

Interview with: Scott Drabinowicz

Occupation: Fishermen

Port Community:

Interviewer: Olivia Marcus

Interview Location: Shadbush Rd. Rhode Island

Date: 06/06/2010

Name of the Project: National Marine Fisheries Service and the Massachusetts's Fishermen's Partnership's Voices from the Fisheries Project

Logger/Transcriber: Olivia Marcus

Interview Duration: 0:47:52

OM: This is Olivia Marcus interviewing Scott Drabinowicz for National Marine Fisheries Service. I'm going to ask you to state your name and the informed consent.

SD: My name is Scott Drabinowicz and I hereby give to NOAA fisheries service this recorded oral history and grant NOAA fisheries the right to use my life history for educational and scholarly purposes, including the tape recordings, transcriptions, and content of this oral history interview.

OM: Thank you very much. So for the record this is Olivia Marcus, it is the sixth of June and we're at Shadbush Road in Rhode Island. Can you begin, please, by saying your name, your address, how old you are, where you're from?

SD: My name is Scott Drabinowicz, my legal residence is 31 Salem St, Swampscott, Massachusetts. And what else, my phone number or?

OM: How old you are and where you're from.

SD: I was born in Salem Massachusetts. I am 46 years old as of this year now, but have resided in Swampscott for over 30 years.

OM: How are you involved in fishing in general?

SD: I'm involved in fishing as a captain of the long-line vessel. I've been captain of a long-line vessel for this company for the past 20 years.

OM: And what company are you working for now?

SD: Is that gonna?

OM: You don't have to say it if you feel uncomfortable.

SD: Yeah, I work for the Eagle Eye II Fishing Corporation.

OM: Thank you. Alright, so can you tell me a little about your neighborhood and growing up?

SD: The neighborhood in Swampscott is a very nice, very, very nice neighborhood. I would say an affluent neighborhood. Very low crime, lots of activities and sports for the kids growing up. Where we live in Swampscott

there's a golf course. We live right on the water, the Atlantic Ocean Swampscott beach. So yes, very nice surroundings, very quiet town.

OM: And where is your family from? Were your parents from Massachusetts as well?

SD: My parents were both born in Salem, Massachusetts, which is the next town over from Swampscott. So they have stayed very local throughout their lives.

OM: Can you tell me what your parents do or did?

SD: My father was employed for NINEX Corporation; my mother was basically a stay-at-home mom. So she just took care of the kids. She had a couple of odd-ball jobs while we were in grade school and high school but other than that she has just been a home-making mother.

OM: And your parents did either of their previous or current occupations have anything to do with fisheries?

SD: My father's main base was his, his main job was working for NINEX, but he did have for a number of years a small, in-shore lobstering business that consisted of approximately in between 100 and 225 traps throughout various times of his life.

OM: And what about siblings?

SD: I have one brother who is a college graduate. He has done some fishing as high school job, college job, sometimes fill-in job. But basically his training is in chemical engineering.

OM: So his occupation now has nothing to do with fisheries?

SD: His occupation now has nothing to do with fisheries.

OM: Can you tell me a little about your education and job history?

SD: My education, I have a high school diploma. I spent a few years of college, but dropped out before my bachelor's degree to pursue fishing. Growing up and high school, the jobs that I did have were running a landscape crew, ornamental horticulture, and quite a bit of lobstering. Some harpooning, and as I got older I dedicated it to long-lining for pelagic species.

OM: And before I move on to asking more about your fisheries history, can I ask if you're married, for how long?

SD: My status is single, I have never been married and I don't believe I intend on getting married.

OM: And what about children?

SD: I have no children whatsoever. Neither does my brother as a matter of fact and my brother is married.

OM: How and when did you get involved in the fishing industry?

SD: I would say my first job as a commercial fisherman would have been a, they call a stern-man on an in-shore lobster boat, and that was in 9th grade. And basically from high school I was bouncing back from occasional landscaping and doing some in-shore fisheries.

OM: Did you have any informal jobs within the fishing industry?

SD: Informal as in...?

OM: Just not in the industry, I suppose.

SD: No I've had no employment as, you know, say like a retailer or a fish-cleaner or a processor. I've always been in [dogs start barking in background; recorder is turned off]

OM: Ok we're back after the interruption of the dogs. So can you tell me how you got involved in the fishing industry? Did it have anything to do with your father already having some kind of affiliation with it?

