

Interview with INTERVIEWEE [ANON] [Interviewee requests anonymity]

Occupation: Sons are fishermen

Port Community: Point Judith, RI

Interviewer: Azure Dee Westwood [AW]

Date: April 9, 2008, ADDRESS1, TOWN1, RI – interviewees home

Women's Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries

Logger/Transcriber: Azure Dee Westwood

INDEX: (minutes:seconds)

Interview

[00:00]

AW: Maybe if we could just start: If you could state your name and that you've read the consent form, in case we ever lose this [referring to the paper form] there's a verbal agreement that you wish to participate in this oral history.

ANON: I am INTERVIEWEE and I did sign the consent form.

[00:56 – Transcript stopped for phone call]

[00:00]

AW: And maybe to start also, if you could state where you live, so we know as well, for the record.

ANON: I live on ADDRESS 1, TOWN1, RI.

AW: If you also could tell us a little bit about how you came to be here, how you came to be involved in fisheries, what your scope and your history is, briefly. A little background.

ANON: I don't know where to start.

AW: Were you born in the area?

ANON: I was born in Town 2, RI. I've always lived in the Town 3/ Town 4/ Town 5 area. My father and mother were also born in this area plus my grandparents. And maybe their grandparents, too. I married my high school sweet heart whose family were fishermen and they were mostly shell fishermen. Concentrated in scallops and had a marina and rented boats. We were married and the first year we scalloped together on a little boat and I learned how to open scallops right away. We fed ourselves all winter by digging clams and oysters and living off the land. My husband had a small fishing boat named the BOAT1, which was named after me. It was very small, but yet he would go out on the ocean and go dragging for fish with the FAMILY FRIENDS1, who were fishermen down out of Salt Pond. That was in 1948 that we were married but it was also 1948 that the Point Judith Fishermen's Co-op started. And we went to that first meeting. And it was always fun to go to the meetings; it was usually down at George's or some restaurant/ pub place down at the Point. So progressively, he got into a bigger boat; that was in 1948 that he had a bigger boat built, the year we were married. It was named the BOAT2, it was built in Gloucester, the same year that the FAMILY FRIENDS1 had a boat built called the FRIENDS BOAT1. My husband named it after FAMILY FRIENDS DAUGHTER.

[03:21]

AW: **BOAT2**. How do you spell...?

ANON: [spells the **BOAT2**]. That was the name of the boat he had for years. That was in '48 and then in '52 I think it was, my grandmother also died in 1949 and she owned a place where I have lived ever since, but in 1952, we were able to buy my grandmother's farm and so have lived here ever since. My husbands name was **HUSBAND** and we had 3 sons; **SON1**, **SON2**, and **SON3**. I think... **SON1** was born in 1955, was that right? Yes, he was born in 1955. And around that time, my husband sold the **BOAT2** and bought the **BOAT3** which was an eastern rig and the other two boats he had were western rigs. It had formerly been a swordfish boat... **FISHERMAN1**, a very accomplished fisherman, and he had used it to fish off the Grand Banks and they had gone tuna fishing, so that was a really pretty boat. It was about the time I had my second son because my husband wanted him named **SON2** after **FISHERMAN1** who owned the boat. Also **SON1** middle name was **SON1 MIDDLE NAME**, and he was named after my husband's best friend, **HUSBAND'S BEST FRIEND**. When I had my third son, at least I named him myself, **SON3**, after my brother and **INTERVIEWEE FATHER'S NAME** after my father. I got to get a choice! And they all eventually became fishermen because they were exposed to that and jumped on boats probably when they were 14, and carried on the family tradition.
[05:59]

AW: Now, was your husband the captain?

ANON: My husband was always the captain. He was very, very smart. He was a clever, quick guy to catch on. It was in his blood; he was a **INTERVIEWEE'S LAST NAME**, and **INTERVIEWEE'S LAST NAME** always have something to do with the sea. He also got to drinking, he had a drinking problem. A lot of the fishermen in that day had a drinking problem. But he could still out-fish most of his buddies after a hang-over. He was very... and he didn't ever act drunk or look drunk, but he sure did drink a lot. And then he got drafted and went in the Service during the Korean episode, but he didn't get sent to Korea; he got in a really good position of teaching guys how to tie knots and he was in the Harbor Craft Department of the Army, so he was stationed at **Town 6**, which was the transportation section of the Army and they had tug boats and harbor craft. And he really had a good time. And **FISHERMAN2** ran the boat, his fishing boat, while he was in the Service for two years. And I went down there and lived... it was maybe a year and a half... I lived down there in **Town 7**. We got an apartment and we used to go crabbing, and catch crates full of crabs on the weekends, and we used to go cat fishing, and everything we did that was spare time had to do with the fishing industry again! And also he had a lot of buddies and his captain, his commanding officer came from Michigan and he got so carried away wanting to know everything **HUSBAND** knew about the fishing industry, that when they both were let out of the Army, then he came for the summer and stayed and went fishing with my husband, which was different. He was a Lieutenant and I think maybe **HUSBAND** was Corporal and they were buddy-buddies.
[08:58]

AW: Did your husband bring the boat that you owned to **Town 6**?

