NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

82 Touro Street
Newport, R.I. 02840
(401) 846-0813

MANLY GRAY

THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 1930-1987

MANLY GRAY

Manly Gray was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1922. "Too big to go to school" in the eighth grade, he obtained work sorting fish in a Gloucester fish house. Mr. Gray worked in the fishing industry from that time until his death in the summer of 1987. He recollects the way of life of a Gloucester fishing family during the Depression and describes the various fisheries which comprised the Gloucester fishing industry at that time. He includes fascinating stories about dory fishermen who worked the Grand Banks and the depletion of certain Grand Banks fish species. He also provides valuable information about various aspects of the fishing industry he experienced first-hand when he lived in Gloucester.

From 1958 on, Mr. Gray and his family resided in Newport, R.I. He talks about the state of the fishing industry prior to the establishment of the 200 mile limit and recounts the effects of Russian factory ships on the offshore fishing grounds. He explains the hard hard work of offshore draggers and offers moving perceptions of his work and experiences.

Tape I Side I

Biographical Interview
Family heritage in the fishing industry
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Gray's memories of dory fishermen in Gloucester
Description of dory fishing operation
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Gray's work redfishing on the Grand Banks
How Gray became involved in Gloucester fishing industry
    Way of life of a Gloucester fishing family
Gray's first fishing experiences in Gloucester
Navigational equipment on fishing boats before World War II
How Gray happened to become a fisherman
    Sorting fish in the fish loft
How Gray started fishing out of Newport, R.I.
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Gray's present hobbies
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    Lobster pot coffee tables
Schooners, ex-dory fishing boats converted into draggers
    Size of boats
    Species sought
    Crews and their skills
Beam trawlers
Otter trawlers
Gray's decision to live in Newport in 1958
Lobster dragging offshore in the late 1950's
    Lobsters weighed up to 38 pounds.
Newport waterfront in the 1950's
    Rebuilding has ruined Newport.
The fishing industry in the 1950's
The Newport fishing industry
    Parascandolo fish dealers
    Anthony Bucolo
    Tallman and Mack Fish Trap Company
    Day draggers
    Offshore draggers
    New Bedford boats
New Bedford fish auction
Gray's work running draggers for Anthony Bucolo
    Grounds fished
    Species sought

Tape I Side II

Species sought on offshore dragger trips in the late 1950's
Technology developed for World War II found its way into the fishing industry.
- Loran
- Radio telephones

Later technology used in the fishing industry
- Fishscopes
- Sonar
- Scanners

Comparison of skills required of fishermen when Gray started out compared with today
Impact of synthetics on the fishing industry
Gray's work on offshore draggers
- Crews
- Deterioration of crews
- Drugs and alcohol in the fishing industry
- Length of trips
- Rotation of the work
- Fishing around the clock
- Sleep rotation
- Length of tows
- Description of the work -- towing, hauling back, washing and sorting the fish, storing the fish

Fishermen helping eachother out-- "hot tips"and codes
Abundance of yellowtail flounder

Tape II Side I
Biographical Interview, contd.
- Gloucester waterfront neighborhood Gray grew up in
- Childhood during the Depression
- Obtaining food
- Gray's parent's work
- Ethnic mix in Gloucester
- Earning extra money in a fishing community
- Gloucester fishing fleet
- Going back to Gloucester-- changes that have taken place

Gloucester fishing industry
- Redfish boats
- Whiting fleet
- Gillnetters from Portland, Maine

Description of whiting fishing
Redfish fishery
Grand Banks fishing trips
- Boats
- Catch size
- Length of trips
- Life at sea
- Overfishing and depletion of redfish
- Crew and their jobs
- Work done steaming back and forth to the Grand Banks
- Twine men
- Fishing heritage and backround of men Gray worked with on redfish boats out of Gloucester

Description of skills needed on a fishing boat
Learning to be a twine man
Sleeping quarters on Gloucester boats
Trying to keep clean at sea with no bathing facilities
Meals and meal schedule
Shack locker
Hard work
Seasonality of Grand Banks trips
Explanation of where redfish bottom was found
Fishing trips around Nova Scotia
Trips to Bird Rocks after the icebergs melted
Harsh weather in the North Bay
Depletion of Grand Banks fish stocks
Depletion of redfish
Redfish grounds remembered
Overfishing
Catching of small, young fish
Mackeral seining
Weather forecasting
Radio weather reports
Why old time skippers were better than today's weathermen
Signs of bad weather
Bad storms at sea "I was never afraid."
Boats Gray was on that sank
European pair trawlers on the Grand Banks

Tape II Side II

Work and activities to keep busy while steaming home from the Grand Banks
Fishermen's pay
Perceptions of occupation
Length of time between trips
Gloucester fishermen who came to Newport during the 1950's
Redfish depletion, "brokers," and why Gray moved to Newport from Gloucester
Trip fishing off Newport
Leaving Gloucester
How moving to Newport was advantageous to Gray's family
Yellowtail trips on Agnes and Myrne out of Newport
Abundance of yellowtail
Side trawlers
Development of stern trawlers
Dragging for fish and lobsters on the Continental Shelf Canyons
Graduating from greenhorn to skipper
Gray's work skippering boats for Anthony Bucolo in Newport
The Bucolo family
Grounds fished
Fishing as a dangerous occupation
Sayings and superstitions
Strange things in the nets
Crews
Gray's perception of himself as a hard skipper
Responsibility of being a skipper

Impact of technology on the fishing industry
- Stern trawlers
- Power
- Big nets
- Fish finding equipment

Dragging for lobsters offshore
Gear conflicts between draggers and offshore lobster pot fishery
Russian boats offshore prior to establishment of the 200 Mile Limit

Tape III Side I

Russian boats offshore, contd.
Species caught by Russian factory ships
- Horrible smell of Russian factory ships making meal at sea

Size of the nets on Russian vessels
The 200 Mile Limit
- Fishermen and the government
- Regulations set up by the 200 Mile Limit
- Fishermen forced to cheat to pay expenses
- Inconsistent, unrealistic regulations set up by the government

Making a living as a fisherman
Lack of support services for the fishing industry in Newport
Feelings in Newport toward the fishing industry
- Transient, riff-raff fishermen who gave fishing a bad reputation

Drugs and alcohol on fishing boats
Oil exploration on Georges Bank
- Danger of oil spills on Georges Bank
- "The tide never changes on Georges Bank."
- Overfishing on Georges Bank

Tidal interaction on Georges Bank
- Explanation of tidal shifts on Georges Bank
- Timing the tides to catch fish

Fishermen spend their lives learning the ways of the sea.
Comparison of highliners and average fishermen
What it takes to be a good fisherman
Brutal wintertime fishing conditions
Whaleback, turtleback
What fishermen wear in winter to keep warm
- "Whiskey oil clothes"

Expense of oil clothes today
Memories of oil clothes in the old days--linen cloth rubbed with linseed oil
The shoalest place on Georges Bank
- Cultivator Shoals

Newport fishermen in the 1950's
- Locals and transients
- Draggers
- Lobstermen
- The Parascandolo's
- Greek lobstermen

Where fishing boats docked in Newport during the 1950's.
Amount of money wholesale/retail fish dealer, Anthony Bucolo, made by selling out to developers

Tape III Side II

Grounds fished by Mr. Gray skipering boats out of Newport
Gray's work for Ronald Fatulli, Newport lobster dealer
Financial uncertainty of being a fisherman
The Elizabeth Ann
    Boats Gray was on that sank
Twine men "then and now"
Conduct on fishing boats
Comparison of nylon and cotton net materials
Fish that are hard on nets
Species formerly considered trash fish that are in demand
The 200 Mile Limit
    Foreign fishing and species depletion prior to 200 Mile Limit
    Perceptions of foreigners working on factory ships
    How fishermen felt about intervention by the government and scientific community into the fishing industry after the 200 Mile Limit was established
    Fishermen and the government

Tape IV Side I

Changes in the fishing industry in Newport, R.I.
Future of the fishing industry in Newport
    Fish wholesalers selling out
    Price of waterfront property going up
    More money in yachts, marinas, development
    Newport State Pier
Hardest part about being a fisherman
Gray's retirement activities
What Gray liked about being a fisherman
Physical hardships
Fishing as a dangerous occupation
    Fishermen Gray knew who died
What Gray does now that he's no longer fishing
Young men going into fishing
The best and worst parts of fishing

Interview with Mr. Manly Gray for the Newport Historical Society's Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, conducted by Jennifer Murray on April 29, 1987

MURRAY: Is it all right with you if I tape this interview?

GRAY: Yes.

JM: Let's start out with, Where were you born?

MG: I was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

JM: What were your parents' names?

MG: My father's name was Elmer [Gray]; my mother's name was Velora [Gray].

JM: Where were they from?

MG: Maine.

JM: Whereabouts?

MG: Bucksport [Maine].

JM: What did your father do for a living?

MG: He worked most of his life cutting fish on the fish wharf in Gloucester. One grandfather was lost at sea. He was around thirty-five years old -- fisherman. My other grandfather died in Snug Harbor, New York. He was a Merchant Marine skipper.

JM: Were there people before your grandfather who were fishermen?

MG: I couldn't tell you.

JM: What kind of a fisherman was he?

MG: Mostly dory fishing in them days, way back years and years. Bucksport used to be a big fishing

port, way back years and years ago - going back over the turn of the century.

JM: Where did those dory fishermen go?

MG: They fished around outside of Maine, coast of Maine, Georges Banks - all the fishing grounds.

JM: It must have been tough.

MG: They were tough men.

JM: What kind of fish did they get out there?

MG: Codfish, haddock - whatever was running at different times of the year.

JM: Tell me how those dory trips worked.

MG: I didn't go dory fishing myself. I can remember when I was a kid, around the wharves in Gloucester, they were all dory fishermen then. We used to hang around the boats. Once in a while, they used put a dory overboard and let us kids row around the harbor - stuff like that. I understand it was a real, real tough life. They had no power like you've got today on boats - nothing at all. All sail. They used to have lanterns for running lights on the boats. The same thing down below. You'd have lanterns hanging up for lights to see with, a coal stove to cook with.

I know when I first started fishing, most of the old-timers were all ex-dory fishermen. They were tough, tough, old men. My God. I was lucky.

I was just a generation ahead of them.

JM: How did that operation work? There was a main boat with dories on it?

MG: Well, it was according to what kind of fishing they went after. They carried about twelve dories -- sometimes single, sometimes double, dories. They'd go out and set their trawls and set the lines with the hooks, and they'd catch the fish and bring the fish back. They'd split the fish on the big boat - split them and salt them down in the hold. They'd go on long trips - two or three month trips.

JM: Wow! Out on Georges Banks?

MG: And Grand Banks. They'd go way down to Grand Banks, off of Nova Scotia, Quereau Banks. There's banks all the way from Gloucester to the Grand Banks they'd fish. You know, Georges Banks.

JM: Those Quereau Banks are pretty harsh, aren't they?

MG: Yes. That's off of Nova Scotia - Quereau. We did a lot of dragging there years ago.

JM: You did?

MG: Yes, red fishing. We used to go to the Grand Banks. We made a lot of trips to the Grand Banks. We'd go way up the North Bay, up the Coast of Labrador.

JM: How did your father happen to go to Gloucester?

MG: I don't know. He had a friend that lived there, I believe, when they were young fellows. I understand he had a friend or something. He came to Gloucester. He liked it. He tried fishing; he didn't like fishing. He got a job on the fish wharves. Of course, in them days, there were a lot of those fish wharves. He cut fish all his life.

JM: How about your mother's family?

MG: My mother's family -- That was her father died in Snug Harbor. They were fishermen - most of them.

JM: So she came from that background, too.

MG: Yes. My father's family and her family knew each other. I guess he went back to Maine and married her.

JM: What didn't your father like about fishing?

MG: Well, I don't know. I imagine he's a little bit smarter than the rest of us. [Laughter] It wasn't a very good life. But, if you lived in a fishing town and you wanted to make a living in them days, you had to go fishing. Fishing wasn't that good either. Them were the days you went fishing, while you were out fishing, your families lived out of the company store. Then you came in. Sometimes you owed them money; sometimes they owed you money or whatever.

JM: Was that going on in Gloucester when you were a boy?

MG: When I first started, we used to buy stuff at the company store. But it was fading out then - starting to fade out.

JM: Was that the main industry there?

MG: Yes - just fishing. That's all. That's all there was in Gloucester, yes .

JM: Where did you go to school?

MG: In Gloucester.

JM: Where did you meet Mrs. [Mary] Gray?

MG: I met her on a blind date. I've been blind ever since. [laughter - Murray] She comes from Rockport - Pigeon Cove, what they call down in back of the Cape.

JM: Oh? Rockport, [Massachusetts]?

MG: Yes.

JM: Do you have children?

MG: I raised five of them - four girls and a boy.

JM: Is your son involved in fishing at all?

MG: Well, he did go. He went fishing with me for about twelve years. When I quit, he didn't want to go no more. He owns a garage now. He runs a garage - the Getty garage down on Connell Highway, M & M.

JM: Oh, yes.

MG: Do you know Paul [Gray]?

JM: No, I don't. I might know him without knowing it.

MG: He bought that Getty station on East Main Road.

JM: Oh, good for him.

MG: He's up here now.

JM: How about your daughters? Are they here?

MG: Spread around. I've got one up in Cambridge. That's my baby, Leann. One is a schoolteacher in North Kingstown. Leann, the youngest one, she's a computer programmer. What do you call it? Engineers. They call themselves engineers or whatever. One's a schoolteacher, Maryann. Another one's a secretary, Cathy. I've got another one. She just raises babies. She has four kids.

JM: She's got a full-time job. [chuckles]

MG: Peggy. Yes. Dickie is one of her sons - Richard.

JM: Oh, yes. Nice guy.

MG: Have you met his brother?

JM: No.

MG: He's bigger than he is. They're both big boys.

JM: He's a big boy.

MG: Nice family - two girls and two boys.

JM: Did you say that Mrs. Gray's family was involved in fishing also?

MG: No. She gets seasick just standing on the wharf.

She gets seasick. Her father was a carpenter.

JM: About how old were you when you got your first job?

MG: Fishing?

JM: Yes.

MG: Oh, fifteen years old.

JM: How did you get interested in it?

MG: We lived across the street from the wharves. That's all there was in the city. It was pretty hard to get away from. You couldn't get away from it. I went out at ten dollars a week.

JM: What was that?

MG: That was gillnetting.

JM: For cod?

MG: No. That was for pollack at that time. I was only a kid. They told me they'd take me that summer for ten dollars a week. It was hard work.

JM: I'll bet.

MG: After about a month, I asked them for a raise. The next week, I got my raise - ten dollars and one cent. And I got fired.

JM: [chuckles] For asking for more money?

MG: Yes.

JM: Was that a pretty new thing then - gillnetting?

MG: It was something that had been going on for years and years and years.

JM: Was there anyone at that time that helped you and taught you things that you couldn't learn in school?