SD: How I got into the fishing industry is we live right by the, you know, basically right on the ocean and Swampscott harbor had a small fleet. When I say small it was probably maybe up to 20 boats. As an in-shore fishery out of there- lobstering, some tuna fishing, gill-netting, and some mackerel trapping. So I guess I started that way just from convenience, it was right down the street. It was a decent paying job for a young kid of myself, I think back in those days we were, you know, I would get \$60-\$70 a day, plus a percentage of the lobster. So at that time it was good summer pay for sure and I guess that's really how I started. Now my dad had never commercial lobstered when I was in 9th grade, when I first started commercial lobstering. He seemed to pick that up right after, but he had always had a small number of lobster traps that he fished for personal use and every weekend we basically went out cod-fishing or haddock-fishing or flounder-fishing so I guess I've just even as a young kid at say the age of 5, 6 I was out on the water just recreational fishing, you know, substance fishing for ourselves, our family.

OM: So it was definitely the community atmosphere that got you into that line of work?

SD: I wouldn't say it was the community atmosphere, it was, I guess what I'm saying is that the job was open when I was around so I took it. The ease of, I guess, commuting to my work at such a young age- I could ride my bicycle down to the beach. So it was a very easy way to get to work. It was no hassles, I basically lived maybe a mile and a quarter from the boats.

OM: Did you have any, what other influences might have brought you into that? Friends? Were there any other family members?

SD: No, the guy I started working with he was a friend of the family's. We did a lot of target shooting together. So I kind of knew him, you know, as that. He was approximately 10 to 12 years older than I was at the time.

OM: How did you, you just learned the skills you needed for the job by getting employed?

SD: Yeah, I learned the skills by being, yeah all in-shore fisheries as I was basically trained. When I was hired I knew nothing and I learned from a day-to-day basis and was taught on a day-to-day basic. And just being able to retain all of that you just learn more and more and that's how it kind of went. There was no instructional manual [chuckles].

OM: And what are some hot topics you'd say around fishing in your community right now?

SD: The hot? In my? Wow in Swampscott? I'd say right now the lack of lobsters, the lack of fish, and the lowering of prices. Especially for lobster. Ground fish seem to be holding their own, if not rising, basically with the rise of the economy and so on just the, I guess the cost of living I'd say that's gone up but lobstering, the lobstermen I really hear them complain about lack of price.

OM: And what kind of fishing have you done? Target species, in-shore, off-shore?

SD: I've targeted lobster, I've targeted all sorts of groundfish, I've targeted blue-fin tuna, I've targeted yellow-fin tuna, big-eye tuna, swordfish, mako sharks. What else have I targeted? I guess really that's everything that the New England fishery has to offer. Other than dragging or scalloping I've basically targeted all those species. And groundfish, which you can catch by dragging, but I've never worked on a dragger. I worked as a gill-netter, a captain of a gill-netter as I got older. And I also worked for a couple friends of mine tug-trawling or trot-fishing.

OM: What was the first major job that you got or you had?

SD: I would say the first job of real importance was, I'm not sure of my age, I would have to say I was just 21 or so, and I was a captain of a 55 foot Bruno Stillman gill-netter and we did harpooning as well. But harpooning was not our mainstay. We did that as, say a bonus. We did it as we saw the fish, basically, we were rigged up to do it, but our main staple as I was running the boat was to catch groundfish.

OM: What sparked your decision to decide to discontinue school and have fishing be your occupation?

SD: When did I decide that?

OM: What sparked that decision?

SD: The amount of money I was making. I guess the, what really drove me away from college was, I think I had a) enough school and b) the money was very good. We were good at what we did and we made very good money for the times. And I think that persuaded me to leave college. Cause we were making a very good year's pay and I did not see the reason why to continue on to college.

OM: Is there any particular time period in your fishing career that you would say was kind of a peak? Or, you know, you might look on as one of the better times?

