

Fishtales, Saturday, September 29, 2012  
Working Waterfront Festival

Interviewer – Markham Starr  
Interviewee – Bob Richardson

MS Ok so if you could tell me your name.

BR Name is Bob Richardson. My brother Wayne is here with me. We're from Orleans. My father was a commercial fisherman, scalloping way off shore. He came in shore when I was young, 13 and I went on board the trawler. It was a side trawler then which was different 'cause you have to lay to the, and it's more difficult to haul the catch in. My story really involves I guess one of the perils of fishing. One of the times I went overboard which was actually in a calm sea and we had so many fish that we had to split the net. It's a term that's pretty familiar to fishermen. So we kept the mouth of the net in and paid out the rest of it. So my father was running the winch and he pulled the cod end in and all the net started going out. Well, I was just sittin' on the gunnel and I went with the net. So I went right overboard and I just hung on to the gunnel and my brother and father were looking around for me 'cause I was supposed to put the other pin board in. And they didn't see me. All's they see was a pair of blue gloves on the gunnel. So they came over and got me and pulled me up with their gurrey encrusted gloves which was the worst part of the whole adventure. And I really wasn't in any danger 'cause there wasn't, and the fish, we had so many fish in the net that it actually floated, so I was standing on top of the fish. But we're a fishing family and we don't do that now. My brother's an engineer, he's retired. And I'm a minister and I'm retired. So I figured I was gonna tell you the family fishing, just doing some different kind of fishing, but and that's why we come up here and see all the changes and it's still a dangerous job and it's a, but once you get salt water in your veins, you're sick. So we're up here every year and there's other stories, but this one will do for now. We'll come back next year and I'll tell you another one.

MS How about another, what's, when did you get out of fishing?

BR Oh gosh, it's been probably twenty or thirty years, it's been a long time, yeah, yeah. We got out of that and then went to seminary and so on, but you're always fishing. We still have boats, my brother and I still have small boats, 20, 20 feet long. And we do fish, rod and reel fishing and stuff like that. And he's very involved in the Coast Guard Auxiliary and stuff and but we're out there all the time we have a sailboat so I do that once in a while. And it's just the sea. It gets in your veins and you do it. And I'd love to be able to do it again. I'm too old, but it would be great to go out and haul those nets back in you know. So we have a lot of stories, a lot of things we do and, oh Gosh, I won't tell anymore but there's plenty.

MS How about another one.

BR Well, we were in really rough seas one day, I used to cook. And so I would go into the fo'c'sle and, but it was all psychosomatic. At nine o'clock, no matter how rough it was, I could go and cook. Before then, you didn't get anything to eat. But after that, I could go down to the fo'c'sle. And actually we put up a little fence around the oven so that, and with a screen door spring over it to hold the kettle on top with the water and we be cookin' bacon and I'd be sliding backwards. I could do that then. After nine o'clock. Before nine o'clock, you didn't get anything to eat. But we were in a rough sea one day and my brother was coming down into the fo'c'sle and we took an awful sea and the boat went right out from underneath of him so he let go of his coffee cup and grabbed the side of the stairs and after we hit bottom, he reached back up and grabbed the coffee cup. [laughs] That was, it was really interesting. So we had a lot of fun on the boat, it was a lot of hard work and we were very pleased to meet other fishermen when my brother was a, he was an engineer on the Florida power plant and we went down to Port Canaveral and the shrimp fishermen had told him we were fishermen from the Northeast just like brothers. And they treated us well, showed us around the boat and everything. So it's a great experience.

MS What was your father's boat's name?

BR My father's boat's name was the Conquest and she was a wooden boat, western rigged, built in 1946 in Lindenhurst, New York. I was born in 1946 in Orleans in our own house. He had a small boat then. Started out in the Little Rock Harbor in Orleans. Kept getting bigger boats. Kept reinvesting and finally ended up with a very big boat and he got out of that in 1964 when the large foreign fleets were coming in. It was either go very, very big or to get out then. And he retired into plumbing which he did prior to World War II. And [inaudible] that's another story. But it was, and the only thing was we had mostly family that worked on the boat. And if he went really big, then he would have to get crews that he didn't know, stuff like that. And there's nothing wrong with that 'cause they're all good hard workers, but he said not he's gettin' old enough and he said it's time to go ashore. So we came ashore. But we're still off-shore in our minds. That's it. That's our story.

MS Thank you

BR And I'm stickin' to it.

MS Alright!

BR Alright.