MG: You just learned by doing - just by going aboard the boats and working. You went aboard. You was a greenhorn for a few years. Them days, if you was fishing less than ten years, you was a greenhorn. Now they go fishing a year or two, and they're skippers, with all this new stuff they've got.

I asked a guy with a boat one time. I was fishing fifteen years at that time, out in a boat. I asked him for a boat. He said, "I'm not giving my boat to no beginner." That's fifteen years of fishing. Fifteen years, today, is bigger than -- Today, you've got a lot more to work with.

JM: What did you have to work with then?

MG: You had a compass, sounding lead, your chart - all dead reckoning. None of the electronics like you got now. I think it was after the second war that they come out with the sound machines.

We used to take bearings on lightships and different capes and that - they had radios you could take bearings with. That's the only way you could get a position - take the cross bearings. You'd come within three or four miles of where you

was, with your soundings and everything.

JM: How long did it take before you felt that you could rely on yourself?

MG: I don't know. Usually you'd find yourself around by taking soundings. The depth of the water up there -- It was all edges up there, up in Gloucester, Nova Scotia, and them places. Off of Newport, down here, everything is flat. It's pretty hard to get a position by sounding. It's just flat bottom down here. But you get up the other side of the Cape Cod Canal, everything is on edges. You can tell pretty close where you are just by your soundings.

JM: What was it that made you want to become a fisherman?

MG: Well, to start with, when I was in eighth grade, they took me out of school. My father told me I was too big to go to school then. I had to go to work. That was it. He got me a job in the fish loft where he worked. I went to work there. I worked there pretty near a year.

JM: What did you do?

MG: I was sorting fish - all salt fish. You put them out in the yard in the sun there. You take them in at night. It's just regular work around the [loft]. You powdered the fish. They used to

have stuff they used to powder the fish with to keep them from going bad. All that kind of stuff. I worked there pretty near a year and I said, "This ain't for me," so I quit. I was getting a big sum of twenty-six cents an hour.

JM: I bet it was hard work.

MG: It was. I was fourteen years old.

JM: Did you have brothers and sisters?

MG: I had seven sisters and one brother.

JM: Did they get out and work as early as you, too?

MG: Yes - most of them, I guess. Most of my sisters got married young. I think one sister went through high school out of the seven. Most of them got married young and all of them had big families. My brother, he started young. He died last year, my brother did.

JM: Sorry to hear that.

MG: He got married four times. He was the live wire of the family.

JM: [chuckles] I'll say. How did you end up in this area - on Aquidneck Island?

MG: Well, I was fishing out of Gloucester. Every fall, up in Gloucester, a certain amount of Portuguese boats would come down and fish out of New York for scup. I was on this boat. I forget the name of the boat now. I forget the name of the skipper.

Anyway, we left Gloucester to go fishing out of New York. We come out of New York one day and it was real cold weather. The water pipes for the fresh water busted in the hold. So the skipper come to Newport to get them fixed. We were tied up down at Parascandolo's. I was talking to a guy I know from Gloucester, Pete Russell. You ever hear of Pete?

JM: No.

MG: He fished down here for years. He was down here about ten years before I come here. He's back in Gloucester now - retired.

I got talking with him. I didn't like -- With all the Portuguese aboard, of course they spoke the Portuguese language. I was the only guy that didn't speak the language. I felt kind of funny. So I quit the boat.

This Axel Weiderman -- You've heard of Axel Weiderman probably in your travels around.

JM: Yes.

MG: He come down here years ago with a couple boats and did a lot of gillnetting, dragging. When he heard I was quitting, he asked me -- He still lived in Gloucester. He still had a house in Gloucester. But he was fishing here. He wanted me to make him a net when I got back home. I told

him yes. I made him a net when I went back home. The next year, he called me up and I come back down and took one of his boats.

JM: What kind of a net did you make?

MG: Drag net -- for dragging.

JM: How'd you learn that?

MG: I learned it by fishing. It's just part of the trade.

JM: Do you still do that at all?

MG: Every once in a while, one of these guys come up here and I make nets for them. These fellows with these lobsterboats fishing the rivers around here, up and down the rivers, once in a while, they want a net made and I make it for them. It's just like a sideline. Right now, I'm knitting heads for lobster pots. You know the twine that goes in lobster pots?

JM: Yes.

MG: I'm making a few of them for a guy. And I've got my hobbies. I made those model boats on the wall there. I made them up one year. There's one of the lobster pot coffee tables I made.

JM: It's beautiful.

MG: I just putter around, that's all.

JM: What kind of boats were those Portuguese boats?

MG: Most of them were schooners in them days. They

were ex-dory fishing boats, is what they were. They put big power in them and made them into draggers.

JM: What kind of power were they using then?

MG: Oh, big Cooper-Bessemer engines and Atlas engines - all heavy-duty. Real, real, big, big, heavy-duty engines.

JM: How big were those boats?

MG: Oh, a hundred, hundred and ten foot, ninety foot - whatever. They were good size boats.

JM: What species were they going after?

MG: Codfish, haddock. For years in Gloucester, mostly it was redfish. Everything was redfish for years. Of course, we caught them the quickest. You got no big price for them, but you caught them fast.

JM: How about the haddock?

MG: Certain times of the year, they'd go after haddock and cod. But they didn't go after them steady. A few of the boats did, but redfishing was more of a sure thing. Some of the guys had real, real good boats and good crews. You had to have a good gang of twine men to handle the twine. When you're chasing codfish and haddock and that, you tear up a lot. If you haven't got a good crew, you can't keep a net together. No sense going at it.

JM: How many hours do you stay out in the dory on a

boat like that?

MG: Like I say, I never went dory fishing.

JM: Oh, okay. They're ex-dory boats.

MG: But they did, I guess, put in a lot of time. I mean, there's no such thing as so many hours a day or whatever.

JM: Were those beam trawlers or were they using an otter trawl?

MG: I've heard the word "beam trawl" all my life. But I've never seen a beam trawler.

I fished out of Boston for a couple years. The guys in Gloucester, we'd call Boston the "beam trawlers." They were no different than our boats. The only thing, is they're a lot bigger, and they were made out of iron. We used to say, "I went beam trawling out of Boston last winter," like that. It's just a saying.

Actually, they're all otter trawlers - everything I've been on. You've got your two doors and your gallowes on the side. That was it. But, I've never seen a beam trawler.

JM: I haven't either. But people have said that to me.

MG: I've never seen one. Never had one in Gloucester; I've never seen one Boston. I think a beam trawler is a little bit before my time - before

they ever got so they knew how to use doors on nets. They had to have that beam to spread the net. I don't know. But I think that's just a saying they just kept around. Boston boats - they weren't beam trawlers; they were otter trawlers, the same as the Gloucester boats or any other boat. The only thing is they were bigger. We used to call them beam trawlers because they were big.

JM: Did you live in Boston?

MG: No. I just traveled back and forth.

JM: How long were you fishing before you came to Newport?

MG: I've been here about twenty-eight years, I think. Close to twenty years I was fishing before I come down here.

JM: Had you been married very long?

MG: Forty-five years this year. That's long enough. I got married when I was in the Navy. I went in the Navy in 1942, the second war. That's when I got married.

JM: You had been fishing for a while before that?

MG: Yes.

JM: And that was before you came here?

MG: Oh, yes.

JM: What branch of the service were you in?

MG: Navy.

JM: About what year was it when you came to live here in Newport?

MG: I don't know what date it was. You probably wasn't even born. The day the two boats come together in Newport Harbor - oil tankers. They run into each other and they blew up. Did you hear about that?

JM: No.

MG: I would say it might have been 1958 or 1959. Two oil tankers come together just between Castle Hill and Fort Adams, and they blew up. Guys were killed and everything. A real foggy morning. That's the day I moved down here.

JM: Did you decide to stay here after you got off that Portuguese boat?

MG: Yes. Well, then Axel Weiderman called me up and asked me to come down. So I come down here. I still lived in Gloucester. He asked me if I wanted to take one of his boats. I said, "Yeah, I'll try it." So I ran that boat almost three months down here. I was here three months, the people were so nice; I never met people like that in my life. They were nice people.

JM: Local people?

MG: Yes - local people. Everybody was real [nice].

So I went home and I told the wife, I said, "Pack everything up. We're going to Rhode Island."

JM: What kind of a boat was that that you were fishing?

MG: A little otter trawler - a little schooner boat, fifty foot boat.

JM: Offshore?

MG: Yes, we used to go offshore, out in the Gully, lobstering. We were one of the first ones who started lobster dragging. That was Axel Weiderman's boat.

JM: How big were the lobsters you were catching?

MG: In them days, we used to get a lot of big ones - thirty, thirty-five pound, thirty-three pound, thirty-eight pound. Nowadays, there's no more of them left. They're all gone. Awful big lobsters.

JM: Could you sell a lobster that big?

MG: We had trouble getting rid of them. None of the restaurants or anything - nobody wanted to buy them. They thought the meat would be too tough. They didn't know any better in them days. If you caught that stuff today, boy, they'd grab it right quick.

JM: Would you sell it whole?

MG: Yes. We used to get thirty or thirty-five cents a pound for lobsters then.

JM: Wow! [chuckles] Isn't that amazing?

MG: If we were lucky. Yes.

JM: Tell me about the waterfront when you came here in the 1950s.

MG: I thought it was pretty. I thought it was a pretty town before they started that new rebuilding the waterfront and put all the roads in and all that stuff. I thought it was a pretty town - like Gloucester was years ago. But they've done the same thing in Gloucester as they've done here. Gloucester was a beautiful town. They used to have artists come in the summertime to paint and everything else - all them old buildings and nets and everything. They did the same thing. They ruined the town. They ruined the looks of it. In Newport, they've done the same thing. They started rebuilding the waterfront. After they done that, then they started with these high-rises. Well, now you can see what you've got in Newport. I don't see nothing beautiful about it at all. I don't see nothing pretty about Newport no more. You take the quaintness away from a place, you've got nothing. Years ago, if Newport was like it is now, I'd have never come here. No way. The people were nice and everybody was down to earth. It was real, real nice. It's not changing for the better, I wouldn't say. Maybe

it's because I'm getting old. [chuckles]

JM: No. No, it isn't. What was the fishing industry like then?

MG: It was good. It was hard. Of course, you didn't get the prices you get today for fishing. You made a living - that's all. You didn't get rich; you didn't starve. You worked hard. You made a good living.

Parascandolo's -- I've always sold to them for years and years. They were nice, honest people. They're good fish dealers. They give you an honest price for your fish. They were real nice people - real nice. I think he has seven sons, five or seven.

JM: That's a big family.

MG: When I first came down here, the father was there - Nick - old Nick [Parascandolo] himself.

JM: He started it, didn't he?

MG: Yes. I think it was five sons. The five sons are still running it. But yes, they're all nice people - nice, honest people. They're out to make a dollar, the same as everybody. But they always give you a fair price for your fish.

Of course, we'd turn on the radio in the morning, and we could hear the fish auction in New Bedford that was selling the fish. They always

treated us good. I can't say a word against them. They were nice.

JM: Tell me about Nick Parascandolo.

MG: The old man?

JM: Yes.

MG: I never knew him too much. He was a nice old fellow. He used to walk with a limp. He had one leg that was bad. Everybody liked him. Everybody thought the world about him. I never heard anybody say a thing against the man. And his sons are all the same way. They're all real nice people. Have been down there and met any of them?

JM: I've been trying to.

MG: They're nice, nice people - real nice people.

JM: So there were the Parascandolos. There were a lot of boats that docked there, weren't there?

MG: Oh, yes. He was the only wharf in them days, until Anthony bought his place.

JM: And there was Tallman and Mack.

MG: Yes. Well, that was a trap company.

JM: Were most of the boats draggers?

MG: Yes - pretty near all draggers.

JM: Day draggers or offshore?

MG: Probably half a dozen day draggers. The rest were all offshore boats, pretty near all offshore. A lot of New Bedford boats used to come in to take

out there. A lot of New Bedford boats used to come here. They don't no more, but they did.

JM: Why was that?

MG: Well, I don't know. Between the crews didn't like it sometimes, and between the union troubles and this and that. They even had trouble one time with the wives.

JM: Oh, really?

MG: They didn't like their husbands coming into Newport. They called Newport "fun city," which was an illusion. That's all it was.

Fishermen are a breed apart. Sometimes you can satisfy somebody - like, give a guy a price which he thinks is good and fair and everything, and the other guy will argue, he wants more. Or he gets kind of hot and he'll slam the door, and he won't come back for two trips. Then, he'll probably come back after a few trips and apologize, say he was wrong, or something. Everything isn't smooth.

But all in all, I thought Parascandolo was pretty good. You never had to worry about him stealing no weight from your fish, which they did in New Bedford. New Bedford - they were hard.

JM: Stealing?

MG: Yes. Taking out fish, you had to be on your toes.

You were supposed to get a hundred pounds to a box or a hundred and twenty-five to a box, and bang, they'd push another ten pounds on. If you wasn't standing there to pick it up, you'd lose a lot of fish. You'd lose a lot. That goes on everywheres.

But at Parascandolo's, I don't think I ever lost a pound of fish. Real honest people. Nice, down to earth people.

JM: How about the lobster industry? What was going on with that then?

MG: I worked for Anthony. I worked twelve years for Ronnie, too - Ronnie Fatulli. I worked about twelve years with him.

JM: Lobstering?

MG: Well, I ran his boats, his draggers. Anthony Bucolo -- I worked for Anthony for eleven or twelve years. I ran his boats when they were brand new - the first ones he ever built. The Mariano Bucolo, Crispina Bucolo. The first one he ever bought, that was the Elizabeth Ann. I ran that boat. No, Chris Ann. Chris Ann's the first one. Then he bought a little bigger one, and then he built two new ones. He was a nice guy. Anthony was nice. I got along good with Anthony.

JM: Where did you go in those boats?

MG: We went to Georges Banks mostly.

JM: Year-round?

MG: Yes. Southeast part of Georges.

JM: What were you going after there?

MG: Oh, yellowtails, groundfish, lobsters. Mostly yellowtails in those days.

JM: You could catch all those things in one trip? Or was it at different times of year?

[end of side one]

MG: You'd catch yellowtails in one place. If you've got enough yellowtails or whatever, or if you just felt like going for something else, you'd go up to the Northern Edge, pick up a few grey soles, groundfish. You go to different places to catch different kinds of fish. Lobsters, we caught them at a different place.

JM: A lot of technology from the war found its way onto the fishing boats. Was there a lot of equipment on those boats?

MG: I think the first thing that found its way into fishing that was a big help was the loran. That was something that come from the war days. That come from the airplanes, I believe. That was a big, big, big, big help. You can get a position any time you want it - a real good position.

And you got your radio telephones. There was a lot of stuff. Now, in later years, you've got

your fishscopes and all that stuff. You've got sonars on the boat that's got the money to buy it. You've got scanners all around the sides of your boat to find fish now. Them days, you didn't know if there was any fish where you were fishing until you put the net down and hauled it back.

