

Fishtales, Saturday, September 29, 2012
Working Waterfront Festival

Interviewer – Markham Starr
Interviewee – Brad Hathaway

MS Alright so what is your name?

BH My name is Brad Hathaway. I live in Mattapoisett. I am a former reporter for the Standard Times where I worked for 37 and a half years.

MS Wow. And you said you were covering the waterfront?

BH Yes. I covered the waterfront for a period of about five years and you know I'm eighty years old now and I don't remember the years that I covered, but a couple of the stories that I have to tell you are, would date the period.

MS Ok. What was the first story you wanted to tell?

BH Well, the first story was the loss of the Midnight Sun. At that was in a storm. And I remember as a cub reporter, I had to go to the Risdal home and the people were gathered there. This was quite a few days afterwards because, of course, in those days when there was a storm it took a couple of days before they realized that the boat was missing and that was, that particular story was very emotional for me because I did have to go to the home, but I was treated very well there.

MS And how was the Midnight Sun lost, do you remember details about that?

BH Well she was a scalloper and the only thing that I could remember was that it was a terrific storm and she never came home.

MS Do you know how many men were on board?

BH I don't off hand, no. I'd say about eleven.

MS And was this one of the first stories you covered?

BH Oh no, no. It wasn't. No.

MS So when you went to the home, they already knew she was gone?

BH They surmised that she was gone.

MS And what was the family reaction, what was that

BH Well there were quite a few people there. And I don't remember at this point who I spoke with, but it was someone in the immediate Risdal family. Yeah.

MS Was there a lot of fishing community there?

BH I would think so, but I'm not sure. It could have been crew you know, families of the crew or it could have been just the Risdal family 'cause if I remember it was quite a big family.

MS And what was the other story?

BH Well, the other story was the Barbara and Gail. And the Barbara and Gail was, she needed help at sea and had called for help and the Coast Guard went out to meet her. And in coming home, the Coast Guard towed the vessel over the shoals and the ship foundered and five of the crewmen were drowned. There were, I think, five more were saved. And the interesting part of that story was that when I met the survivors, when they came home, among them was my classmate in high school and a kid that I had grown up with over in Fairhaven. His name was Edgard Kent. And I brought him home after the accident. That was another really sad, sad story because the Coast Guard over the years has been such a tremendous help you know to the fishermen, but in this case, the accident took lives.

MS And what other things did you cover on the waterfront?

BH Oh I covered a lot of things. One of the, one of the nicest things that I covered was being sent to Halifax, Nova Scotia to cover the ICNAF meetings the international commission for Northwest Atlantic fisheries and I did a story at that time, I did quite a few stories because it was, I think, a five day meeting, but I was able, my wife and I were able to go aboard a Russian fishing trawler. And this was the period when we weren't very friendly with the Russians, nor were we very friendly with their fishermen because of what they were doing out there on the Banks. And I asked to be invited aboard a ship and the Russian captain said he would and the most interesting part about that was that this was the morning, it was early morning and when we went aboard the first thing he asked is if we would like a glass of vodka [laughs] we declined! It was too early in the day. [laughs] But I did a number of stories on that meeting and the one I remember most was the story I did on that particular visit. And it ended up on the front page of the Standard Times. And one of my friends, one of my friends in Mattapoisett said to me after its' publication was, "Why did you ever go aboard a Russian fishing vessel and write that story!" That's how we felt about the Russian fishermen.

MS What do you remember about the fishing vessel? What was the story about?

BH I don't remember. But it was about, it was about their fishing and who was fishing out there, because at that time we weren't quite sure. We think there were Cuban fishing vessels out there and it was a time when the fishermen here were having a hard time, just

like they are now, you know, but anyway, those were my main remembrances of my work as a reporter. I only worked as a reporter for about five years. I also did some stringer work. And that was for the Maine Coast Fisherman and for the Fishing Gazette out of New York City. Stringer work that involved the New Bedford fleet.

MS Did you ever end up goin' out on any boats for stories?

BH No. The only thing I remember was going out on, an I'm not sure it was a fishing boat, it might have been a fishing boat, out to the Texas Tower that was here in Buzzards Bay, the one that, no it wasn't the one that collapsed, there was another one, there were three or four of them out there, yeah.

MS And so you've seen a lot of changes then here over the years...

BH Yeah, a lot of changes. All of the vessels were wooden boats. I did numerous stories on some of the wooden boats that were built up in Maine at Harvey Gamage shipyard, for instance. And some of the old fellows. I once, oh I can't, you know I'm eighty years old now and I can't remember names. But there was a captain that I wrote about. Oh I wrote about some of the young fishermen in the fleet. I had a series of stories I wrote about Doug Swain and I don't think he's living anymore, he's Paul Swain's brother. And I can't remember some of the other young fishermen, but I thought it was a good series at the time because they were all in their early 20s, some of them were captains of fishing boats. But anyway, of all the years I worked at the newspaper, my years on the waterfront were the most productive I think and the most fun, even though a lot of the stories weren't very much fun at all, you know. That's it. You're welcome. [laughs]