ANON: No, that stayed right here and kept fishing while he was in the Service. And we had this place which was my grandmother's place, but it didn't have modern conveniences; it didn't have a bathroom, it didn't have faucets – it still had the pump in the kitchen, it was very old fashion. We had started to get it fixed up, but also I had Irish Setters that I had been raising and I had, I guess it was two at that point, a male and female, Irish Setter. So I let a family have the house, as

long as they kept care of the Irish Setters. So that kept the house busy with all these kids. It was a good deal for me, because I didn't have to worry about the dogs or the house. They survived it; they had to have stoves, the heat and everything – they were happy – so that was a good deal.

AW: And you said this was an old homestead?

ANON: Yes, it was an old homestead. It was huge; it had 11 doors that opened into a main hallway, down stairs and upstairs. It had 33 windows, it was 3 stories. It was like a huge, old time farm house. With two chimneys and it was all hardwood floors; it was really nice. After we had it so beautiful, it just caught fire one day and went to the ground – that's another whole story. We survived that.

AW: No one was injured?

ANON: No one was here, but its something we'll never forget. Actually my husband was at the drying out place and he wasn't even here. It wasn't **WOMAN1**, it was **WOMAN2** came here. I had gone to hairdressing school and I was giving her a permanent. I had promised the kids to take them to the beach. So when the people left that were here, they nagged me, "come on, come on, you promised..." and so I said O.K. But I had started dinner. This side of the house was brand new; it had two big rooms that opened into one. And the kitchen was in the north side and this part was a family room. So the stove was along that back wall. I had a brand new counter range and the buttons were on the counter, so you had to reach over to either turn off, push a button off or on and I pushed the wrong button evidently. I had French fries and evidently the French fry... we were only gone less than a half an hour, because we went to Moonstone Beach. And evidently the French fry grease caught on fire. But the firemen never figured out what really happened. But then I figured it out about 3-4 years later, what happened. Since where the fire started, that side of the house was all in tact. The opposite side of the house was burned. What happened was, I had gone shopping, and when I came in the yard, they were here. So when I brought my groceries in, I put everything there beside the stove and only put the milk and things that needed to be in a refrigerator away and left everything out there. But among the groceries I had there was an insect repellent can. So later on, one day, I was burning... I used to have a big barrel outside that I used to burn the trash in. One day I took the trash and threw it in and all of a sudden, "kapow!" this thing just went off into about 15 separate fires all over the yard. And it was an insect repellent can and I thought: "There, that's what happened"; that thing blew there and went clear across and set maybe 10-15 fires all at once. And that's why it went so fast. Because when we came home, you couldn't get in the house.

[13:49]

ANON: That was hard to recover from, which we did recover from that. **PAINTER1**, who was a marine painter – his paintings are now very expensive, and a lot of fishermen have them; he died last summer – his paintings are worth thousands now because he had prints made of them – but anyhow, he offered that we could live in their house which we did and they went and lived in his uncles house.

AW: What year was this?

ANON: 1966; the house was all done by '67. 1968 my husband died. So that was another great, huge calamity. But anyway, there'd been so much struggle and all the problems that come out of alcohol and all the domestic abuse that went with it, so it was sort of an anti-climax, not a climax. Because it seemed like all the grief we had stopped, because then it was peaceful because

we didn't have that constant fear or "now what's going to happen". Because my husband wasn't the same person when he was drinking. And my brother was a fisherman. And my brother was staying here too. He was drinking too, so between the two of them, that's why I went to hairdressing school because I kept thinking, "I'm in a real trap with three kids". I have to know how to make money to survive if I just go another direction. Anyway, so there was a lot of... a lot we went through, a lot the children went through. But one thing that's wonderful is they never blamed me for anything that happened because they saw with their own eyes what was happening; they were old enough. Even though they were only... SON1 was 13 and SON3 was 8 and SON2 was 9. So they weren't that old, but they were old enough to know that I didn't have to be afraid anymore. And I kept going to school and I think it was 1970, which was only two years, I had my own beauty shop already, because I was so determined that I was going to make it. So we stayed right here. We carried on. Now one boy lives just on the same property, over there, I can't see his house but I can see his lights at night. SON2 lives in the first house and SON1 lives down the hill which was my UNCLE farm. So SON1 bought UNCLE farm because he was fishing and he was making good money. So there's 30 acres there and about 25 here I guess.

[17:28]

ANON: We kept all the land and we still are right here, plugging along. SON1 has two daughters and SON1 DAUGHTER1 now will be 21 this summer. She's going to college and working and she's out on her own; she has her own little apartment. And then SON1 DAUGHTER2 just turned 16 and SON2 had two boys. Unfortunately his son SON2'S BOY1 who was 18 last summer was killed in a car crash, just one minute away from my driveway and he lived with his father, because his mother and father are divorced. So that's been a very sad situation that happened. But he has another boy who will be 16. There's two shifts of children; the first shift are all turning 20 and another shift are all turning 16 and then there's one boy, SON3'S BOY1, who is my youngest son's... he's 17 and his brother will be 20; he's going to college. And the two younger ones are really doing very well. SON3'S BOY1 is going to be a lifeguard for the State Beach at Town 7 this summer; he already has the job. And SON3'S GIRL1, his sister gets all 'A's; she's a sophomore, she's going to college too. I doubt if any of them are going to be fishermen, although it didn't take anything for SON3'S BOY1 to pass a lifeguard test because he and his brother are down there surfing at Town 3 or Town 4 or Narragansett all winter in their wetsuits. They are very good, too, at going out and catching bass and stuff with their father. They all take a fishing rod and go get stripers and have fun doing that. AW: Did any of them dabble in fishing, summers...?