Today, it's a lot easier. No doubt it's a lot easier. Today, you can take a kid out of college and make him a captain - just by the equipment he's got in the wheelhouse. Them days, when I first started, you had to have a lot of time and experience before you'd even think of taking a boat. Everything was more manual. I mean, you had something you had to put into your head before you -- Of course, today, everything's push-button and big iron boats.

JM: That must have felt pretty good, though - to be able to go out there and know what you were doing like that, without all the equipment.

MG: It was just a way of life, is all. Take these boats today. I don't think 10% of these guys today could put a net together. A lot of these boats, they'll carry four or five nets. They tear them all up, come in, ship them someplace, and have a guy fix them up for them.

Besides that, in them days, we had sisal,

manila, twine. We didn't have this nylon or none of this stuff when I first started. You was forever working on nets.

JM: It must be quite an art to know how to do that.

MG: I'd say I've tied a lot of knots.

JM: I'll bet you have. Were they using the sisal and manila as late as when you went to work for Anthony?

MG: No. By the time I got down to working for Anthony, we was into nylon.

JM: How about the crews you had on those boats?

MG: I was always lucky. Most of the time, we had a four-man boat. On Bucolo's boats, we had six men. I always had a crew from Gloucester the first year I had the boat. I couldn't get a good crew here. Actually, there's not many fishermen - regular Newporters - that fish out of Newport. There are very, very few. Even today, pretty near everybody's fishing -- You see them down there on board boats. They either come from New Bedford or down South or someplace. There is a few left - very, very few.

JM: Was it hard finding a good crew in those days?

MG: I was lucky. I had guys with me for [years]. Pete Russell -- He was with me for twelve years. Another guy was with me for eight years. I always

had a pretty steady gang. I had my son with me for twelve years.

JM: That's nice.

MG: It's nice when you get a good crew. It's very nice. But in the later years, my son got married. He started raising a family. His wife didn't like him fishing, which I don't blame her. He decided to go to work in a garage. He's always fooled around with engines all his life anyway. When he decided to quit, I said to heck with it. Guys come down there, smoking them funny cigarettes. I didn't have the nerves. I couldn't do it. I tried it. The last trip I made, I went out there and I had two of them aboard with me - two real lulus. I don't know what you call them. When we come into the wharf, I was shaking. I come home and told the wife that I can't do it no more. My nerves are just too bad for it.

JM: When was that?

MG: Three years ago October. I said, "I can't do it no more."

JM: It's pretty dangerous to be out there with people like that.

MG: Yes, it is. You can't lay down to sleep. You're scared to give them the wheel to steer. This younger generation -- Maybe it's me.

JM: No. You're not the only one who says that. It's a big concern with a lot of people.

You went out to Georges Banks on those boats of Anthony Bucolo's. How long were your trips?

MG: Oh, seven, eight, nine days. Usually a week or a little better - eight or nine days, ten days sometimes. It takes about a day to get there - twenty, twenty-two hours.

JM: What was the rotation of the work? How many hours on did people have?

MG: Well, when we had a full gang, we used to go six and six.

JM: Six on and six off.

MG: Sometimes, if we were a man shy or something, we'd go eight on and four off. It's according to the fish. If you happened to get a big set of fish or a lot of fish on deck, the crew was pretty good. Everybody would come on deck until the deck was clean. A good crew works together. But mostly it was six and six. We worked pretty good.

JM: Would you describe how that worked for me? You put the nets over and then what?

MG: We'd fish around the clock. Like on a four and eight watch, you've got six men on board and two men below all the time. That was a four and eight

watch.

JM: What were they doing below?

MG: They'd be sleeping. The other four guys are up. You hand them the nets when you're ready to haul back. They'd have 8:00 to 12:00 below. Come 12:00 (either noon or night; it made no difference), the two guys below got up and the other two guys turned in. In other words, every four hours, two different guys would turn in and two guys would get up. We call it a four and eight watch.

The cook was just another man on deck. The engineer was the same thing. And the skipper and everybody was just at work. Everybody worked. No such thing as a guy saying, "Well, I'm the cook. I'm staying down below," or "I'm engineer." Them was just side jobs - being a cook and an engineer. That's the way it worked.

JM: How long did a tow last?

MG: Two hours. It's according to how much you was getting in the net. You could stretch it out to two hours, sometimes two and a half hours. Some places where you fish, you might tow an hour if you get too much junk, too much trash and stuff. It's according to the way you was fishing and what you was fishing for. Usually, a two hour tow, you

haul it back. It takes you a half an hour to haul it back and set the net out again. If you wasn't getting too much fish, in less than an hour you'd have the deck all clean. So you'd be sitting down and looking at yourself for another hour. You didn't work steady all the time, unless you caught an extra amount of fish, a lot of fish.

JM: The fish was also sorted once you let it out of the net?

MG: Yes.

JM: And then, did the net go right over again immediately?

MG: Yes. Put the net right over. Before you even touched it at all, all you did was dump the fish on deck and you left them there. You throw the net right overboard again. You set it out and you hook it up. Once you was back towing the net again, then you handled the fish on deck. You pick out all your flatfish and wash them. Your groundfish, you take and rip them -- what we call ripping and gutting them -- and wash them good and throw it in and ice it down every tow.

JM: Was it mostly groundfish that you were going for?

MG: We were most of the time on yellowtails, flatfish. At times, if groundfish was a good price or whatever -- You had different fellows you fished

with. You knew each other. One guy would call you up and give you what we called a hot tip. He'd call you up and say, "I got a few codfish," or something like that. "Why don't you come up here?" You'd haul your net back and you'd steam up where he was. Sometimes you help each other out that way, too.

JM: Did you have a lot of friends that did that?

MG: Yes. Of course, everybody has their own codes, too. You'd tell each other in code what you had, or you'd shift to a different channel and go onto VHF. VHF, you had a lot of channels. Shift over to sixty-five or whatever.

JM: What would some of the codes be like?

MG: Well, I don't know. I had a guy from down South who used to come up here all the time. Me and him had a [code]...Like yellowtail. Say everybody's looking for yellowtails. You haul back a thousand pounds of yellowtails, which is a real good tow. You didn't want to tell your friend over the phone, "A thousand pounds or so." You'd work it out so that when you were ashore, I'd say, "Well, Jimmy, if I mention the word 'few' that means I've got three times what I told you. If I just say 'a couple' that will mean four times as much," or whatever. So I'd say, "I've got a few

yellowtails, Jimmy." The word "few" is something like four bushels. That would mean I have twelve bushels with the word "few" in there. You have to kind of sneak it in there somehow.

Then, the next trip we'd have to change it because one of the crew would go ashore and tell the other crews, their big mouths flapping. "Do you want my skipper's code?"

JM: Were the yellowtail pretty abundant?

MG: They were at one time. Yes. Down eastwards. Even around here.

JM: What do you mean by that?

MG: Even off Block Island. They disappeared from Block Island about three years ago - four years ago now, I think. You could make a living off Block Island in the wintertime. We used to fish there, fish off there, and nighttime go in and tie up in the harbor, go out in the morning.

Of course, when I fished for Ronnie Fatulli, he hasn't got the newest boats in the world. He got them old wooden -- You can't go too far in them old boats. But I made a good living. I fished south of the Islands, off Nomans. Good weather reports and that, you'd go down to the Corner Buoy or whatever.

JM: Where's the Corner Buoy?

MG: South of Nantucket. But in the wintertime, in Ronnie's boats, you didn't go too far. They're old wooden boats.

End of Interview

Second interview with Mr. Manly Gray, conducted by Jennifer Murray on May 1, 1987

MURRAY: There are a couple of things that I wanted to catch up on a little bit, about when you grew up in Gloucester. Was religion very important to your family?

GRAY: No.

JM: Tell me a little bit about that neighborhood that you grew up in, on the waterfront.

MG: Well, it wasn't too good a neighborhood.

JM: What do you mean by that?

MG: I lived right across from the wharves. There were a lot of barrooms around in them days. Alongside of what it is today, I mean, it was good. No mugging and stuff like that.

We used to play around the wharves and go swimming, diving off the piers in summertime. We lived right on the waterfront.

JM: Nowadays, that would be quite a place to be able to live.

MG: It was nice. You could go out at night. I don't

ever remember anybody ever locking doors when I was a kid. Like you get in and you lock your house every night, you know. No, I don't ever remember locking doors or nothing years ago. Now, I know my daughter lives up in Cambridge, [Massachusetts]. Even in the daytime she has to lock her door.

JM: Do you lock your door here during the day?

MG: Oh, yes. When I'm alone I do. Yes.

JM: Were most of the people who lived around you fishing families, too?

MG: Yes. Pretty near everybody was a fisherman. Either their fathers were fishing or their sons or grandfathers.

JM: That was during the Depression. Was that tough in Gloucester?

MG: Well, I don't remember the Depression. I was born in [1922]. The Depression was in 1927, wasn't it? Or 1928. I was born in 1922. It was tough. I can remember there were real bad times. I mean, nobody had a lot of money or nothing. All you had was a lot of kids - a houseful of kids running around.

I can remember we used to go down and get grapefruits and stuff from the -- What do you call it? It wasn't Welfare; it was something

else. Once a week, you'd go down and get the grapefruits and canned meat and stuff like that - flour and whatever. Everybody was in the same boat in them days. I mean, nobody had no more than the other person, I don't believe.

JM: You had mentioned that you ate a lot of fish.

MG: I ate a lot of fish. Yes.

JM: Was that stuff that your father got from work?

MG: Or I got it myself, down on the wharves. Us kids used to go down on the wharves and bum fish from the fishermen and go sell them. That's how we made our spending money. And my father brought a lot home. He worked for Gorton Fisheries, which was a big company in them days there. He used to get a lot of fishcakes. You know Gorton's Fishcakes? You've seen them.

JM: Sure.

MG: He'd go to that cannery every so often and the cans that were dented, he would bring home. To this day, I love them.

JM: That must have been something, feeding all those kids.

MG: Yes. I remember he'd come home from work at night around 5:00 or 5:30 and take a shotgun down to what we called the back shore (all the cottages) and shoot rabbits. That was our source of meat.

Jack rabbits, I should say - flashlight and a shotgun, you know.

JM: Who cooked that?

MG: My mother. We always had a hound; we always had an old hound dog - them coming from Maine. All of them down Mainers are all great hunters.

JM: Did he teach you?

MG: Yes, I went hunting. I lived down Maine for two years when I was a kid. I liked it down there. In fact, when I came out of the service, I talked to her [my wife] about moving down there. But she said where she come from was small enough. She don't want to go to a place that's worse. I'd move down there. I like small towns, country. I don't like the city.

JM: Did your mother work outside the home?

MG: Yes. I can remember my mother working in a laundry - not what you would call a laundry today. There were two laundries in Gloucester then - right on the waterfront. There was more steam coming out of them buildings. They'd actually boil the clothes like you would in a house. Women in there, running them through ringers all by hand and everything else.

JM: It was all women working at the laundry?

MG: Pretty near all women. Yes.

JM: Were they housewives?

MG: Most of them were. Yes. It was hard work.

JM: Who could afford to have their clothes done in the laundry?

MG: I think most of it was the hotels. They had a lot of hotels - like in the summertime, tourists. Same as when you go around the Drive here. There's a lot of big hotels. But in them days, there wasn't too much money around - not that I remember. I know I didn't ever see much of it.

JM: I think that's true of most people at that time.

MG: There was a lot of lobstermen around. Us kids, sometimes we'd get a job with a lobsterman for the summer. You'd go and help him haul his pots and get his bait and repair his pots. What they'd give us for pay -- they'd give us all the crabs they got - big hard-shell crabs. We'd put them on what we called jiggers, or a cart we made ourselves, and barrels. We'd go up around what we called Portuguee Hill and sell them ten cents a dozen. That was our pay. We'd sell a lot of them - two or three barrels of them some days.

JM: You learned how to take care of yourself at a young age.

MG: Oh, yes.

JM: What was Portuguee Hill?

MG: It was a section where all the Portuguese people lived. That's where we used to go to sell our fish and crabs and stuff. The Portuguese people are great fish-eaters. We'd go up there and go along there hollering. In them days, we were only little kids. We called the old lady. "Ten cents a dozen, crabs." They'd come out with a big pan and they'd take about fifteen or sixteen for a dozen. A real circus.

JM: Were they all speaking Portuguese?

MG: Most of them. Yes.

JM: Could you understand any of it?

MG: No.

JM: There were a lot of Italians in Gloucester, weren't there?

MG: Yes. There was a big settlement of Italians there, too. That was down on the South end of town, what we called the Port. All Italians in the Italian fishing fleet. The Portuguese had their own fishing fleet. You had your Portuguese fleet, your Italian fleet, then what you called the American fleet. Most of them were from Nova Scotia or migrated from there - whatever. There were a lot of boats there at one time.

JM: About how many do you think?

MG: Oh, I'd say there was three hundred boats there at

one time. It used to be the biggest fishing port on the East Coast. Big vessels - between the dragging, the trawling, the seining, gillnet, lobstering.

JM: About how many boats do you think are there now?

MG: I've got no idea. I don't go up there hardly at all. The few times I do go up there, it's like going into a strange town. It's all been changed and rebuilt. The streets are all changed. Where I lived, that neighborhood is gone completely. It's all been taken right away. It's all hardtops and buildings and restaurants. They just changed the whole thing.

JM: Were most of those boats going after the redfish?

MG: At the time I was fishing, they were. Yes. The majority. You had your smaller boats, your Italian fleet -- Well, they had a lot of big boats, too. But we called them the whiting fleet. They'd catch whiting in the summertime. There was fifty or sixty of them. I call them small boats - fifty foot, fifty-five, sixty foot.

JM: Draggers.

MG: Yes. They had a big fleet of them. A lot of gillnetters. Way back, years ago, a lot of boats would come down from Portland, Maine and go gillnetting. They used to come down and rent the

wharves in Gloucester at certain seasons (the fall of the year or the spring of the year).

JM: What was the whiting used for? Was it eaten?

MG: Yes.

JM: Whole or put into something?

MG: We used to cut the heads off on the boats. We'd tow the net, dump them on deck, and then set them on the rail and chop their heads off. We'd get about three or four cents a pound - whatever.

JM: The market was in Gloucester, wasn't it?

MG: Yes.

JM: How about the redfish?

MG: We didn't dress them or nothing. They caught them in the round. Fishing redfish, we used to go down to the Grand Banks. That was, I don't know, eleven hundred miles from Gloucester. It took us five days or four and a half days.

JM: In what kind of a boat?

MG: Most of the boats we had was the old beam trawlers that they didn't want in Boston no more. They'd take them to Gloucester to send redfishing.

JM: How big would those boats have been?

MG: A hundred and twenty foot, a hundred and ten foot. Of course, Gloucester had a lot of their own big boats that they'd built - big wooden boats. We'd

go down there - two hundred and fifty, three hundred thousand pounds of fish a trip.

JM: How long would a trip last?

MG: Oh, I think the average trip to Grand Banks would be fifteen days - sometimes a little longer when the weather was bad.

