

Fishtales
Saturday, September 29, 2012
Working Waterfront Festival

Interviewer – Markham Starr
Interviewee – Melvin Shorey

MS Alright, so, could you tell me your name again?

MSH Melvin Shorey, I have 34 years in the fishing business.

MS Are you from New Bedford?

MSH Yes. I live in Acushnet right now, but I've been on this waterfront my whole life.

MS Was your family in fishing?

MSH My father used to be a scallop fisherman before me. I don't know how far back it went, grandfathers or whatever.

MS And when did you start fishing?

MSH 19, 1978 somewhere around there. I got 34 years. This is 2012, somewhere around there. Somewhere around 1978.

MS And what type of fishery were you in?

MSH I started out scallopin' and then I went draggin' and then I went swordfishin' and then I went scallopin' then I went draggin' [laughs] So basically most of my years were in the draggin' part, yeah, for groundfish, codfish, yellowtails, flounders, it's basically what I've always done. I've been cook, mate, engineer, deckhand, everything but captain.

MS Are you, you're still fishing today?

MSH No I'm out on an injury right now. I got hurt in June, pretty severe I almost died. Dangerous. It's a very dangerous industry. People don't realize what we go through, what we sacrifice. And they just need to respect us, you know? I'm a lucky man, I'm still here. I've had some really close calls. This one kind of scared me. You saw the pictures. Kind of brutal. So I'm still in recovery and one day at a time, you know. [inaudible] So, I just wanted to say hello.

MS I know you said you had pranks played

MSH Oh we've got quite a few. We did the electric scallop knife as I was telling you when we taped an extension chord to a scallop knife 'cause we had a new guy called a shacker, inexperienced, and he couldn't keep up. So we went and told him, aw here, we'll

give him the electric scallop knife so you can cut faster. Go ask the captain where he wants you to plug it in. It was the funniest thing because we didn't even have one 110 back in those days [laughs]. We had 28 volts, you know 24 volts. It was kind of funny. We've done a couple other pranks, a guy doesn't wanna take a shower, push the deck hose down in the old eastern rigs. We had a couple guys who didn't want to take showers so we took the deck hose and flooded their bunks with them in it. We've been, I don't know too crazy, crazy stuff. A lot of good memories.

MS How about, what was the storm, how about the biggest storm story?

MSH I was out in the "perfect storm" I was 53 miles closer to home, it took me nine days, for a five day steam, to get home. We were goin' backwards. While we were goin' forwards, in the water, the current was goin' backwards. That was ugly. Sixty foot seas sixty-five foot seas, yeah. I've been in four fires, three collisions, two sinkings and a hurricane. I'm done [laughs]. I'm pretty much done. Ok, nice talkin' to you.

MS No more, you wanna tell us some more?

MSH Nah. I've gotta find my ride.

MS Ok, we, can I write down your name, ok. Thanks. You'll have to spell your name out 'cause my spelling is terrible.