

Rick Verity  
May 11, 1988  
Interviewed by Nancy Solomon

Learned from father Elwood Verity how to eel. Grandfather caught lobsters – Bill Verity. No children. Was 3-4 years old when he started going on the bay – raking clams. Lived in Blue Point. Father taught him where to go. Treaded clams. Soft mud is best. Goes to Amityville. Father rakes clams for 15 years around Patchogue, earlier in Baldwin. Born in 1968 in Freeport. Father caught eels. They combed, and set traps. Made their own traps. Wire, wood, nails. Bought wood from lumberyard. Pine was used. Used double funnel designs.

Used 3 nozzles. Front nozzle was made of webbing – today they use wire. How the trap works. Changed design because it worked faster. How it is made. Buy webbing from a net company. People used to make their own webbing and nets. How he makes a gil net. How it is shaped – like a Christmas tree.

Makes traps, spearing nets which catch shiners. Season for shiners – mainly in the spring. That's when he can sell them. Also catches them in Christmas for people who eat them. Italians eat them. Sometimes around Jewish holidays. Makes killey cars. Harvests eels. Catches killeys in summer, eels in spring, fall and winter, blue claw crabs. Wire traps for crabs.

Builds traps in winter. Still working on killey traps. Single nozzle for killey traps. Green crabs – uses design for eel traps and modifies it. Winkel pots are used to catch scungilli – snails. Winkel pots. Soaked in water to help wood swell.

Does not build boats. Buys them from boat builders – Ollie Rickter (?) and ? Pickerell – lives on north shore. Both are baymen. The boats belonged to his father. Goes duck hunting – uses his father's old decoys, which were given to father by his grandfather. Dick Abbott made them.

Learning to hunt. You never get it done absolutely right. Nothing is perfect. Always constantly changing something. Father got it almost perfect. Learned everything from him. Likes eeling. Need to know where to catch them – goes to Patchogue, Oceanside. Where eels live. Follows the eels. Combing for eels – how it's done. How to prevent eels from freezing. Keeping warm.

Fell out of the boat a few years ago. How it happened. Fred Verity helped him get the boat back. Mother also went fishing with his father – eeling. Blue claw crabs. Getting bit. Stepped on a horseshoe crab once. Stitched himself.

Saw people run their boats onto the meadows. Funny scenes on the state boat channel – 200 people who don't know what they are doing. Did not have a bay house. Went hunting in the bay. Ate what they shot. How they prepared the duck. Killed them if they were not dead. Recipes. Used store bought stuffing. Shot black ducks, geese. Does not like geese. Brandt too.

End