JM: Tell me what the life was like on those boats.

MG: Well, of course, that's different than the groundfishing like we did down here. The only time you stood watch was when you was steaming - steering the boat. You'd fish from daylight to dark, redfishing. Sometimes you'd fish nights, but very seldom. The fish used to come off the bottom. You couldn't catch them at night.

JM: They came off the bottom to feed?

MG: Yes. You caught them fast. When we first went down the Grand Banks, I'd see two hundred and fifty thousand in twenty-two hours aboard a boat. Less than twenty-four hours, you'd have the hold chock full of fish and bound home again. As time went by, they kept getting scarcer and scarcer. The fleet kept catching them up. After a while, it got so bad, it didn't pay to go down there. You couldn't go down there. You were only catching three and a half to four cent fish -- four cents a pound. That's all they're paying the boat.

JM: How many people would be in the crew on a boat like that?

MG: The average gang was about ten men. There was a captain, cook, usually two engineers. They pulled six and six in the engine room. You had a mate or a twine man, or boss on deck.

And on the way down, if it was nice, good sunny weather, it was pretty smooth. You'd spread your nets out, repair your nets - either going down or coming home. Other than that, you'd just lay around for five days and take your wheel watch when your turn came. It was nice fishing.

JM: Did most of the people know how to work on the nets?

MG: Pretty near all of them, yes. In them days, pretty near everybody -- I'd say eighty percent of the men were twine men who could make nets or splice wire. The men were more professional in them days. It seems to me they were.

JM: What was their background, most of them?

MG: Most of the fellows I went fishing with were Nova Scotia men, Newfoundlanders. Pretty near all the skippers were either Nova Scotia [men] or Newfoundlanders. They'd come from there or their fathers come from there.

JM: Any of them go back to whaling days?

MG: Oh, I don't know. That was three or four generations before I was.

JM: Did they take an interest in teaching you?

MG: In them days, nobody taught you nothing. You had to teach yourself in between times. You'd hold the twine for the guys. The nets had big rollers on them, right at the bottom of the net -- great big rollers -- to keep it off the bottom so it wouldn't tear. That was your job, taking care of them rollers every night. They'd split and break and everything.

Until you learned to be a twine man, you got all the dirty jobs. In between time, where there was nothing to do, you'd take a piece of twine and your jackknife. You'd go down in the stern or up in the bow and sit there and try to teach yourself. Most of them, they'd say they haven't got time to teach you. You know, when you're working, trying to get the net together again. But there was so much tearing up then. You paid attention. You learned quick. About a year I was fishing, I was going twine man.

JM: Was that unusual that someone would do that so fast?

MG: A lot of the guys learned that fast. I would say yes. It isn't that hard. It's nothing you'd

have to go to college for.

JM: Were there any conveniences on those boats? Was it a hard life?

MG: It wasn't that hard. I don't know. You had nice sleeping quarters, bunks.

JM: Did the crew sleep all together?

MG: Well, no. The skipper had his stateroom off the wheelhouse. On the bigger boats, the engineers had staterooms. On the beam trawlers, they had all staterooms. But most of the Gloucester boats, all the crew on deck slept in the foc'sle - regular single bunks. They were real comfortable - real good living. You had no showers or nothing. The only shower you could take was a salt water shower.

JM: Did you ever do that?

MG: Oh, yes - when the weather was warm enough. Every once in a while, if the cook didn't see, you'd steal a bucket of water and you'd give yourself a sponge bath. But none of them boats in them days had showers or anything. After two or three weeks, you feel kind of itchy.

JM: [chuckles] I'll bet. What was the food like?

MG: The food was real good.

JM: What was it?

MG: Real old fashioned cooking.

JM: Like what would you have for breakfast?

MG: We had eggs, ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, pancakes. They all made their own bread - homemade bread all the time. I can remember cooks that used to make oatmeal bread, white bread. I've even been with guys who used to make cookies, cakes. They were real good cooks - real old fashioned. Baking powder biscuits, corn bread, and stuff like that. The food was beautiful. I can't say nothing against that.

JM: Did you eat fish out there that was caught?

MG: Yes, we ate plenty of fish.

JM: How many meals in a day would you have to have?

MG: Three meals a day. Red fishing, after you set out in the morning (first tow in the morning), you'd probably have breakfast at 5:00 or 5:30. Dinner at 12:00. Your supper would be around 6:00 at night. And then they had what they call a "shack locker" - like one of them cabinets [points to small cabinet]. There's always something there to munch on - bread, cakes, or whatever. Coffee on the stove all the time - a big pot of tea and coffee. You never went hungry.

JM: I'll bet some of those people really had an appetite out there.

MG: Oh, yes.

JM: Was the noon meal the main meal of the day?

MG: Every meal was a big meal - every meal. All big meals. We worked hard in them days.

I remember going down in the hold of the old Newton out of Boston. I went redfishing with her. That's the time we got the trip in twenty-two hours. Two hundred and fifty-five thousand; seventy-five ton of ice. And just two of us down in the hold to shovel all that ice. I couldn't do that today. [chuckles] That's a lot of work.

JM: Well, you wouldn't get it on that fast today.

MG: It was a lot of work.

JM: About how old were you then?

MG: I was redfishing mostly when I come out of the service. Twenty-two or twenty-three years old.

JM: Were you married after the war or before?

MG: While I was in, in 1942. Yes, the first year I went in the Navy.

JM: Were those trips out to the Grand Banks year-round?

MG: No. Well, no. Mostly you'd go in the spring of the year and late in the fall. In the winter, we used to fool around off of Nova Scotia - off of Quereau and a place called Bank Whitehead.

JM: How far North is that?

MG: It's the whole South Coast of Nova Scotia. Once you get out into eighty, ninety, a hundred

fathoms, it's all redfish bottom -- Off of Lunenburg, Liverpool, Calvern. We used to go all the way around the Cape, out past the Bird Rocks. In the spring of the year, after the ice melted, the icebergs went away and you could go way up to Bird Rocks.

JM: What was that like?

MG: It was a hard place to go fishing up there - the North Bay. They call it the North Bay. In twenty-five miles of wind, it would get rougher than forty miles of wind around here. In them days, that's when redfish was getting scarce. We used to fish right around the clock up there - keep going all day and night, day and night.

JM: Were there any halibut?

MG: Yes, we used to get quite a few halibut.

JM: How big were they?

MG: Oh, I've seen halibut five hundred pounds, five hundred and fifty pounds, four hundred pounds. That's a real, real big fish. I've seen them so big, two guys couldn't turn them over on deck. And I've seen them as big as that pad. [referring to interviewer's notepad] I used to get a lot of halibut.

JM: Did you see icebergs up there ever - ones that hadn't melted down?

MG: I've never seen that. No. Usually, we didn't go up there until we were sure they were gone.

JM: What month would that have been?

MG: Oh, around May. I would say in May - late in the spring. I went to the Grand Banks a good many years until finally they cleaned it out so bad all the boats stopped going down there. Then they went up to North Bay. There was a few fish up in North Bay when they started going up there. But they kept catching them up, catching them up. It takes about twelve or thirteen years for a redfish to grow up big enough to be of value. What it was, the boats were catching them faster than they were growing.

JM: American boats?

MG: When American boats first started redfishing, they used to go redfishing off of Cassius.

JM: Where's that?

MG: That's about seventy miles east of Gloucester. I saw all kinds of redfish there and east of what we called the Highland off Cape Cod. All kinds of redfish there. They caught that up, and then they moved to Nova Scotia. They kept going further and further and further. Finally, after so many years, they just cleaned the whole works up. Every time you clean a piece of bottom up, small

fish move in. Of course, they ain't got time to grow. And that's when fish get so small they're too small to cut and they ain't no good.

It ruined itself. They fished right through the spawning season. I'd see them dump loads of redfish on deck and the spawn just running right out through the sides - fish chock full of spawn.

In them days, there was no limits. Nobody set no limits or nothing. If they'd have done in them days what they do today, you might still have the business.

JM: Yes. How about herring?

MG: I never went for herring. Sometimes I used to go seining for mackerel. Sometimes we set the seine by mistake on herring.

JM: Oh, really?

MG: What a mess that would be.

JM: What would happen?

MG: They'd mash in the twine. A real job to pick them out.

JM: It must have taken forever.

MG: It wasn't too good.

JM: When you started, were there weather reports before you went out that far?

MG: We used to have radios to get our weather reports. Today, they say they're better at it than they

were in them days. But I think them old-time skippers were better than the weathermen today. They used to have the weatherglasses. I think them guys actually were better than the weatherman is today with all his millions of dollars' worth of equipment. But I used to listen to weather reports. Yes.

JM: What did you look for in the weather? What were bad signs that would make you not go on a trip?

MG: Oh, there's a lot of different signs that a breeze of wind is coming. Have you ever seen the seagulls go way up in the air in a circle?

JM: Yes.

MG: They go way, way up in the sky and then they go around in circles. That's supposed to be a sign of a breeze. And your glass going down. Some of them old-timers, I think they could smell a breeze of wind. It seemed so. They were good. Some of them guys were real good.

But in later years, I mean us guys that went skipper in years after that, we depended mostly on our modern radios. You get away from that stuff.

JM: You must have been caught in some pretty bad storms out there with those long trips.

MG: Oh, yes. We'd just lay to. You were too far from land. You couldn't go nowheres. If it got too

rough, you'd just tie everything down on deck, batten everything down, and just lay there. Every once in a while, it if let up a little bit, you'd just start the engine and drive into the wind a little bit so you wouldn't drift too far. That's all you'd do - just drift around. That's all.

JM: Were you ever afraid?

MG: I was never afraid. I don't think I was ever afraid on a boat. There's been times when I've been nervous, but I don't think I was ever afraid - what you call really afraid.

I've been on three of them that sunk.

JM: They sunk when you were on them?

MG: Yes. One, the Joffrey -- She was an old dory fishing boat converted to dragging. The engine room caught on fire. I rowed twenty miles that night to get in.

JM: Where did it happen?

MG: East of Gloucester.

JM: How far east?

MG: Twenty or twenty-five miles.

Another one that I owned, I lost up in Newport here. She was seventy foot.

JM: What happened?

MG: Well, I don't know what happened. Sea caulk or something let go in the engine room. We were off

of Newport. A guy came up to take the wheel - an old Portuguese fellow I had with me. We had what they call "water indicators" on the dashboard. All it is is a vacuum that goes down into the bilge. Any water gets in the bilge, it pushes the needle up.

I told the guy, "If that needle moves, you call me." I slept way forward. It had no bunk in the wheelhouse.

Anyway, he called me. When he called me, I came up and the needle was way over. I went down to look in the engine room, but I couldn't even get down there. But I was lucky. There was a guy right in back of me, coming out. He stopped and picked us off the boat.

JM: Where did that happen?

MG: South of Newport - about twenty miles out.

JM: What was the name of that boat?

MG: Elizabeth Ann. I'd just bought it nine months before that.

JM: That hurts.

MG: You're not kidding. I was just starting. I'd just come off the railways, that trip, and spent three thousand dollars on the railways that trip. In them days, that was a lot of money.

JM: What did you have done on the railways?

MG: I had coupling put on my shaft. There was a shaft taken out and straightened out, and a new coupling made for it. They painted it.

JM: Where was all that work done?

MG: At Williams and Manchester.

JM: Were there any Europeans fishing out on the Grand Banks yet?

MG: At times, we used to see them, yes - big pair trawlers.

JM: Where would they have been from?

MG: I think they were from Portugal mostly. But every so often, we would see them. We wouldn't get real close to them, but we'd see them. They used to go pair trawling - two boats and one net. It didn't happen too often, but at times we have seen them.

JM: What did the pair trawlers fish for?

MG: The same thing we were fishing for, I guess.

JM: How about Russians? Was there any activity with them yet? Or was that all later?

[end of side one, tape two]

[tape began after Mr. Gray had spoken]

But that was after you moved to Newport?

MG: Yes.

JM: What would you do on the way home on those long trips out to the Grand Banks and off the Labrador Coast?

MG: You'd work on your nets in the daytime if it was good weather. If not, you'd just lay around in your bunk and read, eat, get lazy, stand your wheel watch. Usually, there was enough work to keep you busy. We used to have what we called a whaleback back there. Sometimes you'd go under there and do a lot of work - making up cod ends and making up nets. You kept yourself pretty busy.

JM: What was the pay like?

MG: Well, it was something to be desired, that was. The Grand Banks -- If you go there, you'd get two hundred and fifty thousand of fish, three weeks all together (damn near that). You'd make three hundred dollars clear. In them days, of course, that was worth a lot more than three hundred [now]. It still was nothing big. Before I moved down here, I used to make five thousand, fifty-five hundred dollars a year or so. The first year I was in Newport, I made seventy-two hundred, I guess. I never thought I'd ever see another poor day.

JM: What was the furthest north and east that you'd go on your trips when you were out of Gloucester?

MG: North Bay is the furthest north and the Grand Banks is the furthest east.

JM: What did you like the best about those days?

MG: I don't know. To me, it's just a job. I don't think I knew enough to like or dislike them. It's just part of your life - something you've got to do. In a way, I liked them. Like the guy going to a job in a factory every day. I mean, he probably hates the factory, but he's got to go in every day and work there.

JM: How long would it take when you got home before you'd have to go out again?

MG: Three days. That was the worst part of it. If you got in on a Monday, you'd take out your fish Monday. You worked taking the fish out unless you wanted to hire somebody to take your place, which you couldn't afford. So you worked, taking out fish Monday. The next day you had off - Tuesday. The next day you went down and helped put gear aboard. The next day you took ice and everything, and got all fit out and went out.

JM: For three weeks.

MG: Yes. That went on trip after trip after trip.

JM: Year after year.

MG: Come home, your little kid's running around - only two years old. You pick her up and she cries. She didn't know you. Your kids didn't even get to know you.

JM: That's hard. It must be tough on a family.

MG: It was. It was hard on my wife. It was hard on her.

JM: I'll bet - with all those children.

MG: She had a hard life. But like I say, everybody was in the same boat in them days. I think everybody was tougher in them days. You had to be tough anyway, to get by.

JM: When you moved here to Newport in the late 1950s, what were those Gloucester fishermen that you knew doing here? Why were they fishing out of Newport? Axel Weiderman and people like that.

MG: I don't know. They're the fellows that talked me into coming down here. Axel came down here. I don't know. He must have been down here ten years. He was after me for a long time, him and the other fellow, Pete Russell. They were after me for a long time to come down. Martin. That's another guy that come down here. There was quite a few of them. If you were born in a town and lived there all your life, it's pretty hard to make a change.

JM: Yes, it is. It's very hard.

MG: It finally got so bad that redfish got scarce in Gloucester. The last year I spent in Gloucester, two trips before Christmas, we made two brokers.

We call them "brokers" when you make nothing. The last trip, we came in with a hundred thousand [pounds] of redfish and we didn't make a dime. Redfishing in them boats, the first hundred thousand or a hundred and twenty-five thousand is your expenses. The next hundred thousand you get paid on. You've got to pay expenses first.