ANON: Oh yeah. SON1 fished for 26 years with the FAMILY FRIENDS1 on the boat called the FRIENDS BOAT2. And that was another tragic thing that happened; that, when was it, maybe 4-5 years ago now, the FRIENDS BOAT2 sunk in February and thank God they were saved by the Coast Guard. They were trying to make it in to... the Coast Guard had come and put three pumps on the boat, and they had everything out, they were towing, and so they lost some time by not cutting the gear away and head for home, they took the time to get the gear all aboard and headed... they weren't that far away from Point Judith, actually. But just as they got inside the breakwater wall, the boat had got so much water, that it started to tip up on it's side like it was going down. And the Coast Guard was right there and they picked them all off the side of the boat that was up. They had their wetsuits on; they were all ready to go in the water if they had to. They really weren't in severe danger, but it was a scary situation. They wanted to save the boat; they were headed for a sandbar; they thought they could beach it. But they never made the sand

bar. So SON1 never went fishing again; that was the end of that. And he worked for his father in law's family down at Company 1, they owned Company 1 that makes repairs to the diesels, they install the diesels in all the boats and they do some work on tug boats. And SON1 had always been interested in computers, so on his own he had really, really gotten into computers and then after the boat sank, he did take an advanced course in computers, so that's what he's doing.

[21:55]

ANON: With the fishing industry now going down the drain, just in the last three weeks maybe, Rhode Island Engine is also feeling this so much that they haven't fired anybody, but they've cut... there's no more overtime and they've cut the hours to 35 hours per week. Problem being that the fishermen that had their work done this year have not been able to pay their bill. And the ones that are fishing now can't afford to get anything fixed. So Rhode Island engine will eventually... I don't know just what they are going to turn to... but this is all they know, so this might collapse due to the fishing collapsing. That's one domino affect right there.

AW: So they're strictly marine engines?

ANON: Marine engines, right. And there's not enough tug boat work that they're doing that would keep them going. They also work with yachts and things too, but this time of year, its maybe summertime it would pick up, I don't know; they probably work with lobster boats also. The lobster business isn't in good shape either, but I don't think it's in as bad of shape as the fishing is now. I'm not sure about that, but I hear the boys talking. Ever since the shell disease came with the lobster, that's the lobster business, it's declined now for like 10 years. But then when the oil spill happened at Moonstone that affected the lobster business. But they've had more help, I think, from the government or whatever, the Lobster Association has really been active, but I don't see anybody subsidizing anything for fishermen or making it easier; if anything it's harder and harder.

[24:13]

AW: Now, were your sons' captains/ owners or crew members?

ANON: No, they were crew members, but on HUSBAND'S BEST FRIEND boat there was always HUSBAND'S BEST FRIEND, who owned the boat and his son, HUSBAND'S BEST FRIEND'S SON and HUSBAND'S BEST FRIEND were co-captains and SON1 worked on the boat. He was very into the electronic system of the boat, and the Loran's and the fish finders and he knew everything. The night before they'd go fishing, he'd get on his computer... he kept log books, kept his father's logbooks, he had FISHERMAN3 logbook, all the old fishermen that kept logs, he had them and he had them all, all the data on his computer. And he would just go, and he would know, for 10 years in a row or whatever, that this particular fish would be in this particular spot. And he really was tuned in to the fine details of where they are going to go, what they are going to catch and so that would help. They just weren't out there using up a lot of fuel looking for stuff; they knew... in the old days it was what they called day fishing. And day fishing, you went out and you came back in the same day, where other boats over the years have gone out, made 3 day trips and 5-10 day trips and the trip boats got bigger and bigger. The government gave a lot of money, the banks were glad to let these guys have any boat they wanted. That was in the money-making days. But now, here they are with the boats, and the only thing they've go now that's valuable to them is their fishing license. Because once you give up your fishing license, you never get it back again. Right now, if a fisherman wants to sell the days... because they are also limited on days they can fish, never mind what they can fish and

how much of that they can sell... so the boat my son **SON2** fishes on, they buy days from other fishermen. It's almost like they are back to the day fishermen again. Maybe they've got a chance to stay in the game because they know where the airplane wrecks are, they know where the barge wrecks are, they know where the stone wrecks are, they know how to fish that ground. Whereas some of these sophisticated, big trawlers, wouldn't have a clue how they could set a net between here and Block Island. They have to go away and get out there where they don't have to worry about fouling up the nets on a rock or airplane wing of something. So I think that's interesting. That the old time fishermen, the way they fished in the old days, like back in the '40's and '50's, might be, the ones that know how to do that and have learned how to do that, and have had fathers and grandfathers that fished that area – that might be to their advantage, to stick it out. [27:41]

AW: So as the fishery changes and as more people get out or retire and less new fishermen are coming in, you're losing that kind of expertise on how to fish this area.

