with now on a typical trip?

DF From what I heard, this time of the year people are comin' the range is from 2,800 to 3 and a half thousand pounds a day. That's a good crew is coming with that kind of poundage, maybe somebody comes with more, you know. But I don't know. I came with a big, my biggest trip in my whole career was 62,000 pounds in 2005 or 6 I think. That was a lot of bags.

MS I can't imagine cutting that much meat. I mean it's just inconceivable. You must, what is the daily. How many hours are you working a day or what is your schedule when...

DF It all depends. Right now I'm working on the one dredge boat. We work 12 and 6. Twelve hours on the deck and six hours off the deck. So you probably roughly are away about thirteen hours and you've got five hours of sleep. On a two dredge boat we try to work eight and eight with hour overtime, maybe two hours overtime. It changes from trip to trip. Sometimes you got four hours overtime. So it comes out, if it's four hours overtime, it comes out to 12 and 4 sometimes. Mostly often we work about eight and eight with an hour and a half overtime.

MS And I assume almost all of that is cutting

DF Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's most of the time is cutting, you know?

MS Yeah. Do you have any idea how many you can cut in an hour?

DF All depends on the size of the scallops. Last trip I went was a science trip so we didn't cut nothing. But the trip before on the one dredge boat we were cutting small scallops. And that was about 32 count, 25-32 count. That's considered small scallops nowadays.

MS Huh. And so do you foresee yourself staying in fishing? Is that something you'd stay with?

DF Yes. Mmmhmm. Most definitely. Although the government is cutting the days down. I'll try to stay.

MS How many days now would you be out in a year?

DF This year was thirty two I think, as far as I remember. It's gonna go down next year it's gonna be less, less and less I guess.

MS So that's it, 32 days for fishing. And what do you do when you're not fishing?

DF 32 days open area and there were two closed areas this year, so... I'm lucky this year that 'cause I work on three boats, so I've been going around.

MS So it gets you out there more. You're out there quite a bit. Are you married?

DF No.

MS Girlfriend, boyfriend?

DF Girlfriend. I'm thirty-one years old

MS How does she like it?

DF Like any other girlfriend.

MS [laughs]

DF They don't really like it

MS Yeah it's pretty tough. Well great. Well thank you.

DF Thank you very much sir for your time.

MS Thanks.