So I made two brokers and I said, "To hake with this." After Christmas, I went to New Bedford - from Gloucester to New Bedford. I got a site with a guy fishing from there. I was making a living, fishing out of New Bedford. Of course, them guys from Newport were still asking me, but I figured they were giving me all these wild tales about the money they were making -- a lot of that stuff was fairy tales.

I fished that winter in New Bedford. I went back. The next fall, I got a site on a Portuguese boat, going to New York, scupping. His name was Manny [ ]. I can't think of his last name.

Like I told you, we went into New York with a trip of fish. Then we come out again. We had to come to Newport because the water pipes busted. That's when I talked to Axel Weiderman. I went home and made a net for him. After that, he asked

me if I wanted to come down and take one of his boats. He had two boats. I said, "Yes, I'll give it a try." So I did. I come down. I didn't tell the old lady nothing about moving then. Thought I'd try it. So I fished about three months down here.

JM: Where did you live when you were off the boat?

MG: I used to go home between trips. If not, I'd sleep on the boat. I was here about three months and I liked it so much I moved down.

We used to make four day trips, five day trips.

JM: Where to?

MG: Off Block Island and Nantucket - wherever. We'd come in and take the fish out. I'd drive home to Gloucester. It's about a two-hour drive. The next day, I'd probably come back or the day after, then we'd go out again. I just commuted. After about three months, I decided I liked it enough to move down here.

JM: Where did you live when you first moved here?

MG: I lived on Pope Street, right near the Handy Lunch. Do you know where the Handy Lunch is?

JM: Yes, I do.

MG: Right there.

JM: So you could walk to work then.

MG: Yes.

JM: Did your family like it here?

MG: Yes. My wife liked it. Well, at first, she didn't. When we left Gloucester, I was getting ready to take her down here, she was out in the yard with all the neighbors up there and everybody's crying - all the neighbors.

JM: That's nice.

MG: I felt guilty. But after she was down here a while, she loved it; she liked it. You'd never get her away from Aquidneck Island.

By moving down here, I think my family made out a lot better than we would have if I had stayed in Gloucester. I know my oldest daughter, she graduated from high school - Maryann. I don't know how many scholarships -- God, she got scholarships she didn't even need. It was good in them days. People were real nice down here. I liked it. Everybody was friendly.

JM: What were the names of those two boats?

MG: Axel's boats?

JM: Yes.

MG: One was Elizabeth Ann - same as the name of the one I had; the other one was Agnes and -- Oh, my memory.

JM: Well, it doesn't really matter. It will probably

come to you when we talk about something else.

MG: I know the boat. I knew the boat for years. I think it was Agnes and Bernie. Yes, Agnes and Bernie. Frank Foot bought that boat after that. Have you heard of Francis Foot, Frank Foot?

JM: Yes.

MG: He owned the boat down here. He bought Axel's boat. After the war, I came down here - in 1945, 1946. I shipped with Frank Foot, seining. We came down here, seining. That's the first time I ever came into Newport then.

JM: Mackerel?

MG: Yes. We came in here with two trips of mackerel in the fall of the year. We came in with ninety thousand [pounds]. Two days later, we came in with eighty thousand.

JM: That's really something. Were those trips that you made on Axel Weiderman's boats yellowtail trips?

MG: Yes, those were all yellowtail. They were small boats. There's no power. You had no big power. To go groundfishing or scupping, you have to have more power to tow a big net, different type nets, and that. But most of the boats were smaller boats. But there was enough yellowtails to make a living.

JM: Were they a side trawler or a stern trawler?

MG: Side trawler. They were all side trawlers in them days. There wasn't many stern trawlers around at all.

[machine off/on]

JM: They were all side trawlers?

MG: Pretty near all side trawlers in them days, yes. Every once in a while, you'd see a stern trawler. [Luther] Blount built the Narragansett. I think that was the first one he ever built - the Narragansett.

JM: What were they powered by?

MG: Mostly Caterpillars, G.M.s (General Motors). When I worked for Anthony, he had two brand-new boats built, and they were side trawlers. That was 1967. Stern trawlers wasn't that much in style. It was right after that, he was sorry. He wished he'd have built a stern trawler. But he done good with them two boats.

JM: Did those trips go on the Continental Shelf Canyons - out that far?

MG: Yes. We called it the Gully. We'd go lobstering out there.

JM: Trawling?

MG: Yes. Dragging - dragging the nets for the lobsters. You call it the Continental Shelf. We

call it the Gully - where the edge drops.

JM: Oh, okay. Who did you work for first, Anthony or Ronnie Fatulli?

MG: Anthony.

JM: Anthony Bucolo first. You skippered his boats.

MG: Yes.

JM: How did you get from being what you called the "greenhorn" to a skipper? How long did that take?

MG: When I came down here, I went skipper. I went as skipper in Gloucester first. I had three or four boats in Gloucester. When Axel asked me to come down here, I went skipper all the time after I came down here.

JM: Were those boats in Gloucester mostly -- People owned a couple of boats? Or did someone own one boat and get you to --

MG: They were privately-owned boats. One guy owned a boat they called the Madame X. He's one of them guys who went fishing all his life and got tired of it. So he bought a restaurant. He didn't want to go fishing no more, so I took his boat and went skipper of it.

Another one that I took, some guy in Plymouth owned it. He didn't go fishing, but he owned the boat for an investment. I took it and half a dozen other boats before I come to Newport. When

I come down here, I worked for Axel for a year or a year and a half, I guess. Then I went to work for Anthony. I think I was twelve years with Anthony.

JM: How'd you happen to work for Anthony?

MG: He called me up. They had a little shrimp boat that they took over. Some guy down South owed them money for fish that they sold to him. The guy's boat come up here and they grabbed it - a little fifty foot shrimp boat.

About six months they kept calling me, but I didn't answer them. I wasn't interested. Finally, I went down and talked to them. I took the boat and ended up staying twelve years with them. I got along good with Anthony.

JM: Was Anthony's family down there then, too - his brother and --

MG: Oh, yes. They were all stockholders [Anthony's family] - Richard, Dominic, his father.

JM: Was his father there and his uncle, Mariano?

MG: Mario. Yes. The uncle was there.

JM: Did they speak Portuguese?

MG: No, they all speak English all the time.

JM: The Bucolos are Italian, aren't they?

MG: Yes. The Mendosas are Portuguese.

JM: Right. The Bucolos are in on the Mendosas'

business, too, aren't they - the Tallman and Mack Company?

MG: Yes. I think Bucolo owns fifty-one percent. As far as I know, they do. But they were no trouble. They always got along good, those two families.

JM: So those twelve years that you skippered boats for Anthony Bucolo were out on the Gully in the waters off Block Island and --

MG: Georges Bank.

JM: Are there pretty bad storms out there?

MG: Oh, yes. As bad as any place.

JM: Do people talk about the danger much? Or is it just part of the --

MG: No. It's just part of the business. Nobody talks much about it.

JM: Are there sayings and things about things that you're supposed to do and not supposed to do, like don't whistle on a boat?

MG: Well, not that bad. But there's a few things. There are some things that I believe in.

JM: What are those?

MG: You never mention "the animal" on a boat - curly tailed. [refers to pig] I don't believe in that.

JM: What would happen if you did say that?

MG: It's supposed to be bad luck. I believe it actually happened to me.

JM: No kidding.

MG: At a time when I was on the Joffrey. This fellow, Byron Campbell (a real good friend of mine) -- In fact, he lives now up in Easton. He was fishing with me quite a bit. Right now, he's about sixty-eight or seventy years old.

We were together on the Goffrey. We were on our way home with a boat full of fish. We were talking, reminiscing about World War II. He was talking about over in Germany. He was in the Canadian Army. He was talking about going through Germany. He stopped at this farm. The head was on the table of "the animal." In other words, he was talking about "the animal." A half an hour later, we were in a dory. The boat was on fire, burning and sinking.

JM: That makes you think, doesn't it?

MG: That's when it made a believer out of me.

JM: What other things like that?

MG: The hatch upside-down is really bad, or dropping the hatch in the hold. Sticking a knife in the mast is bad luck. When you go with the Italians, a loaf of bread upside-down on the table is bad luck.

Every nationality has their own little -- You never sing "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" in

front of Portuguese people. That's bad luck. Everybody's got their own little quirks.

JM: I heard it's bad luck to have a woman on the boat. Is that true?

MG: No. Somebody told my wife it was bad luck to watch your husband sail. So all these years she was driving me down. I used to go out at night most of the time. She'd drive me down. [chuckles] She'd take off right quick. She said, "It's bad luck to watch you sail." Because somebody told her that. I never heard it, but somebody told her that.

JM: What's it like out on the Georges Banks at sunrise?

MG: It's according to what the weather is. Sometimes it looks nice; sometimes it don't. It's hard to say.

JM: Did anything strange ever come up in the nets?

MG: The last year I was out, I hauled back a skull in the cod end.

JM: Where was that?

MG: South of Block Island. It was a regular skull of a person. I dumped the bag and the damn thing come rolling down the deck. One of the guys with me says, "Who's that?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't recognize him." [chuckles] I thought it was funny. It was

just a skull.

Another time down at the Corner Buoy, we hauled back a whole bag full of horns - goat horns, just regular horns. Some steamer must have thrown them overboard or something. It was a cod end chock full of horns.

JM: You wonder what they were doing with them.

MG: They were about the size of what they were having years ago out West for powder horns and stuff like that. The steamers throw a lot of stuff overboard. Out in the Gully there, on the edge of the deep water, we used to get a lot of coffee mugs. That's the Navy. The Navy used to go out along there. I suppose the guys on deck drink coffee, finish the coffee, and throw the mugs overboard. We were forever getting them.

Sometimes when you're fishing out on the deep water, you get a lot of little fishies and stuff that you've never seen before.

JM: Really?

MG: Different kinds of fish - nothing too unusual.

JM: A lot of things that you wouldn't see in the shallower water?

MG: Yes. When you're in that deep water, you see a lot of funny little animals and stuff crawling around on the deck.

JM: Does that stuff all get thrown overboard?

MG: Yes. I had the Dauntless there one summer. Some guy over at the University of Rhode Island gave me a big, five gallon jug of formaldehyde (they call it?)

JM: Yes.

MG: He had me put all that stuff in it. So I spent the whole summer putting stuff in that - taking the top off. It had a round top like that. He told me to save it. He wanted to look at it and everything. That's the only time I ever found anybody interested in it.

JM: What were the Newport crews like that you worked with on Anthony's boats? Did you pick the crews or did he?

MG: I shipped my own men. Like I say, when I had the new boats, when he built the new boats, the first year I had a whole gang from Gloucester - all Gloucester guys. I couldn't get a crew from here that knew enough. Of course, I had my son with me. I broke him in and he went mate with me - an engineer. There was a few good men around Newport then. Not many. There's always been a scarcity of men in Newport all the years I've been here - good fishermen.

JM: Why is that?

MG: I don't know whether the guys that live here weren't interested. I mean, all the guys fishing out of Newport come from someplace else. Carl Johnson. You heard of Carl Johnson?

JM: Yes.

MG: He comes from Connecticut. Pretty near all of them come from different places. Whispering Sam there -- I mentioned him the other day. Manny Silvia. I call him Whispering Sam. He's so quiet. I broke him in - first time he went fishing. I took a lot of young guys out. I had a name of being a little bit hard. I was kind of hard on them, I guess. I worked too hard.

JM: Everybody talks about you and says how fair you were. Did you have to be hard on them?

MG: You know, young fellows today, even in the service -- The sergeant's got to be a big brother. He can't be a sergeant. You tell a guy to do something and he don't do it. What are you going to do? Me, I get mad quick. I tell them to do it or else. Most of the guys I've taken out, I've always got along good with. If I got mad at somebody or if somebody didn't do what they was supposed to do --

A lot of times, you're standing watch at night, you're laying to at night, because you

don't catch much fish at night. So each guy takes a couple hours' watch. I'm laying there and I could never sleep too sound, because you're always on edge. I don't know how many times I got up, eased up into the wheel and looked, and the guy on watch was sound asleep. It's very dangerous. Big steamers going back and forth. We might spring a leak. They're supposed to be checking the bilges and everything. Many a time. I'd say, "What are you? Nuts? You're supposed to be on watch here. All these guys are sleeping and there you are, you're --"

"You're the skipper. Give me a call down." What are you going to do?

JM: Did that get worse with all the new equipment on the boats - technology?

MG: No, I don't think so. The technology is nice. It's good in any business. It's nice to have all that stuff to work with. Nowadays, this generation now and everything -- What people don't realize is it's all supply and demand on fish. Every time you get something to catch more fish, you're going to get a lower price for your fish. Of course now, they've caught the fish all up. That's why the price is so high now. There's no more left to catch. If they left

things like they were -- It's a hard thing to say. But if they did, there'd be still plenty of fish around and they'd be getting a nice price, and everybody would be making a good living.

JM: What do you mean, "if they left things like they were"?

MG: They've got these big big stern trawlers, big big power, big nets. They've got all these big fishscopes, all that stuff to find the fish. The fish ain't got a chance. For years and years, they brought in twice the fish you could handle. Yellowtails and that stuff, they used to flood the market. Fish dealers got rich putting them in the freezers. Buying them cheap and selling them high.

You plant a garden out in back here, you go out every day and pick just so many tomatoes and so many carrots, and your garden lasts a long time. But if you've got twenty families you want to feed and you go out every day and pick all you can out of that garden, how long is it going to last? The same thing with the fishing grounds. You catch fish faster than they can grow. That's why you've got nothing.

The same thing with the lobster industry. That's why lobster's so high now. You can't even

catch enough lobsters now to eat on a dragger; whereas years ago we used to go out and drag for them and make a living. You can't find them no more.

JM: When did you drag for lobsters? Was that when you worked for the Bucolos?

MG: When I first come to Newport and when I was with Bucolos. When he built those brand-new boats there, half the hold was lobster hold, with tanks in half the hold and pumps and all that. JM: So those were combination trips.

MG: Yes. Half the hold was for fish and the other half for lobsters. But there was a lot of lobsters around. Of course, a lot of the boats were dragging for lobsters. And then you got these guys with the pots. They're loaded with a thousand [pots]. Christ, now, they fish about three thousand pots a piece.

JM: Those are the offshore people?

MG: Yes.

JM: Did you have trouble with them? You had been dragging out there for a long time. What happened when they started setting pots our there?

MG: We had trouble in the territories. I never had trouble with them. I tried to stay away from them. Of course, there's times you'd be towing

and you towed into one. But a lot of them didn't have their gear buoyed the way he should have. Sometimes, if you went to a place at night and you wanted to try it, you couldn't see the buoys. First thing you know, you're in the middle of their gear, which you didn't want to be. They kept taking more and more of the ground. Finally, the draggers said, "Why should they take all the ground we've had for years and years and years?"