ANON: Yes, that is an expertise that certain fishermen have. My husband had it and the **FAMILY FRIENDS1** had it, and the **FISHERMEN4** had it. So my boys are **INTERVIEWEE'S LAST NAME** and they also are related to the **FISHERMEN4** and our best friends are the **FAMILY FRIENDS1**, so there are three families that have continues; they won't go down the drain.

AW: Now the **FAMILY FRIENDS1**, are they living in the area as well?

ANON: Yeah, but they are kind of out of it now. The older ones have all gotten too old and the younger ones have gone in a different direction because, especially right now – some of the younger nephews and so forth are carrying on. I know like the **FAMILY FRIENDS1** were connected with the **FISHERMEN5** and I think **FISHERMAN5** has a lobster boat and he does well, and maybe some of the **FISHERMEN5** boys are doing alright too.

AW: **FISHERMAN6** sounds familiar, is he a son?

ANON: He would be a nephew; **FISHERMAN2**.

AW: Now, let's go back to your work and your salon. Was that something you had up until recently or are you still actively working?

ANON: Yeah, I just retired when I was 76 from hairdressing. But bought my own salon, I think it was 1970. But then in the middle of the '70's there was an oil embargo and there were people waiting in line to get gas and gas, and gas was expensive and heating oil was expensive. One of my best friends, was a Norwegian girl and I had known her since her husband went to URI. Her children were the same exact age as my children. So we had stayed friends all these years. Well it seemed that in that oil embargo, she decided... her father lived in Norway and he was friends of the man who owned Yotul Stoves, the Norwegian stove factory in Oslo I think it was. **GIRLFRIEND1** wrote a letter to her father to tell him that we were having such a hard time with heating the houses. They lived in Portland, Maine and they had bought a house up in Andover, Maine and there weren't any stoves, so her father sent... this was interesting too... **GIRLFRIEND1** lives in Portland and she could speak Norwegian. So the Norwegian ships would come into port with sardines, and so what happened was her father sent her a Yotul Stove; it was wonderful. So she said: "I want to see if I can sell these stoves because everybody is having this energy crisis up here". So she became the distributor of stoves. She got the territory with all the

land east of the Mississippi River. So she started getting boat loads of stoves coming into Portland and she had all these people out there that she gathered up to sell stoves. So I said, well I can throw a couple of those in the waiting room in the beauty shop and I can probably sell some stoves out of the beauty shop, which I decided to do. Well, it was taking up... I was doing more with the stoves that I was with the beauty shop. So the place next to the beauty shop became empty so I rented the place beside the beauty shop and started the stove business, so I'm selling not only Yotul Stoves, but every kind of stove you can think of. So I had the stove shop, I had the beauty shop too. In order to keep the stove shop going, there was a lady; she and her husband owned a restaurant up the street and her husband died. And she had antiques. I said, "GIRLFRIEND2, come on in with me. I'm just going to use the front of the store for stoves; you can have the back, it's got all shelves and stuff, you can have all your antiques in here." When I can't be there, you're there. And if you have a problem selling a stove, I'm just next store and I can run over. Well finally it got so crazy, I just had to give up one or the other or whatever. So I sold the beauty shop to one of the girls that worked for me. And she still owns that beauty shop, and then she bought two more beauty shops. In the meantime I did my stoves. But then that all of a sudden... What happened was, I was selling kerosene heaters that were beautiful kerosene heaters that came from Japan. One night I'm listening to the news and it said they were dangerous and deadly, and anyone who had bought one of those kerosene heaters, take them back and get your money back. So when I went to work the next day, there were 12 people with their kerosene heaters and wanted their money back. So this went... these kerosene heaters were gorgeous, and they are still selling them. And I had the distributorship for the Corona and the... can't remember the name of the other one... but they were the best kind. And so I got so discouraged with the whole thing, and besides by that time, it was about 1981, that the things got better with the oil situation and people were not bothering again with stoves. So I gave that up. [34:28]

ANON: And then I went to Sawyers School and took a Business course and decided I was going to major in Travel – I decided I wanted to be a tour guide and get out of all that and go do something else, so that's what I did. I was a tour guide for about 5-6 years.

AW: Did you travel abroad or just in the region?

ANON: No, it was just... went to Canada; I worked for COMPANY1 in Cranston. The first year, though, I did 65 trips to Atlantic City because that's how they break you in. If you can tolerate that stress, you can tolerate anything.

AW: You get a reward by going somewhere nice and naturally after 65 in Atlantic City.