SD: Well as in better times, I don't know. We went through some ups and downs both with price spikes and somewhat boycotts with swordfish. So I'd say it's been peaks and valleys every since. I don't think I've hit the pinnacle yet. I'm still learning, I learn every year, and I'd say the last 5-7 years I've been running the Eagle Eye II, which is a 100-foot long-liner. I'd say that's probably like the pinnacle for me. It's a very nice boat, a very well maintained boat, a nice-size boat. So I think I'm having the most fun as well as being on one of the nicest boats. So I'd say right now we're on, if we're not peaking we're on a pretty nice plateau.

OM: And in the past what kind of positions have you held on the boats or off boats?

SD: Oh I would say ever since I've been the age of 21 I've been the captain of a boat. So I'd say I've been a captain for at least 25 years.

OM: So that hasn't changed, you're just always the captain?

SD: I've always been the captain.

OM: How many crew have you had or is your crew currently?

SD: The smallest crew I used to go fishing with was 2 men. And the biggest crew that I fish with now is up to five men.

OM: And where do you fish out of and what do you fish for?

SD: We fish out of numerous ports, I'll name a few. We have fished out of Port of Spain, Trinidad. We have fished out of Bridgetown, Barbados; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Port Royal, South Carolina; Fairhaven, Massachusetts; and Baybolls, Newfoundland. I would say that would be enough. We have gone to some others but I would say those were our major working out of ports where we frequented the most.

OM: And you consistently fished for swordfish?

SD: Most of the time we, um, we basically fish totally for swordfish, but at certain times of the year we will switch over to try to catch big-eye tuna and other times of the year we may directly target yellow-fin tuna as well. But primarily we are a sword-fishing vessel.

OM: On a typical trip, what would be the duration, who decides where to fish?

SD: The duration of an average trip is anywhere from 3 to 4 and a half weeks, and myself, the captain, makes the decision on basically where to fish, when to go fishing. I do consult with the owners and our company expeditor on market strategies, i.e. I guess when's the best, if we have enough fish, is it a high price, is the price peaking, and can I make it to the dock in that amount

of time to catch the peak price? But other than that I'm pretty much in charge of when I go, how I go, where I go.

OM: In general, where would you say your crew is from?

SD: My crew is scattered from the West Indies, to United States.

OM: Would you say you more often have US citizens as crew members?

SD: I would say US citizens are, consist of most of my crew.

OM: What are examples of other countries that you would use to describe your crew?

SD: Dominica. We've had crew members from Dominica, and we've had crew members from Trinidad as well.

OM: Can you describe how the industry has changed over the years?

SD: Well the industry's changed quite a bit. The reduction in boats is one of the most significant. I would say, I'm not sure of the total swordfishing, permitted swordfishing vessels on the east coast, considering I was never much of an in-shore is what we call a swordfisherman, basically a swordfisherman that stays within the 200-mile economic zone. I've basically always fished in international waters, you know, sometimes closer to Africa than anything, you know say East Coast of the United States and South America. What other question was in with that?

OM: How has the industry changed over the years?

SD: Oh yes. The reduction of vessels. At one time I would say there was approximately 40 to 50 boats fishing the Grand Banks, say in the mid- to late-80s. And now a days there's approximately seven. A lot of people fell by the waysides with trip limits- we were forced into having trip limits. Lack of money, there were some campaigns against us, which had lowered the price to making fishing almost not even worth, you know, even going at all. Basically non-profitable and actually a loss at times. So a lot of people got out of it and did fall by the wayside with that.

OM: How have regulations from the National Marine Fisheries Service or other government agencies affected you?

SD: With our current regulations we have had to totally change our gear style. Length ratio from ball drop to liter has been totally changed. And our hook style; we are no longer able to use a J hook, which is the best hook to catch a swordfish. Swordfish is a slasher and kind of an aggressive fish, so with a J hook we would pick up approximately another 15% worth of fish foul-hooking. Now we have to use what they call is a 'circle hook'. And circle hooks are good for tuna fishing cause they're meant to catch fish in the jaw and a swordfish does not really have a jaw, it has – they call it a lower jaw and an upper jaw, but the upper jaw is basically its bill and the lower jaw is basically shaped like a beak: very v-shaped and very pointed. It does not have

a rounded jaw like a tuna fish and a circle hook will pull out and not hook the fish a lot. And it is proven, a documented fact, that by using circle hooks we loose 29% of our catch, guaranteed.

OM: So do you think regulations such a those and changes that have been imposed upon you is a big reason why a lot of people have fallen out?