They started making different concessions. "Well, you take this and we'll take that. So many miles will be yours; so many miles will be ours." And everybody cheated on it. A few boats sued a few more other boats for gear lost. On top of that, you had the Russians going around out there.

JM: Did you see a lot of Russian boats out there then?

MG: When I was fishing there, yes.

JM: How did that affect the kind of catches you were getting?

MG: I don't know if it affected us a hake of a lot. What they were catching, I think, was more fish up in the water.

JM: The pelagic fish?

MG: Yes. I don't think they hurt us a hake of a lot. When we was out there, most of the time the Russians were out there, we were just lobster

dragging.

JM: You were?

MG: Yes. And I know they wasn't lobster dragging. They used to haul back. You'd see the net. [end of side two, tape two] Most of the fish they were catching were cod, hake, and stuff like that. They were factory ships. They'd go by, there'd be the awful smell when they were cooking. They were making fish meal. That's what they was doing. They'd make fish meal and bag it. They had mother ships out there unloading. You'd see them unloading and everything. I don't think they hurt us that much.

JM: It must have been quite a sight.

MG: It was. There was a lot of them out there. They scare you, too. They had a little small boat towing between them. Them guys would come along. They'd be towing their nets faster than you could steam. I had one of them there one time. A couple different times I got harassed. One of them harassed me one day. I ran out in the middle of the deck and I gave them the finger.

JM: [chuckles] Did they know what that meant?

MG: I think everybody in the world knows what that means. He was blowing his horn - coming across

our bow, blowing his horn. What could I do? [chuckles] He'd have caught me in the net. He'd have taken me in the net and everything.

JM: How big were their nets?

MG: Oh, I don't know. My God. They probably had a bag that was about the size of this mobile home here. You'd see them haul them bags up through the stern there. Thousands and thousands of pounds of fish.

I'd just stand there and give them the finger -- that's all -- and tell them to go to hake.

JM: How did you feel when the two hundred mile limit was passed?

MG: It didn't bother me too much. That didn't bother me too much. Over on Georges and places, I imagine they [foreigners] might have caught a lot of fish. On the Gully, they didn't hurt us too much. But around Georges they did, no doubt about it - out in the Channel and them places where the groundfish are. I was glad to see them go when they got rid of them.

JM: Did it hurt a lot of fishermen around here that they were out there?

MG: I don't think so.

JM: How did people feel about the government getting involved in the fishing industry, setting

regulations and things?

MG: I don't like to see the government get involved in nothing that I do. Every time you get the government involved, you're in trouble. You've got a whole bunch of guys making rules that don't know nothing about what they're doing. That's the only thing I don't like about it. Instead of doing it the right way --

They came out one time, they brought down a log. They [the government] wanted us all to keep a log - what time I hauled my net back, what time I set my net out, all the bearings where I towed that tow. You go fishing, you make fifty to sixty tows a trip. That's a lot of bookkeeping. The loran bearings, where I hauled back, where I set out, what I got, what I discarded over the sides. I'd have to carry two secretaries to keep up with that stuff. So I took my log and I threw it overboard. That's what a lot of other guys done, too. You know damn well they're not going to look at that stuff. If they did look at a loran bearing, they wouldn't know what they was looking at.

I called the Coast Guard one time. I was on Vearchers. I was broke down. This is a hundred and twenty miles offshore. I'm talking to a Coast

Guard guy. I gave him my bearings. He had the nerve to ask me, he says, "Can you see any landmarks?"

I told him, "I can't see that far."

The Coast Guard guys had no idea where I was. Any time the government gets involved -- they've got all good intentions, but they end up fouling everything up. They can't run the government, let alone run the fishing industry.

JM: Were there regulations that hurt your livelihood?

MG: When they had that limit on yellowtails, yes.

JM: When was that?

MG: About seven or eight years ago.

JM: What did they do?

MG: Limit you to seventy-five hundred pounds of fish. That would probably be enough fish to pay my oil bill or my grub bill on the boat.

JM: So what do you do?

MG: You take them out at night when they can't see you. You cheat. It's foolish to say to a guy, "Well, you've got a boat. You can only bring in so much fish." They limit you to just enough to pay expenses. What are you going to do? Are you going to go fishing for nothing? You pay your expenses and then you've got no money to bring home. You're not going to make a profit. It's so

stupid.

JM: Especially when it's so inconsistent.

MG: Yes. I mean, even at times, they admitted they did wrong and they tried something new or something different. I don't know. Do you ever watch that program -- every once in a while it's on television -- about the lobster dragger out there dragging on Georges?

JM: No.

MG: Every once in a while it's on one of these channels. It shows a meeting in Gloucester with the government workers. The government workers' are trying to pass these laws and all that stuff, and having to keep books, keep track, and keep records. All fishermen have certain pieces of ground they fish on - their own special pieces of ground that he hopes the other skippers don't know about. He's not going to put that in no log book for the government to look at. The skipper in Gloucester says, "I've got to go fishing. I catch a bigg trip of fish. Then I got ten guys breathing down my back, wanting to know where I was." He says, "I come in and I give the books to the government. Them guys go up and look at it and they know where I was." That's their way of thinking.

JM: Those pieces of ground must be hard to come by.

MG: A lot of times a guy finds a little piece of ground that nobody else knows about. There's a lot of hard bottom out there. Sometimes you find a little piece of good bottom in amongst the hard bottom.

JM: Did you have a lot of special spots like that?

MG: Oh, I had favorite spots. I don't think I ever had any spots that nobody else knew about. I had my own favorite spots like everybody else does.

I made a living. As you can see, I never got rich.

JM: Well, you have a lot here.

MG: I made enough to raise five kids. I never went to welfare in my life or asked anybody for anything in my life. That alone is enough to be proud of, I think.

JM: It certainly is. Were there many support services here in Newport for the fishing industry - places to buy things for the boats?

MG: No.

JM: Is that as good as it could be?

MG: No. There was never -- Every time you wanted to buy something, you had to go to New Bedford or Point Judith. You mean outfitting stores and that?

JM: Yes.

MG: No. You had to go to New Bedford.

JM: What do you think the feeling is in Newport toward the fishing industry?

MG: I think years ago the feelings were nice. When I first came down here, I think people liked them a lot. They was all a pretty good bunch of people. Then you started getting this -- Well, when this gang come here from down Texas there - scallop boats -- Do you remember them?

JM: Yes.

MG: They were a wild, wild gang. They gave fishermen a bad name. Back when I moved up here, I didn't dare tell the guy I was a fisherman, I was so ashamed of being a fisherman. All it takes is one bad apple in a barrel.

I think years ago, fishermen were well-liked in Newport. But, in later years, when the riff-raff come in here -- I call it "riff-raff" -- they were all smoking these joints and all that stuff, drunk. Just go down and ask the police department. They'll tell you.

I've got a good friend. Do you know Bill Watterson?

JM: Yes, I've heard of him. I don't know him personally.

MG: He's a friend of mine.

JM: At the police department?

MG: Yes. [inaudible] He was telling me, "Them guys are hard." Riff-raff, scum - that's all they are. They're not real fishermen. They're just somebody they swept off a wharf someplace onto a boat.

JM: Did you have much trouble with people drinking or using drugs on the boats?

MG: No. I never had no trouble. I put my foot right down: "No drugs on board the boat." I never allowed it. I've had them come to work drinking. I'd tell them, "Get in that bunk and stay there." But once we left the wharf, there's no more drinking. "If I find it, I'm throwing it overboard."

JM: What about the environment? The oil exploration on the Georges Bank? What do you think about that?

MG: No, I don't think about it. It didn't bother me any.

JM: Do you think it would hurt the Georges Banks if they were drilling for oil out there?

MG: If they lost control, I think it probably would. Oh, yes. That's very, very dangerous. And it gets rough out there, too - real rough. As long as they had some sure way to plug the hole up if

they lost it or something. They've got that oil in there. If something busted up...

There's an old saying: The tide never changes on Georges. The reason they say that is because the tide goes round and round. The tide keeps going like this all the time. It's coming like this and it goes like that, right around the clock. It goes right around in circles, the tide does. That's why the old-timers used to say the tide never changes. If you had no wind or nothing, that tide that was on top the Bank would stay right there, the tide would - like going round and round.

That would be a disaster [oil spill]. As it is now, they've got it pretty well cleaned up on fish.

JM: It sounds like a pretty amazing place out there.

MG: It is. But they cleaned it all out. These new modern boats and everything. It's nice. I mean, all these nice, big, stern trawlers and all that stuff. But like I say, if you take more out of a garden than you're planting, you'll end up you've got no garden. The same thing with fishing.

End of Interview

Third interview with Mr. Manly Gray, conducted by Jennifer Murray on May 6, 1987

MURRAY: When we stopped last time, we were talking about the Georges Bank . You were saying that the tide never changes on Georges.

GRAY: Yes.

JM: What makes that happen?

MG: The reason they say that is the tide goes around in a circle. I don't know. It's just where Georges is, I guess. The tide keeps going around in a circle instead of going this way then that way like most places.

JM: Where does the water come from?

MG: I don't know. Georges is actually one big, big shoal - you have deep water all around it -- the Northern Edge around the east side of it and the west side of it, you've got your channel going down through. I couldn't explain why. It's just an old saying that the old-timers have, that the tide never changes on Georges. If you look on a chart, you'll see a lot of arrows on the chart. They show you how much -- You know your timing. You get your time off your clock. You can time which way the tide is running. Every hour, the tide will shift, like it was running south, the tide is running south at noontime. At one o'clock, it will be running probably south by west

or south, southwest. It shifts a point, a point and a half, every hour, right around the clock. Every twelve hours you get a circle.

JM: Does that have a lot to do with the amount of life that's found there?

MG: It makes a big difference in your fishing in different places. Sometimes in a southwest tide -- A southwest tide is the strongest tide. Sometimes, in different tides, you catch more fish. You're fishing alongside of a reef or something like that. Change of tide, and you don't get no fish at all. Probably if you go back six hours later, you'll get a lot of fish. They move back and forth.

JM: And a good fisherman knows about that.

MG: Yes. Fellows who fish there all the time, they're pretty well up on that stuff.

JM: Someone who's new is not apt to --

MG: No. Well, you've got stuff you've got to learn.

JM: How long does it take to learn all that?

MG: I don't think you ever learn. You go fishing all your life, you never learn everything - never. There's a lot I don't know. It's according to -- A lot of guys, they fish this steady all their life. I fish all over different places. I fish off of here, Block Island, off of Gloucester, way

down to the eastard off Nova Scotia. Some skippers out of New Bedford, that's all they fish is just Georges Bank - one place all the time. And they get so they know it very, very, very good. They get very good at it. Us guys that don't fish there steady, we can't even compare with those guys - like Woody Bowers. You've probably heard of him.

JM: No.

MG: He was a good fisherman out of New Bedford. He was one of the best. There wasn't too many fellows who could catch as much fish as he caught. He understood the tides. He knew the tides real good. He knew all the good spots and that. There's a lot to it - a lot of things you can't get out of a book, what nobody else would know about. Probably like Daniel Boone going through the Kentucky woods.

JM: Sure. It must feel that way.

MG: Some guys get the knack of it. Of course, then, what you call the highliners, the guys that catch all the fish -- There's other guys like me, probably average. I'm just an average fisherman. I always made a good living at it. I was never a highliner. But in any business at all, I think, that you go into, you always find there is a few

that's a little bit better than the average. I don't care if it's computers or writing books or whatever.

JM: Anybody around here that you particularly remember like that?

MG: No. I don't know any particularly extra smart fishermen out of Newport.

JM: I'll bet there were a lot of people you were able to help.

MG: I broke in a lot of people, a lot of guys.

JM: A lot of guys that are fishing now?

MG: Yes - young guys. Some guys like it; some don't; some quit. You take a new guy out fishing. I find, I'd say, about one out of five or six would take to it. It takes a certain type. It seems to me it takes a certain type to be a good fisherman.

JM: And what's that?

MG: Well, we have an old saying: A strong back and a weak mind. That's about the size of it. It's a hard life. But nowadays, it's not as hard as it was years ago. But still, it's bad enough. I ain't seen too many of them around Newport. There never has been too many fishermen in Newport since I've been here. Of course, trap fishing, like George Mendonsa and them guys - that's a different business all together. That's the difference

between a guy raising cattle or a guy raising chickens. It's different fishing all together. They set traps at certain times of year. Dragging, you got to go out and look for your fish.

JM: Does it take a person who can endure a lot?

MG: Yes. You've got to endure quite a bit at times - the weather, the conditions, the cold. You're out there in the middle of January and February with the net all tore up, and you can't wear gloves to fix the net. You've got to do it bare-handed. It's pretty rough.

JM: What about ice out there?

MG: Oh, yes. I've seen plenty of ice. Off Nova Scotia, we used to get a lot of ice years ago. We used to carry a whole bunch of wooden mauls. We had regular mauls made out of oak. We had a bunch of them under the whaleback. We'd make so much ice, we'd just throw the boat out of gear and go out on the deck and start chopping it. Ice could sink you. In fact, there is boats that have been sunk on account of ice.

JM: What do you do to get rid of the ice?

MG: You pound it, and then shovel it overboard - as much as you can. I've seen times when we had to go in and tie up to the wharf to get rid of it.

We were making too much ice. Saltwater ice is heavy. It's twice as heavy as fresh water [ice].

JM: What is the whaleback?

MG: That's under the bow of the boat. You've seen the bow of a boat.

JM: Sure.

MG: That bow is built up. Under the deck, that's what they call the whaleback. That's where you stow your gear and your nets and whatever. On the old eastern rigs, we called it the whaleback. With these new western rigs they've got now, everything else is built right in. You don't notice it as much. Down in the stern, you've got the same thing on the stern. They call it the turtleback, the back aft.

JM: What do you wear in freezing weather like that?

MG: I have woolen pants, woolen shirts, and oil clothes.

JM: The wool keeps you warm?

MG: Yes.

JM: Does it have to be wool?

MG: No, it ain't got to be, but it helps.

JM: Do you have to buy all those things yourself when you're a fisherman?

MG: Yes.

JM: Ever get out there with someone who didn't have

the right clothes?

MG: No. Well, there's some guys. You meet a few of them, no matter where you go, that figure whiskey costs too much money. They didn't have enough money left to buy their oil clothes. We used to call them whiskey oil clothes. Them guys would have a big box of patches - patch, patch, patch, patch. The majority of the guys kept good oil clothes, boots.

JM: Where did you buy all that stuff?

MG: Down here, we'd go to New Bedford and buy them. They're real expensive now. Years ago -- I can remember my first suit of oil clothes. I think I paid -- See, why you call them oil clothes, years ago they were made out of linen cloth and they were oiled with linseed oil. You had to keep oiling them up with linseed oil and hanging them in the sun. That was the best thing they had in them days. That's before they ever came out with all this rubber and imitation rubber and all that stuff. You had to keep oiling them and oiling them all the time. The first suit I bought was three dollars. I think the boots was two and a half dollars. The sou'wester - a dollar or a dollar and a half. I forget. Less than ten dollars, I'd have it all paid off.