ANON: Then I could do a trip to Florida, a two week trip to New Orleans World Fair, and go to Saint Louis, and go to Dallas and do all that kind of stuff, and go to Toronto, Montreal, and the Poconos. I did a Washington D.C. and New York, all that kind of stuff, enough so that I got super saturated with travel. Now I don't even want to go out to Wakefield to get groceries. Then I went back to work at the beauty shop. The girl that had been my co-manager... if you haven't worked an apprenticeship for 4 years you can't run a beauty shop, you can't have a manager's license. So when I bought the beauty shop, I still had 2 years left before I could have my own manager's license. So I hired one of the girls that worked with me, so later on, when I decided to go back and get back into hair again, this girl was managing the beauty shop at Town 8, RI. So I went up there and I had a job right away. So I worked there 16 years, from the time I was 60 to the time I was 76.

AW: Now where was your shop originally?

ANON: In **Town 2**, downtown, **SHOP LOCATION**, that was my shop. And **SHOP OWNER** still owns that shop; she still works in the shop – she's no spring chicken now either. Neither is **SHOP WORKER1**, **SHOP WORKER1** turned 60. **SHOP WORKER1** mother went to high school with me, so that's how much younger. She was young enough to be my daughter, but I could keep up with them. I would have stayed there probably now if my mother hadn't come to be with me. I couldn't leave her because she fell a few times and it was just too much mental stress for me to leave her and she didn't want somebody else taking care of her.

AW: And she's how old, your mother?

ANON: 100, she was 100 in February. So she gets up and goes to the bathroom by herself; she's quite self-sufficient. Like she was going to run after you down the road!
[37:57]

AW: And she would have caught me too, she's quicker than I am. She's great. So how did you balance... you worked pretty much straight through raising children as well, so how did you balance raising your three children, your husband being at sea when he was alive, quite a bit I would imagine. He was on day trips so he kind of would come in....

ANON: He would come in. Once in a while he would go swordfishing, but he would come in. No, it was survival of the fittest.

AW: How did you manage, when he was alive, juggle raising a family, then maybe after, how did that change?

ANON: It was easier after when he had died than it was before, because I didn't have any struggle. It's not easy, these women that are married to fishermen. But they are not... all the fishermen aren't wild and drink. I know far more that didn't have the problem, but I just happened to fall in with one that had this problem of alcohol.

AW: Do you see that as a problem today with fishermen in the community that you are in contact with or your children or their friends?

ANON: I see the children, the children are now in their 50's and I knew their fathers when they were in their 50's. Like my husband has a crew that worked with him; his crew stayed with him. I mean they stayed with him, but one of his crewmen had a drinking problem – he had two families. I've watched those lives play out. I just went to a funeral of one of the daughters of one the crewmen that worked for my husband. She had a drug problem; her brother had a drug problem and he ended up in jail but now he's clean. That's wonderful to see when they....

AW: Do you think there is more support to help people to kick their habits now than there was...?

[41:23]

ANON: I know there's more support for women. There's Al Anon, there's all kinds of battered women's shelters, there's all kinds of things. When I was going through those problems, I didn't know who to turn to, and I didn't want my parents worrying, yet sometimes I did turn to them. The **FAMILY FRIENDS1**, I could turn to them anytime, and if I left my husband for a week, I could just pack up and go many places, but I always had to return because I didn't have that self-

sufficiency to carry on. But then if you really step up and decide that you're not going to continue then you have to go through the steps you go through - like a restraining order and things like that - that's when the violence really comes in. So, when I'm watching television and when I'm reading the paper and I see where somebody comes in and kills the wife and kills the kids then kills himself, I know that fear that had to be in the room that day. I know that side of life. Thank God my husband didn't do that; thank God he took his own life and that was it. But, there were threats to my life many times. He would threaten me if he thought that he was losing the power and control over what was going on. So I remember hiding papers that would tell me about where I could send for literature or something about a drinking problem. And there was a lot of... of course I didn't get any support from my in laws. They covered it up; their heads were in the sand 100%. So what happened afterwards, they turned against me, like I was the guilty one, and that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't... because I had sued him for divorce, but the divorce had never gone through, but I think it was over 17 years that they had nothing to do with me or the children. That was the saddest part, for them to shut us out or shun us. And then I found out that he'd had a problem like that when he was 15 years old.

[44:06]

ANON: He had put a bullet through himself over some girl that didn't want to go with him anymore. I met him after that. And he told me he had this scar there because it was an accident, he was cleaning his gun and it went off. And that the bullet went through the door. But the parents knew different and they never, ever, ever, ever said anything to their other children about it or me about it. But they knew, because I found out 10 years afterwards how it happened. The girl said that's what happened. It was when I was in the beauty shop and that happened in... at a high school reunion they were going to have. This girl lived in California and she wanted to know what happened to some of the kids, and one of them was my husband. So she told my customer, who was Secretary of the class ... and she said "oh did **HUSBAND DIED**?" And Viola said yes, he did. She said, "I knew it. He pulled that in High School when I told him to take a hike. And his mother called me up and read me and my mother out..." So he had a history of that violence. He had a history of threatening if he didn't get his own way, but I didn't know that. It took all that time, and even after he was dead, I learned what they'd never told me. That was sad part for my children. The sad part was they not only lost their father, they'd lost their grandparents and their Aunts and Uncles. And you know what? They all died except the mother. And when everyone was dead, her husband and her children, then I went to visit her and she was very nice and it ended up that I was the one that she was turning to help her in her old age. That was what was strange. I remember giving her a permanent... she finally went to the nursing home because her grandson really had charge of everything. But she said, "I'll be going to heaven one of these days". I said when you get there, you better let him know a few things! Let him know who took care of you in the end. But anyway, that was just a turn of events.