SD: No, the circle hooks didn't put anybody out of business. The circle hooks are fairly new, you know in the time frame of long-lining for sword fish. But, no, the circle hooks have...yes they have hurt us, but that was the only way that we would be allowed to fish. If we do not comply we would loose our permits and be unable to fish, so I guess we we're adapting as we go, we're still—even though we have been using them now for say approximately 5-6 years, it could be a little longer, don't hold me to those exact dates, but we're still learning you know on how to hook the bates a little bit different. You know every year we learn a little something new, but my own personal preference I would prefer the J hooks. And the reason why we do go do circle is to reduce intake, reduce catch intake with sea turtles. And that does help quite a bit with the sea turtles as well.

OM: Just a more general question: the pros and cons of being in the fishing industry?

SD: The pros I would say is like any: a) your self-employed, you're your own boss. There still is good money to be made. It's a pro for me because I like the outdoors and I like being on the ocean and I like, you know, seeing the big fish and dealing with the big fish. Let me see, any other pros. Yeah, it's just basically the freedom to do what you want to do. The cons is you're always away from home, you're living in foreign countries a lot, you spend a lot of time out a sea in hazardous conditions, at times. Especially up north where we deal with a lot of hurricanes and extreme storms. So yeah, it has a high divorce rate. Its not easy on family life, I've never been married but I've lost more than my share of girlfriends to the industry.

OM: So would you suggest this kind of occupation to aspiring fishermen?

SD: Would I suggest it? I suppose I would suggest it. I certainly wouldn't deny them the chance to be a fisherman. But I don't know if I would go out on a campaign to say you should fish, or not. I think that's...fishermen are a little bit different of a breed, so its just...its not for everybody. Some people prefer to be in an office, being at a desk. I for one could not do that, so yeah like I say I don't think I would go on an active campaign for any kind of person to start fishing, but I certainly wouldn't want to take that away from anybody. I would never discourage somebody from going into fishing.

OM: Is there an ideal...of what would make a good fisherman? Is there a way to describe that?

SD: What would make a good fisherman? A person who pays attention to detail; self-motivated. Gotta be a go-getter because it's basically up to you, the

captain, to produce your paycheck. If you don't catch fish, you don't make money. You know, so...hm, what else could I think of here?

OM: You don't have to elaborate on it too much. So considering changes in the fishing industry, do you think there were some best years in the past? You said now were your peak years pretty much, but...

SD: Yeah I would have to say that the fishing was more consistent....and...I wouldn't say any better because we're basically processing the same amount of weight at certain trips. But I would say as an overall yearly outlook it seems like there were...the fishing was better just all the time. Now we seem to have a lot of dead time and not so good trips and that's what I would say is really the biggest thing. You know the government has said that swordfish are at a, I think 110% MSY, which means Maximum Sustainable Yield, and I don't quite agree with that. I'm not looking at the numbers the way they look at it, but as my own experience and my own opinion, there were more fish in the ocean 20 years ago than there are today.

OM: And you were saying earlier that how being in the industry and your line of work really has an effect on relationships, so could you tell me what are some of the effects you've seen or felt on your family or girlfriends?

SD: I would say well with girlfriends I've lost them just due to them being frustrated I'm never around or I'm in a foreign country, not around. My mother definitely worried about me, you know, going out on the Grand Banks in Newfoundland and going down to Brazil and all like that. You know I have been through the Panama Canal and been on the Pacific side and fished as well, we fished out of Monta. So I spent quite a bit of time away from my family so my mother is, as guess as mothers do always worry. Yet you miss out on some great times, like you miss out on weddings. And you miss out on some tragic times such as funerals just due to the fact that you were too far out at sea to get back in time. And certain holidays, birthdays, you know little kids stuff, you know with my cousins' and my friends' kids and all that, so it is a big sacrifice.

OM: But despite that at least, it seems that your immediate family has been pretty supportive in you...?

SD: Oh my parents have...I would say have always been supportive of, you know, my decisions. I'd have to say that they probably deep down didn't want me to live this type of a life. But I wouldn't say it disappointed them. I have, you know I have done very in my job so I, you know I think my parents were always at the mindset if you do well at what you do, you've done good. So I feel that I've done well for all my life and all.