JM: It would be a couple hundred dollars now.

MG: Yes. The oil clothes alone are over a hundred bucks.

JM: Good ones.

MG: I don't know. It's been three or four years now since I've been fishing. Boots must be over fifty bucks. Oh, yes.

JM: Did you ever hear stories about Georges Bank from the older men that you knew?

MG: Oh, I probably did. I've heard a lot of stories of old-timers, but a lot of that stuff I forget. Oh, yes, I heard a lot of stories.

JM: I had read somewhere about these old stories about people who had said they'd get off the schooner and have a game of baseball, the Georges Bank was so shallow in some places. Did you ever hear anything like that?

MG: No. The shoalest place on Georges, I've heard of them hitting bottom on the Cultivator. There's a place near the Cultivator. You can take an oar out of the seine boat and touch bottom. That is the shoalest place, but there's no place you can walk on at Georges.

JM: I knew it wasn't really true, but I wondered how that all came [about].

MG: Near the Cultivator, there's a place there. I've

never seen it, but even on the chart it will show you eight or nine foot of water, or something like that. There is places - in real, real rough weather, you start sailing across Georges from North to South or something like that, you don't sail right over the shoals. You can see the shoals when you go by them - see the white foamy water. But I don't know of any places where you can walk on Georges.

JM: [chuckles] Unless you were awfully tall.

You had said when you were in Gloucester, there were Italian fishermen and Portuguese fishermen and people from Nova Scotia. Who were the fishermen in Newport when you came here?

MG: When I came here, most of them come from someplace else. Carl Johnson was here. He had a boat. He come from Connecticut. The trappers, they've always been here. There was a guy here from Boston. He lost his boat out here.
[inaudible - loud noise]
He was here. Axel Weiderman was here. He come from Gloucester with his two boats. There were two or three of them little day fishing boats. What's his name? The game warden's brother.

JM: Fougere?

MG: No, not Fougere. His father. Yes, his father

[Fougere's] had a boat. But I'm trying to think of another guy. Brownell. His brother, Percy Brownell, was a game warden. This guy had a little dragger. He's a big man - bigger than I am. He was thirty-odd years on that one boat. I'm trying to think of his name - a nice guy.

But there was never no great amount of fishing boats here - not out of Newport. A lot of boats come in here - New Bedford boats. Southern boats would come up here in the spring of the year. Boats out of Connecticut come up here. There's quite a bunch of them boats to take out fish, because Parascandolo had a good name as a fish buyer. That's why all the boats come here. But there was never no big amount of boats owned and run in Newport. Draggers.

JM: About how many draggers were there?

MG: At any one time, I don't believe there was over half a dozen of Newport draggers here.

JM: How about lobster? What was that made up of?

MG: You mean lobsterboats?

JM: Yes. Was it mostly inshore when you came here?

MG: We was one of the first ones to go dragging for lobsters offshore. When I first come here, all the lobsters were pot fishing like Billy [Solitro], the guy that was here. There's always been quite

a bunch of them guys - a lot of them around.

JM: Were there many Greeks still doing that when you came here? Or had that pretty much died out?

MG: There was three or four - the Violet brothers: Jimmy Violet, Nick Violet. I think there was three or four brothers.

JM: Melachrino Violet?

MG: I never knew him. I knew Nick and his brother, Jimmy. Like I say, when the Greeks were all lobstermen, I think that was a little bit before the time that I come down here. I never did actually get to know the lobstermen too well, because that was a different business.

JM: Where did all the boats tie up?

MG: Oh, in them days, everybody tied up at different wharves. There was a lot of wharves to tie up [to]. There's no wharf at all now. Now they got, they call it the State Pier down here now. That's all. All the other places are all taken over by the hotels and whatever. I'd have a small boat today if I could find a place to tie it. There's no place to tie one up.

JM: Were there any other wholesalers besides the Paracandolos? Was that who everybody --

MG: Right now, they're the only ones. I guess Anthony Bucolo sold out. They're supposed to open another

fish house down there. I don't know who bought it.

JM: Down at Anthony's?

MG: Yes. Some company bought it. They were talking about opening another fish house. Right now, they've got a liquor store down where the fish market was.

I worked for Anthony when he bought that piece of land. Forty thousand dollars.

JM: Oh, my gosh!

MG: Over two million dollars for it today, or a million and a half.

JM: I think so. Something like that.

You worked for Ronnie Fatulli after you worked for Anthony. What did you do with him? Skipper a boat?

MG: Yes. I was skipper on a dragger.

[end of side one, tape three]

JM: You said you ran three different boats for him?

MG: Yes.

JM: And where did they go? I think you told me, but I want to make sure.

MG: We fished off Block Island to Georges Bank, out in the Gully. We went down off New York a lot of trips. And we went down off New Jersey. Ronnie's boats were pretty old boats. I mean, they were

old, wooden boats. They wasn't the best in the world. When it come wintertime or bad weather, you couldn't go too far. You had to stay close to shore. But we always made a living, fishing around Block Island. In bad weather, I'd go in there and tie up. He was a good man to work for - very good.

JM: How did you happen to go to work for him?

MG: He asked me.

JM: So you just went over there?

MG: Yes. I went down there looking to buy his lobsterboat. I was thinking of going lobstering, buying pots. I asked him about his boat. He had a boat for sale down there. We got talking in the office and that. He said, "Why don't you come down and work for me?" At the time, I was looking for a job anyway.

I said, "Yes, why not?" So I come down. I went down and of course, the boat he had for sale was worse than the other boats. So I took over one of his draggers. I spent twelve years with him. That was one of the best men I ever worked for - a real good guy. I like Ronnie. He had funny ways about him, but I think me and him was pretty near the same. I'd get mad. I must have got mad at him a hundred times - told him what to

do with his boat. I'd come home. I'd sit here. An hour later, the phone would ring. Ronnie calling me up. "Well," he says, "you cooled off?"

I go, "Yup."

"Then come on down. Let's go fishing."

"Okay. I'll be down." [chuckles] That used to happen half a dozen times a year. He was nice.

JM: What happens when people work for someone like that and the fish are really scarce or it's a real bad winter? Are there any benefits or anything or do you just have to take it as [it comes]?

MG: No benefits at all. You just got to take the good with the bad. When you make good money, you've got to put it away or save it or whatever - which few of the guys done. I know I did. If I made a good trip, I'd put a little bit away. But the average guys -- I mean, if a guy's single or young guys, they spend it as fast as they make it.

Fish were good at times - real good. Then we could have bad times which were real bad.

JM: That part must be hard.

MG: Fishing, you could never figure you were making so much a week. The end of the year, you add up what you made for the year. I always made a good year's pay. We made a bit more than somebody

working ashore. Of course, we put in a lot more hours, too.

JM: Were there any boats built here?

MG: The only one built here I know is the Mein Flicker. That was built by the Newport Shipyard. That was built two years before I come down here.

JM: Who was that built for?

MG: That was built for Eric Ericson. He's a fellow that lived out in Portsmouth here. He ran her for quite a while. I think it was built right after the war. I think right after the war she was built. They lost money on her. They broke their own contract. It was a nice built boat. He went down and he contacted the builder. They claim they lost money. It cost more to build her than what the contract was. That's the only boat I know that was built in Newport - a fishing boat.

JM: And the rest came --

MG: Yes. They came down from Gloucester or wherever.

JM: You owned a boat, didn't you?

MG: Yes.

JM: The Elizabeth Ann?

MG: Yes. She come from New Bedford.

JM: What kind of a boat was she?

MG: She was an eastern rig, two mast, side trawler, seventy-two foot. She was an old boat.

JM: How long did you have that boat?

MG: I had her nine months when she sunk. I was just getting her fixed up.

JM: That must have been a big disappointment.

MG: I told you before of having her in the railways that trip. I spent pretty near three thousand dollars. That was a lot of money in them days.

JM: It is in any day. Who was Elizabeth Ann named after?

MG: Anthony Bucolo named her. The first Elizabeth Ann I had belonged to Axel Weiderman. When I come down here, he had a boat they called Elizabeth Ann. I ran her for pretty near two years. I got through with them and I went to New Bedford and made a few trips. I was jumping between New Bedford and Newport here.

So Anthony Bucolo picked up a shrimp boat. He picked that up, him and his father. Like I told you before, they called me up to go down and take it. I run her for three or four years.

Then this boat from New Bedford was up for sale. The Val T., they called her. Tishon Fisheries owned it. Anthony bought her. When he bought her, he renamed her the Elizabeth Ann, because he just liked the name. I think he had a daughter after that and named the daughter

Elizabeth Ann. He just liked the name. That's where the two Elizabeth Anns come from.

I run her for five or six years. And then, his father and him, they decided to build two brand-new boats -- eighty-two footers -- up in Blount Marine up in Warren. So they built them. The first one come out of the shipyard, I rigged her all out, took her fishing. I guess about six months later, the second one come out of the shipyard. I took her and went fishing.

Then we had, well, a little disagreement after about a year and a half. I had a little disagreement with Anthony's brother, Richard [Bucolo] - me and my temper. Anyway, it ended up I bought the Elizabeth Ann. They sold it and I bought it up. That's how I got to buy the boat. I got along good with Anthony.

JM: Richie must have been very young then.

MG: Yes, he was. He went in the Army at the time when they were drafting. When he come out of the Army, he went to work down the wharf. That was the beginning of our troubles. He was going to run the wharf like they run the Army. We had a lot of trouble. A lot of guys quit.

JM: There must have been a lot of resentment over him.

MG: He was just like a spoiled brat. That's what he

was - just a spoiled brat. If he couldn't have his own way, he'd throw stuff and holler. He was spoiled. He was the youngest boy in the family. I think his father kind of favored him a little bit.

But the rest of them, I got along with. Dominic [Bucolo]. Do you know Dominic?

JM: Yes.

MG: I like Dominic. I like him all right. The first time I met Dominic, I thought he was a little bit on the funny side. I got to know him. He's all right.

Like I say, I got along good with Anthony. I liked Anthony. I don't think me and Anthony ever had two bad words with each other. That's more than I can say about between me and Richard.

JM: What other boats were you on that sunk? You said you were on three of them. There was the Goffrey and the Elizabeth Ann. What was the third?

MG: She was a little seining boat, St. Providenza. We were seining -- I think there were seven men aboard -- up on the Isle of Shoals. That's way to the North of Gloucester - a place they call the Isle of Shoals. At that time, we were seining at night. We were fishing night fish. You'd go up the mast with a search light. The boat was about

a sixty-foot boat. In them days, they used to call them "Guinea boats" - Italian boat. We called them Guinea boats because the Italian fishermen in them days, they used to go trawling with them. They used to have whole families going aboard the boat, like a father aboard with five sons. They had these old, heavy-duty engines like Atlas or something like that. They used to sleep around the engines to get the heat. They'd sleep around the engine and eat and everything else right in the engine room. They lived in the engine room and everything else.

The guy bought this boat. I think his name was [ ] Frazier. He had the seine boat with an engine in it. So what we usually done, we'd leave one guy in the big boat, just laying to. And then we'd go out in the seine boat. The seine boat had a mast. He'd go up the mast and flash the light, trying to find fish.

JM: What fish were you looking for?

MG: Mackerel. If he found fish, he'd give a signal to the guy in the big boat to keep close to us.

So, this night we went out. His brother was one of the crew members. He was a greenhorn. He told his brother, "You stay right here. Don't move or nothing. Just stay right here." So we

went out, steaming along, looking for fish. The first thing, we looked up and his brother's got the big boat in gear, steaming. It hit us and cut us right in half. Sunk us. So we had to crawl aboard the other boat. We lost the boat, the seine, and everything.

JM: What time of year was that?

MG: It was in the summertime, warm weather.

JM: That's good.

MG: Yes, it was warm weather. But just by a guy not doing what he was supposed to do -- no insurance and that stuff either.

JM: Did you ever go out with them again?

MG: No, I never did. I went back redfishing. At the time, I was redfishing. Redfishing, you get tired of that stuff - two weeks, three weeks, two and a half weeks. Seining, you're in every other day. I thought I'd go easier that summer, be home a lot. Besides, the week before, they made six hundred dollars, which was a lot of money then. They talked me into going with them.

So I had to go back to redfishing, because he couldn't get enough money together to buy another seine. He lost the seine. He lost the seine boat. He was not insured.

JM: Are there still people who go out on the boats

that know how to repair the nets like you did?

MG: Oh, yes.

JM: You still have to know how to be a twine man?

MG: I don't believe there's as many around as there was years ago. When I was in Gloucester, pretty near every man on deck was a twine man. To get a good job, you had to be a twine man. You'd go down on the docks in the morning, looking for a job or whatever and go aboard the boat. In them days, you even took your hat off when you talked to the Captain. Nowadays, [chuckles] they don't do none of that stuff. But you'd go in the wheelhouse and you'd take your hat off. You'd ask the Captain, "Any jobs, any sites?" The first thing he'd ask you: "Are you a twine man?" If you wasn't a twine man, you were just wasting your time. They tore up so much [the nets]. There's so much tearing up. The better the crew you had, the more you kept the net in the water.

JM: Is there less tearing up now?

MG: Well, it's less now because you've got nylon now and you've got polyethylene and all this stuff - all this different kind of twine that's about ten times stronger. In them days, it was all sisal, manila, and stuff that rots. A big difference.

Pete Russell, he was a mate for years, used

to say, "God bless Mr. Dupont."

Mr. [ ] Dupont invented nylon. We'd go out and we'd haul back a big rock or a big glob of mud or something. It wouldn't tear; it would just hold it. Whereas, with a sisal net, you'd loose the whole net. We used to go out and Pete would say, "God bless Mr. Dupont."

JM: When something like that came up?

MG: Yes.

JM: Are there any fish that are really hard on the nets?

MG: Dogfish are hard. Dogfish chafe the knots. If you catch a lot of dogfish in the nets, it will chafe the knots. Then, every time you haul back, you get holes that big. The knots would chafe and they'd let go. We'd get a lot of (we called them) crows foots [tears in the nets].

Every evening or something, if you're going to lay to for the night, when you get through, you set your watches. The guy on watch usually would sit on deck and check the net over for holes.

But dogfish are about the only thing that will hurt a net.

JM: When you were first starting out, were there any fish that were considered trash fish that we are eating a lot of now?

MG: Oh, yes - monkfish. We never bought any monk fish. Now they're paying big, big money for monk fish.

JM: Yes, I'll say.

MG: Now, I understand, they're bringing in a lot of hake, cod hake. They're cutting them now. They're something you used to throw away or you'd catch them for trash. Skate wings - they take them now.

JM: What's done with them?

MG: They cut them up and make scallops out of them. But don't believe it when they tell you they taste like scallops. They don't. But I've eaten them.

They're taking a lot of stuff today that you wouldn't even think of years ago. Every so often, if we got a lot of skates years ago, we used to ship a lot of our fish to New York. We used to just cut the wings off and ship them. We'd get ten cents a pound or whatever. It wasn't much, but it helped a little bit to pay expenses. Of course, back in them days, years ago, ten cents was a big price for fish.