[47:16]

AW: So it doesn't sound like fishing was the problem, it was....?

ANON: It was a personal problem. But I think that being a fisherman, I think that if he was going to have a drinking problem, he could get away with it a lot easier because there were so many other of the guys that, ..."well, they were there, I was with so and so...", and it's amazing how... there's one fishermen that just drinks, and I don't know if I ever saw him sober, and I'll be damned if I didn't see him fishing last year! He just got rid of his boat.

AW: And he's in his late '70's?

ANON: He's like 85 or 86 years old.

AW: Now the support groups in the community, you sort of mentioned personal support groups, but were there ever any sort of fishing support networks, or fishermen's friends, like the Seamen's Church Institute in Newport that offers some form of support?

ANON: There wasn't anything like that until maybe... when...?

AW: Were you ever a part of these, when they started to appear, did you ever become part of that community in any way?

ANON: I can't even stand, even now, to watch on television anything that has a theme to the story that is anything what I went through. I don't even want to see 20/20 or anything like that. Or any of the movies... anything that has violence, I don't want any part of that. I don't want to be reminded of it. No, my priority was to just be there for my children, my grandchildren, my mother, my father... be there for my family.

AW: So your social networks weren't other fishing families, other wives of fishermen?

ANON: I was always friends with... my friends were fishermen's wives, like GIRLFRIEND3 and GIRLFRIEND4, and WOMAN1, and there was GIRLFRIEND5, GIRLFRIEND5, I don't know if you're going to interview her, but she's a fishermen's wife. GIRLFRIEND5, her husband was a drinker too, but he was a different kind of a drinker; he was low-key and I don't think he would ever offer to be violent, you know. It depended. I know a fishermen's wife that had her head stuck in the sand so much that she would blame everybody else. If some fisherman took his keys away and took him home, she would lamb-baste the guy that brought him home, like protect her husband and make believe that he was A-O.K. and that it was these other guys that were causing all the problems.

[50:45]

ANON: So different wives had different ways of coping with their problems. And I know one that didn't drink a drop, she became far worse alcoholic than her husband; because her theory was that if you can't beat them join them. So if he was in the bar, she was going to be in the bar too. So the kids were probably in a cardboard box under the bar. Or out in the car. She became as violent as he did. And that was her idea of how to cope with it; you can't beat them, join them. Of course she's dead no and he's dead. But WOMAN1, she had to suffer a lot of the same thing I'm talking about. But she lost a son out there. I think that has to be really hard. I mean I lost a grandson, and that's very difficult, he was 18, but he also was... my son's a fisherman, and my son SON2 had a drinking problem too, so... he wasn't like my husband, because he lived that life. He was never going to be violent. He was never violent, but they act goofy and then you're embarrassed when they act so goofy, that it doesn't have to be violence in a family if either the mother or father is drinking all the time. But SON2 two boys, their mother... they got divorced and she went her way. He got the house and everything. So the boys... I blamed the way SON2'S BOY1 went, SON2'S BOY1, my grandson who died, had gotten into drugs when he was 14, 15, 16. They are hard, hard, hard times, so I blame that separation and the kids are at a total loss; they want their father and they want their mother, and they wish they were together. They lived here; they could come in the house anytime they wanted to. So I think that was caused... like a domino affect. The father had the problem... I'm lucky only one kid got the problem, but he wasn't into whiskey and all that stuff. He was just into beer. And he wasn't like

WOMAN1'S HUSBAND; WOMAN1'S HUSBAND was in the bars. There are the ones that go to the bars, and then there are the ones that come home. And maybe the ones in the bars, it's not as hard on the people at home as it is the ones that come home and drink, you know. But I think alcohol disturbs any family.

[54:11]

AW: Now did your sons have... how did they deal with things like health insurance, being a fisherman and providing for their family in that way?

ANON: They were O.K. with health insurance until it's gone out of sight. The price of health insurance... if SON2 wants health insurance it's like \$6,000 per year. I talked to a lady on email yesterday and I think she told me just three months of health insurance is \$2,000 and she just went on Medicare this week. And she said what a relief. It's so difficult for people out there.

AW: You owned your own business for quite some time...

ANON: I owned my own business but I never gave anyone health insurance. I might not have had health insurance myself; I think I didn't ever take health insurance. My theory was that I owned 15 acres over there and that was my ace in the hole. If I really needed a lot of money and I live where the zoning is at least 2 acre... now its 5 acres, I'm zoned for 5 acre piece, but then it was 2 acres, it might have been 1 acre... but I always figured that all this money going into health insurance. My father is living, and my mother... I have healthy parents and healthy grandparents, and I don't drink, smoke, I don't have all these problems. I'll just take a gamble and if I do get sick, I have that land to fall back on, and I never needed it, I never was sick, I never had anything happen to me. But that was just a lucky break on my part, to have that cushion I could fall back on if I wanted to, for money.