OM: And how about your friends? Would you say most of them are in the fishing...doing something with fisheries as well?

SD: I would say 90% of my friends do not commercial fish. Only I'd say 10-15% of my friends are actual commercial fishermen.

OM: Do a substantial amount of your friends have anything to do with fisheries, even onshore occupations or they are just mostly commercial fishing or doing something else entirely?

SD: Most of my friends are all desk-job people. A couple of them do have recreational boats, but they do not do any type of fishing where they would receive any monetary reward. Its strictly recreational fishing and table-fare fishing. That's it.

OM: Are you aware of any organizations that provide social support for fishermen?

SD: Am I aware of any? No I'm not. I'm not aware of any services.

OM: So I'm going to turn the conversation toward health and health-seeking behavior for a second. How do you deal with heal insurance or boat insurance?

SD: Well boat insurance is paid through our insurance broker and while I am on the boat I am covered by their health insurance policy. And while I'm off the boat I have my own health insurance company as well that I pay in to. And if you give me a minute and you can shut that off Ill go get the card and tell you which one cause its something to do with fishermen from Tufts.

[Recorder paused.]

OM: On the boat or off the boast?

SD: Myself, what I pay for. Or is that really relevant?

OM: Off the boat what insurance agency do you use?

SD: Well I'd have to go...it's from Tufts...I think 'fisherman family partnership'

OM: The Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership?

SD: Yes

OM: And what is...do you remember what made you chose that?

SD: Actually yes, I remember what made me chose it very well. It was substantially cheaper than what I was paying for at NASE- I think that's National Association of Self Employed. I pay approximately 60% less, 50% to 60% less with my new plan.

OM: And so how did you hear of this insurance plan?

SD: Actually my mother, who is my accountant and book keeper, happened to – not sure if she read it in National Fisherman or just happened to hear about it through ear, you know, word of mouth, I'm not sure, but she had said, she had mentioned this policy to me and everything like that and we checked it out and that's how I ended up going with it. It was just so much of substantial savings.

OM: And were you aware of other health options or did you kind of rely on her to take care of that?

SD: Oh was I aware of other? Yes I was aware of other health plans somewhat and they were all pretty much comparable to what I was paying before, you know, and some were just a little more tricky with, you know, with a co-pay and this and that but they were all pretty much neck-and-neck running together.

OM: And in your opinion, how important is having health coverage?

SD: It's very important to me that I have health coverage. I used to, I do a number of outdoor activities. I, no longer to I ride motocross but I rode motocross for many, many years so I needed it in case I took a nasty wipe out. But I ride ski-mobiles, I have ATVS, you know, 4-wheelers that I use. I'm outside, I do a lot of deer hunting, I do a lot of hiking, so twisted ankles, broken fingers, you know little mishaps and stuff so yeah I feel it's very important to have it.

OM: Alright so this next set of questions is more about family and personal mental and physical health so if you don't feel comfortable answering any of them...

SD: Yeah I'll just say I don't feel like answering it.

OM: So has anyone in your household experiences mental or physical health issues due to stressors within the fishing industry?

SD: Nobody has been diagnosed or affected in any way like that, no.

OM: And how about yourself? Mental health issues such as anxiety, stress, depression, self-esteem, physical health issues...

SD: No I wouldn't say there's any... I mean there's sometimes a little stress when I'm out fishing trying to catch the fish, but its... I wouldn't say its anything that people would say 'oh jeez you need help' for or I felt I need help for. No and gratification I get from my job cause I do love it I like being out on the ocean so I say it's like a win-win for me. It's almost like when I go out to the ocean it calms me as well. Yeah.

OM: Do you notice that you feel like your crew members or other fishermen that you know have the same experience?

SD: Yeah I would say a lot of the guys enjoy going to sea and then there's people that really are not sure if want to be fishermen and then they get out there. They suffer some stress and I wouldn't say it would carry with them after they left the boat, but you definitely know that they're stress and they do not want to be there.

OM: Are fishermen predisposed to negative stressors in the fishing industry?

SD: Yeah I'd say everybody kind of deals with it a little different, but I wouldn't say there's...I don't know it might cause it- I think it caused it in John's wife (laughs)- but you know, I'm just going with my guys for the last, let's say, 7 years and I'd say no, everyone's been running on pretty much an even keel.