AW: This is a fantastic space; it's very rare to have this.

ANON: Well I have that, an open space now, so now that cuts my taxes way down. It got so the taxes were so high on that, that I had everything re-surveyed and I just have 5 acres and everything else is in open space. I have to renew every year. So that cuts my taxes from \$9,000 to under \$3,000 or maybe around \$3,000 at the most. That's a lot; that's like \$6,000 I save by putting it into open space.

[57:00]

AW: Open space, meaning there can't be a structure on it?

ANON: Yeah, I can't develop it. I can't build on it, I can't do anything with it – but I'm not doing anything with it anyway. And my son has the same; he's got his into farm because if you have over 10 acres that you're farming, then you can get the break for having a farm. So he has the farm, he has 10 acres that has been in corn all these years. That saves him taxes. It fact the boys have... I gave SON3 2.5 acres over there and he's paying more taxes than I am. And SON2 got 2 acres here and he's paying more taxes than I am Because they don't have the break.

AW: Less space, but it's not considered open space. This is so much great information; I just want to quickly look to see if there are any big questions... you've already answered so much.

ANON: The children too, they became fishermen. SON3 worked on a boat, but the minute he was married and had his first child, that was it, he walked off the boat. But then he worked at Trawl Works, he got into a related industry, and worked for Trawl Works making and repairing nets for 10 years until he got the arthritis and carpal tunnel and all that. Due to the stress of his

arms and hands, he applied for a job that was in the **SON3 EMPLOYMENT** and now he's been working for the **SON3 EMPLOYMENT**. And he loves it, he gets dental, he gets health, he gets paid vacations and sick days and time and a half... so he's doing really well. And his wife is also working in the Tax Assessors office, so she also does well too. But you'll find him on his day off, down at Matunuck's bass fishing or he's clamming over there in Potter Pond. He's got a nice little boat...he did go eeling for quite some time to supplement when he was doing Trawl Works, the net work, he had eel pots in Potter pond. So that's a type of fishing.

AW: And this was what time, how long ago?

ANON: Maybe 5 years ago. He did that every summer. And the kids would go with him and do that.

AW: For a time perspective... he started fishing when?

ANON: He started fishing probably when he was 14 in was born in 1960, so in 1974 he would go out on a boat in the summer and then when he graduated from high school, he went fishing.

AW: On draggers mostly, groundfishing or was he lobstering?

ANON: No, he was fishing on the draggers.

AW: Then he stopped you said in the last 5 years?

ANON: Oh, he stopped 20 years ago, because **SON3'S BOY2** would be 20 next month. So he stopped 20 years ago and whatever that would be 1988. He must have been 28 years old when he stopped fishing and did the trawl works, for 10 years. He's 48 now; he was born in 1960, so he'll be 48 this year.

[01:01:24]

AW: Were there any ebbs and flows in terms of the fishery health that influenced his decision? The '70's were a booming time and he was making great money because there was a lot of groundfish and the price was good, was there things that you can recall that rose and fell?

ANON: They did well. They never had mortgages on their houses; **SON2** never had a mortgage. **SON3** might have had a mortgage, but not bad. They were self-sufficient, totally. There wasn't a problem of where is your next meal coming from, they did really well fishing. All the fishermen did. But then I think the reason **SON3** stopped fishing was the dread that he would be lost at sea and his children wouldn't have a father. He didn't have a father; his father wasn't lost at sea, but he didn't have a dad and he wanted to be a dad and have his children have a dad. So that was his motivation. And he's been a terrific dad. **SON3'S BOY2** excelled in baseball. He still is on a league team; he went to Alaska last summer on a league team. He was a left-handed pitcher and he was terrific in high school. But now his priority is not... he decided that he's probably never be a pro and he wasn't willing to commit himself. He'd lived his life out there, excelling as much as possible in baseball, which he did, but now he...he still maintains his baseball life in the summer time with these leagues, Babe Ruth league and American Legion league. And he's going to CCRI right now, he went to Rhode Island College last year, but he's trying to get up enough credit at CCRI. He works in the day time and goes at night. He changes, but he did want to be a school teacher and a coach. So he's working on that idea. I don't know if he's changed now or not.

[01:04:04]

AW: Sounds like...

ANON: SON3'S BOY1 is the same way. He has a goal set: he's going to be in the Coast Guard and he's going to go into the Coats Guard Academy. That's why when he's a lifeguard this summer, it will look good on a resume and he's got good academic scores and marks and he's good in athletics too. So they are very well grounded, those three kids. SON1 has daughters... is it 3:00pm!

AW: Well I certainly want to respect your time, I know I said about an hour, maybe just a couple more thoughts and questions. Part of what we're trying to understand too is whether people's lives change as a result of the fishery changing. For instance, management regulations that might come into place that force people to make decisions that maybe they wouldn't have made otherwise. But it sounds like your sons didn't decide to leave fishing because it was financially difficult, etc. It sounds like they had more personal motivations, their family, etc.