OM: And how about an age range of your crew members?

SD: My crew...the age range of my crew is, I believe, 26 to 50 years old. So a few years older than me, so it varies a lot. The older- I have two guys, one who is 40 and I think one who is 50 or he's really close to being 50. They are the most experienced. They won't be able to play this game, I would say, very much longer. Maybe another 10 years because it is a very physically demanding job, so its always nice to see some of the younger guys getting, you know, doing it and stuff. Basically a crew member life is a short life, you know, not to say health-wise or anything but just on the boat. Your body can only take so much for so long.

OM: Would you say that younger crewmembers are more equipped to be doing this or less cause they're not used to being in these occupations?

SD: Well I mean if you look at the human anatomy a younger body is always more resilient, able to bounce back quicker from injuries and all like that, but...

OM: But mentally?

SD: Mentally, out of a few young kids that we have, yes. Some of the younger kids are definitely a little, I'd say less mentally stable out there. It could be just they're still growing, they're in their young 20s and they haven't really got their sights set and they don't know what they're going to be doing for the rest of their lives. Some think they want to be fishermen and I think that deep down inside that they're not sure. So I would say that, that the younger guys are, you know, younger age physically a little bit better for the industry, you know a little bit better to do the work cause I think they can just a younger body can do it a little bit better, a little bit faster. But it's not to say that some of the guys in their 40s can't run around and hustle too.

OM: Has anyone, have you personally or anyone you know experienced negative stressors from fishing such as money problems, behavior problems, drinking, or drug abuse?

SD: I've never, I mean I do drink, but I've never abused drugs. I've actually never done hard drugs. So I wouldn't say it's ever pushed me to that. I do drink. I certainly don't drink to get drunk, I'm not drunk every night but I do enjoy a drink now and then. Like I say I don't drink every night, but yes I have seen crew members definitely go off the deep end and quite honestly I'm not sure if the fishing caused that or its just their makeup themselves. You

know, I have friends in the professional world that have had drug problems and I've had friends in the fishing industry that have had drug problems so to actually say have I ever seen anyone pushed into an addiction or drinking problems from fishing, I would say no. You know, I would say the friends that I've seen did not get pushed into drugs from them working at their own restaurant or working for a company I've never seen. I don't believe, I think it was the person themselves, just their mental makeup.

OM: So you would definitely not say that alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or other dependency issues are more prevalent among fishermen? Or would you even say their less?

SD: The question is, I don't know if you're asking as a whole on the United States population or are you using...

OM: Just in your personal experience

SD: There are a lot of people in the fishing industry that do drugs.

OM: But compared to, relative to other occupations, industries? Would you say it's any outstanding number?

SD: Yeah I've seen more junkies work on boats than I've seen junkies work in an office.

OM: Do you think management regulations have affected any decisions for people to start abusing drugs or alcohol?

SD: No, I don't think so.

OM: Have changes in the industry influenced people's use of drugs or alcohol?

SD: Yeah, I can't say that changes in the industry have brought on any of those.

OM: How do you consider your health, in a nutshell?

SD: In a nut shell? I'd say my health on a scale of 1-10 would be for my age probably an 8 ½ to 9. I stay pretty active through my outdoor activities and fishing. So I'd say overall, very rarely do I catch cold. Got a little bit of an allergy every once in a while but other than that I'd say very good.

OM: So compared to other labor-intensive occupations would you say yours has kept you pretty healthy?

SD: I'd say fishing has helped keep me healthier.

OM: How do you feel the stress of your occupations affects your mental health?

SD: How does it affect my mental health? I would say I never take my job too seriously where I actually just dwell on it and beat myself up over it. So I would say it really doesn't play much of an effect. Especially there's some

stress going on when the fishing's slow and I'm trying to locate fish, or the weather has really gone to dangerous or something, but I'd say after the trip is over, that trip is over and there's nothing really residual left over from it

OM: Do you think as a captain it's easier for you to let go of things?

SD: I would say as a captain, you know I think that once again on its own the individual himself. But I would if anything tragic happened on my vessel it would probably affect me more since I am the captain and I am responsible for my crew. So I would have to say in that aspect, yes it would.

OM: Do you believe your occupation provides appropriate access to health resources?