ANON: There was the danger of the sea, the danger of the occupation. And when they had children, of course they lost their own father, so they wanted to be home, so that's a personal thing. But their father was a fisherman. And they saw so much of that, well, they lived with that. We saw other people that suffered from the side effects of the fishing – where they come in, they go to the bar, the old dogs are bragging and the under dogs are trying to be up with the old dogs and it's a status that they are seeking to be like an old dog. And whether that old dog was drunk half the time, it doesn't matter. If he was a successful fisherman, they admired that trait in that guy and sort of subtracted the trait that he's drunk half the time too. Overlook all that. Some of the best fishermen out of Point Judith had drinking problems but that didn't diminish their reputation of being very smart fishermen and that was important for them, important for their families. That was a plus. That plus, might equal the minus in that particular family. Or sometimes it didn't. You were kind of at that level. Fishing families are in levels sort of. The upcoming fishermen are striving to be at the level the older fishermen are at, or the more experienced fishermen are at.

[01:07:38]

AW: Do think that the community at large's perspective of fishermen in Point Judith is positive or negative or different from what it might have been in the past?

ANON: I think it's pretty positive. People in general. The banks were pretty positive when everything was sailing along lovely. A lot of guys got big rigs that really couldn't afford them. They couldn't keep up with it. They lost their boats and now guys are still struggling; they got those big boats when it was easy to get the big boats and now it's difficult to make it all work. Like Joel Hovenesian, his boat. I don't know for sure if he was one that had an easy time of getting his boat... and Craig Hartley gave up his boat – I'm sure that he got his boat because the banks were free with money. The Follett's certainly got their boats with the freedom of the money that the banks were willing to give out. And now FISHERMAN7, he's one of the fishermen probably that won't be able to hang in there. Because they got to know, before they go, what they are going to catch and where they are going to catch it. They cannot afford to goof around looking. If they are out there looking for the fish, then the money is all burned up in the oil tank and there's no profit anywhere. They've got to know exactly, pretty darn sure, to the point, and eliminate as much time as possible and make that all work.

AW: Cut to the chase, as they say.

ANON: They have to be really smart now.

AW: I'm sure there are going to be a lot of things that we'll think of because you are a wealth of info which is wonderful. I'm thinking if later down the line if there's something I can think of, is it O.K. to call.

ANON: Oh yeah, that's O.K.

AW: I think we've pretty much captured...

[01:10:18]

ANON: Yeah, I think fishermen... just because a family is from a fishing family, I think they've got the same problems that a farmer family would have or a coal miner family, or whatever except I do think that ...like my son is out there now. SON2 goes... and now he's suffering from some kind of skin ailment that he's got that no one... it's been sort of misdiagnosed but he'll cancel a doctor's appointment that he really should go see to go fishing, because he needs the money. How is he going to go to the doctor if he doesn't have the money to pay? It's like a vicious circle.

AW: So he's out there now?

ANON: He had a doctor's appointment Tuesday, and then the doctor called and he was sick, so he's out there today, he left, that's why I had the dog. When he goes he leaves the dog with me. He opens up that door at night about midnight or 2, but the dog is a smart dog, he just comes up the stairs, the dog is torn between this place and that place, checking to see if... especially starting around 3 in the afternoon because SON2 may come home at 3 if they left at midnight. They've already thrown the net out, got what they can sell and they're home again.

AW: So he's fishing somewhat close to shore?

ANON: Yeah, close to shore. They are either fishing between here and Block Island or they will go beyond Block Island, go into Block Island for the night, and come this way, throw the net over a couple times and by then they've got what they need. So they haven't spent the money fishing at night because they are tied up on Block Island; thank God Block Island is there; that gives them refuge place at night.

AW: Is his social networks involved fishermen? Are his close friends also fishermen? Is he sort of plugged in to what's happening or when he comes home he's home?

ANON: SON2 is a home body.

AW: His close friends, would they be fishermen that you can think of, or are they other people that are not fishermen?

ANON: So most of the people he's with are fishermen.

AW: So that's a tight part of his life. Some people like to kind of separate themselves.

[01:13:19]

ANON: He's had a struggle. He's had two wives. The second wife he married was captain of an oil tanker. They went together but then they got married and then two years after they were married, she came home one 4th of July... and she was in two month and out two months... so

that was that life. He has never gotten over her, but she came home and said she had fallen in love with the Chief Engineer on the ship and that she wanted out. And he was torn up. He still is torn up over that and that's quite a long time ago now, it's got to be 4-5 years ago at this point. And then with **SON2'S BOY1** dying this summer... I think his immune system is down so much, that he's picked up this skin thing which is... the doctors calling it Lichen Phanus, now if you read about it, he might have it for the rest of his life, or it might take two years to heal.

AW: Well, **INTERVIEWEE FIRST NAME**, this has been fantastic. I will say thank you very much for the interview and turn these off. Is there anything else you'd like to add before I do?

ANON: I don't know what. I tried to make it sound sensible.

AW: You are very sensible, it's been great.

[01:16:13]

End of interview