SD: No, I don't think it does. I don't think the Fishermen Partnerships advertise and get it out there enough, in my own opinion. And I think you have to really do some hunting to find it, so I think it should be a little more publicly announced.

OM: What are the organizations for fishermen that you are aware of?

SD: Yeah we have a, I belong to Bluewater Fishermen's Association. They have a decent website, but there is a lot of garbage that pops up on the internet as well so not really sure if that's more just how the websites are set up or spammers. Might be a little out of my league on that. But it would be a little bit nicer if all that stuff was maybe condensed into like a national fishing service website. Something along those lines would make all that social networking, healthcare, a lot simpler, a lot easier.

OM: What are major blockages for you seeing a doctor? Time, erratic schedule, money, personal inhibitions?

SD: No money it's not that. I would say seeing a doctor is difficult in the effect that we're not on land that long, but now thanks to satellite communications, satellite internet, satellite phone, we can be in touch with land a lot more, so setting up appointments is quite a bit easier and more efficient. We can make the appointment ahead of time, and so when we arrive in port we can go see our doctors.

OM: So it's never a huge inconvenience anymore?

SD: Not anymore. Not since satellite communications have popped up. Things have simplified staying in touch with land a hundred fold.

OM: Would you say you pretty regularly see a doctor as an average person does, like once every year or two?

SD: Yeah I'd say I go to the doctor no less than anybody else. I tend to not be totally regular with my physicals and all like that, but as again I'm in decent health so I don't, you know, I think other people see doctors more but I think that's just their own personal preference. I see a doctor as often as I feel I need to see one.

OM: Alright, well I think those are all the questions I had for you. Is there anything else you would like to make known about your history as a fisherman or the fishing industry, long-lining, fishermen in general?

SD: I think the only thing I can say, the long-lining industry is I feel we are going the way of the dinosaurs. I would say within 20 years I feel we'll be extinct due to pressures from protective resources and the changing, the radical attempts to change fishing regulations as in what we're allowed to catch, sizes, amounts. That is one thing I would like to say. And what else? I just hope that sword fishing doesn't go the way of the dinosaurs, but it's just something I feel, it seems like there is not many people if any getting into the industry or new captains arriving on the scene. It seems to be a big problem with our industry now not being able to get new and qualified captains. So it's going to be an interesting next few years to see what does happen.

OM: So you're saying that a lot of the fishing, well at least swordfish and long-lining jobs, are getting outsourced to other countries? Or it's that people aren't fishing for them anymore?

SD: Yeah, well the other countries are a lot of government subsidized and you know so they get a lot of help like that. And basically the price of swordfish hasn't changed since 1970, yet everything else has continued to go, you know, rise. The cost of fuel is hugely different than it was back then. Bait, groceries, cost of living has skyrocketed and yet the price of our fish really hasn't adjusted to that so that may be one hindrance that is definitely harder to make the same money we make years ago, today.

OM: What kind of changes do you think the government can make to make it easier?

SD: To help us make more money?

OM: Yeah or just to help it not go the way of the dinosaurs?

SD: Basically that would be to make all countries that import swordfish or other pelagic fish into this country abide by our own conservational measures. If they can catch fish any way they want and ship it to our country, why do we have to be held to such strict regulations? And that is one thing that I definitely feel needs to be done. Too many countries ship swordfish to our country and it basically floods the market and lowers our price. If perhaps the other countries would have to abide by our regulations to send in their fish to our country, maybe they would try to find other markets elsewhere. Perhaps within their own countries and also other European countries and South American countries. You know, and that would slow down and reduce the import of fish to our country and that would definitely help the price stay higher and longer as well. And longer I mean more throughout the year.

OM: So you generally support the regulations that our government comes up with?

SD: No I don't support all of the regulations that NOAA and NMFS come up with, by any means. I abide by them, but we have fought some regulations tooth and nail and lost. Its what the government feels is right and a lot of us don't feel that its right and lot of us feel that decisions being made are on untested and unfounded results. Kind of putting the cart before the horse, if you'd like.

OM: Do you have any specific examples that you'd like to talk about or is that pretty much?

SD: No, I could really go on for hours about it, there's a handful that are very much up in the air and no, we'll just leave it at that.

OM: Well thank you very much.

SD: Well you're welcome.