JM: Did they make scallops from them then?

MG: I think they started making scallops out of skates during the second war. I guess scallops got scarce or something. The government took a

lot of fishing boats into the service, too. Some guy got somebody to put a bill in that they could sell skate wings for scallops - some kind of a bill just to make it legal. And they did it during the second war. I've never tasted them, but I know damn well they wouldn't taste like a scallop.

JM: How could they?

MG: But they'd cut them in little round pieces and after they were through breading them and everything else, some people wouldn't know the difference. After the war, I guess they went back. It was supposed to be illegal to misrepresent them.

There's nothing that comes out of the ocean, actually, that you can't eat. There's a lot of fish now they're throwing away that could be eaten.

JM: Like what?

MG: Oh, I don't know - most anything. It's hard to say. Even the yellow eels you catch. They call them the "laughing jacks." They're good eating - very good. But people are funny. Like pollack. I always had trouble selling pollack because the meat is dark. People won't buy that color of meat. The same thing as dark tuna fish. Nobody

likes it. That's why it's cheap. Nothing comes out of the ocean you can't eat - nothing that I know of.

JM: So those are sort of prejudices against certain --

MG: Either the way it looks or the color of it or whatever. But them Japanese, they make that crabmeat out of pollack. That's what they make crabmeat out of. They must soak it in something, because it turns nice and white. I didn't believe it. When I [first heard about it]. In fact, I got a package in my freezer now.

JM: It's good for you.

MG: I like it.

JM: We talked about the two hundred mile limit a little bit. Did that, in your experience, do very much to help with the depletion problem or help with conservation?

MG: No doubt it helped to get them out of here. But I think they did the damage while they were here.

JM: The foreigners?

MG: Yes. I think about the time they kicked them out of here, they were probably thinking of leaving anyway.

The only place that I could think of that they did a lot of damage would be around Georges Bank, on the fishing grounds. No doubt they'd

catch a lot of stuff there. Some places, I don't think they did much damage, because a lot of places, they were mid-water trawl.

JM: Was that mostly for herring?

MG: Yes. Squid, herring, scup, whiting - any kind of fish that travels in schools. So, no. I know what they caught didn't do us any good, whatever they did catch. They caught a lot of fish, a lot of stuff. But in this country, they lock the door after the horse gets away.

They used to have factory ships out there, laying there, cooking that stuff. If you passed them on the wrong side, boy, the smell of the fish meal cooking and stuff like that -- In the smoother weather, the smaller ships on each side of the mother ship unloading - right onto the factory ships. They had a big, big fleet. They had big ships. Well, they're all big ships.

JM: How big?

MG: I couldn't tell you how big. Them factory ships were enormous. They were big ships. I'd say you could put about twenty of our fishing boats on the deck, easy.

JM: How big were their nets compared to yours?

MG: Oh, my God. I imagine they could tow right by us and pull us right in their net -- four or five of

us in their net -- and haul us right in through the stern. They could.

JM: Did you see many of those people out there? Or did you never get close enough?

MG: For a while we did. Yes. We'd go alongside of them. They'd come by and you'd see them all hanging over the rail, looking at us.

JM: They'd stay out for a long time, wouldn't they?

MG: Yes. From what I read and everything, they claim they did.

JM: What a life.

MG: They tell me there were a lot of prisoners and people who were sentenced to jail. They'd have the option to go on the fishing boats and probably reduce their time or something. I understand a lot of the help they had on them boats was criminals - not criminals, but guys that had jail sentences passed on them and this and that. They carried some big crews of men. They had women on board. They probably did the cooking and stuff like that.

Oh, yes, they come right alongside of us. Sometimes you think they're going to run you down. It's kind of scary after a while. I got a little nervous a few times.

JM: You know a lot about the sea from all your

experience. How did people like you feel when the scientists and government started getting together and telling you how to run your business, restricting you?

MG: We didn't like that at all. The government cannot run their own business. I don't know how they're going to run mine.

That nylon makes my nose itch when I'm knitting. [refers to heads of lobster traps he was knitting previous to interview]

JM: Oh, really?

MG: Every so often, I get -- I don't know whether the fuzz comes off the nylon or what.

They're interfering into something they don't know anything about. They had people that don't know anything about it either. They'd poke around for a little while. They'd come down and they'd ask questions, this and that - more or less what you're doing now. Then they'd go up, sit in their room, and they'd make rules for us. If they had probably three or four of us guys sitting there with them and talking about it while they make rules or try to get things straightened out -- They don't do that. They make a bunch of foolish things.

And fishermen are a stubborn bunch to start

with anyway. I don't know of any fisherman that I know of that got along very well with Uncle Sam. I know I didn't like it. I didn't like it at all.

They passed the law. The boat owners, I think, done this in New Bedford. They got me listed as self-employed. Now, if I can be hired and fired, how can I be self-employed? I mean, like Ronnie Fatulli owns the boat. They say, "Well, you lease the boat."

I said, "I don't lease that boat. He takes a percentage of the fish. He handles the books; he handles the money. I just bring in the fish and give him the check."

What happens is, I've got to pay my own Social Security because I'm self-employed. Some guys in New Bedford own five or six boats a piece. So the boat owner doesn't have to pay no Social [Security]. On a regular job, he matches what's taken out of your wages. If you work for a company, seven or eight cents is taken out for the Social [Security] and the company's got to match that. That runs into a lot of money. Besides, by being self-employed, I've got to pay -- I think this year, it's close to fourteen percent for Social Security. That's a big thing.

I got here and I even asked the guys down at

the post office. I said, "If I can be hired and fired, which I can because I can't get that boat unless Ronnie hires me, then how am I self-employed?" Even the crew members are considered self-employed. And then, I'm not self-employed by the State. The State don't recognize it. It makes quite a mix-up.

JM: Oh, it must when you go to pay taxes and all of that.

MG: Yes. By being self-employed, I don't have to send in quarterly taxes. There's a special thing that they've got made up for farmers and fishermen, whereas at the end of the year, as long as I send my taxes in by, I think, the last of February, I don't have to send in quarterly. Every year, I sent my taxes in on time and everything. Then, when I paid my State tax, every year the State was fining me for not sending it in quarters. I had quite a job straightening that out. The government tells you you can do one thing, and the State says you can do another.

The government, they don't know what both hands are doing at the same time. They get all fouled up.

JM: Do you think fishermen themselves have wanted to get involved in the political side of the

industry?

MG: No, no. I got no interest in politics at all or the government. The less I have to do with the government, the better off I feel. It ain't that I like to do anything illegal or anything like that, but it's the foolish things they make you do. I don't know. I could tell you some things that I wouldn't tell you here anyway [that's happened].

JM: With the government?

MG: Between the government...Let's say government workers and different fishermen. Of course, I can't say nothing.

JM: I can just imagine.

MG: I'll tell you after you knock that thing [tape recorder] off.

[chuckles]

[end of side two, tape three]

JM: The fishing industry in Newport has changed a lot since you came here.

MG: Oh, yes. It's changed a lot. The last ten years, it's changed a lot. You've got all Southern boats. You go down to the wharf now today, down to Parascandolo's. You'll find one boat that's not a Southern boat and you'll be very lucky.

JM: Really?

MG: All Southern boats. Go down and look at the names on them. Underneath the name, it tells where they come from. There's two or three of them that are still out of Newport. But all them big stern trawlers -- Elmer Nunes, he's got a big boat here. He ties down the State Pier. Have you met him?

JM: No.

MG: What's the name of the boat? It's a red boat. It ties down at the State Pier. He's got bigger boat here, I guess. But they're all Southern boats.

JM: And they're just here on a seasonal basis?

MG: They're here year-round now. They can't make a living down South no more. The bottom is cleaned up. They come up here, they like it, and they stay right here.

JM: And they live here?

MG: Some of them do, yes. Some of them moved right up here. A few New Bedford boats used to come over here years ago. Up till a few years ago, a lot of New Bedford boats used to come here. Not many of them come here no more now.

What happened, Mike Parascandolo, the oldest son, used to work in the office and make the prices and that. Then, he got a heart attack. The next oldest son went in the office - Louis

[Parascandolo]. Don't get me wrong. Louis is all right - a nice guy and all that. But everybody liked Mike better as a fish buyer. Mike could pick up the phone and talk to them guys from New Bedford. He had more diplomacy. I mean, he could handle the job, I think, better than Louis.

Sometimes you'd come in with a trip of fish. Say the price is twenty cents in New Bedford. Louis says, "Well, all I can give you is twelve cents." That's quite a drop. There's a lot of boats they've lost that way. But I wouldn't say it's their fault. Probably they can't get the price. Louis probably can't talk as good as his brother could.

Right now it's all rebels - all Southern boats. And none of the Southern boats are unionized. They're not union. The skipper comes in, no matter what he gets for his fish, he can give the gang whatever he wants. If he wants to give them a half a share or a quarter a share... The New Bedford boats are all unionized. You've got to make out your settlement in a certain way - so much for the boat, so much for each man. But the Southern boats, there's no union or nothing. They just throw each guy a few bucks here or there. They get by that way, whereas the union

boat can't do it.

I know most of this stuff you've got to cut out.

JM: What? No. I don't cut any of it out.

MG: Oh, no? [chuckles]

JM: [chuckles] No. I wouldn't dream of it. It's not up to me to [make cuts].

MG: I'll have people hitting me on the head, coming up to my house here.

JM: What do you think the future of the fishing industry is in Newport?

MG: Well, Anthony is gone now. I don't know whether he's gone or not. All you got left is Parascandolo. They'll probably hang on for a few years. They've still got young sons, young guys growing up - quite a few of them.

I think with the price of property going up, taxes, and everything else -- In time, I don't think you'll see no fishing in Newport. If Parascandolo closes up, that's it. That's the end of the fishing, unless some guy gets another wharf somewhere. But there's more money in yachts, marinas, and all that stuff, than there is in fish. I don't think there's no future at all in fishing in Newport. I can't see it.

JM: Do you think the State Pier will go, too?

MG: I think in time. In time, I think so, yes. You can't fight big money. It's hard. Look at Newport. They tried to stop all the building. Once it started, there's no way in the world they could stop it. Now they've got the whole harbor all filled up with these high-rises and big hotels. Now you watch. It will start on the other side of Thames Street - between Thames Street and Spring Street. Ten years from now, there won't be many houses left between there. They'll be all hotels. That's the way they work - wherever they can buy a piece of land big enough to throw one up.

JM: What do you think the hardest part has been about the way of life of being a fisherman?

MG: Too late I found out that I wasted a life. That's the way I'll put it.

JM: Really?

MG: Yes. My friend, Byron Campbell, he was sitting right where you are one day. He come down here. He had his wife with him. My wife was here. He's about five years older than me. He's been fishing as long as I have or longer. He told me, he said, "Buddy, you know something?" He's Canadian, but he's got like a dry English humor.

"What's that, Byron?"

"Me and you," he says. "Look at us. We're two old men. We've been going fishing all our life," he says. "What a waste," he says. "Look at all these other people. They've been home. They belong to clubs. They belong to bowling leagues. They're home every night with their families. Where have we been," he says, "for the last forty years?"

He was right. Since he said that, I've often thought about it. Sat here and sat here. Since I quit fishing, the last three years, you can't get me out of the house. After all them years of going to sea and being on the water. My whole family's mad at me. I love being home. I just love it. I love being home.

I go out in the morning, go down and have a cup of coffee, come right back, sit here, and if I feel like painting, I paint. They can't see it. I'm enjoying something that I haven't done in all my life.

JM: I'd say you deserve it.

MG: Well, they're after me all the time.

JM: Was there anything in it that you liked, that kept you --

MG: Oh, there's something about going to sea. It charms you. I mean, it's something that keeps

pulling you, pulling you. There's no doubt, I didn't hate it. No, I didn't hate it. I did enjoy it at times. It was a job that I liked. I liked the job. When you get my age, you find out all that you missed. That's the regret you did it.

They have an old saying in fishing: Once you make your first trip, that's your big mistake. You can never get away from it after that. So it's something that draws you, draws you back all the time.

I quit one time. I come out of the service in 1944 or 1945. I went fishing as soon as I come out. I went back fishing. I come in one trip. I said, "I'll never go fishing again. I want to quit." My wife was happy. I went down and got a job at a furniture store on a furniture truck, delivering furniture. I worked there a week. By the end of the week, I got in an argument with a guy that run the store - a Jewish guy.

"You're not fishing now," he says. That was a bad mistake.

I said, "No, but I will tomorrow." He paid me and I went back fishing.

JM: That would be very difficult to work for someone after all that time.

MG: Yes. You get independent. Fishermen are

independent. You've got so many options when you go fishing. You go in one boat. If you don't like the boat too much, you take your sea bag and go ashore. Within a week or so, or whatever, you're on another boat. It gives you a good feeling of [independence]. Somebody that works ashore in a factory or something, there's not that many jobs that they can do that.

JM: No. You can't do that for long.

MG: Fishing, there's always something a little different. I don't think I could ever punch a time clock. That would drive me up a tree - every morning pushing a button; noontime, push a button. Fishing, you're always going for different kinds of fish; you're going to different bottom; you're going to different ports. You travel around. There's always something new and different. It's something that draws you and keeps you there till you get a certain age. That's the way old fishermen end up.

But they [referring to family] don't see it my way. I tell them to live their life the way they want to live it. I'm going live mine the way I want to. I made a few of them mad, but that's the way I do it.

JM: It's an old occupation. How do you feel about

that - about being part of something that goes so far back?

MG: I don't know. To me, it's not that interesting. Of course, to people who've never seen the ocean or something like that, it might be interesting. It's just another job, another lifetime, is all.

They started a fisheries school in New Bedford to train young fellows in fishing. They always ask when they join, "What are you joining for? What do you want to go fishing for?" One guy said he thought it would be romantic. I thought that was very funny.

You're out there in the middle of winter. Some of them storms we used to have.

JM: It must be very demanding, physically. What happens to people after years and years of that?

MG: Well, they end up -- What do they call it? Burnout? I'm just burned out. Physically, it's very hard work. We worked hard years ago - very hard. We didn't have all the stuff you got today. When you're putting the fish away, icing them down. All them heavy nets and rollers. Working on deck, the boat tossing around. It's hard to explain unless somebody's out there and sees it themselves. You try to explain what goes on. Like in a big breeze of wind, you're laying there

and these big seas are coming at you. Sometimes they'll build right up and they'll break right over you and fill the boat full of water. Sometimes it'll knock the windows out of the wheelhouse. I've seen them take the dories right off the top of the wheelhouse - the dories, the boats, and everything right off, clean them right off.

You tell people that, and they can't visualize it. I've seen a lot of pretty scary things. I've got a lot of friends that got lost at sea - a lot of them.

JM: Getting washed over?

MG: Yes. Washed overboard, disappeared.

JM: Did you have any close calls like that?

MG: Well, just the one there - the Joffrey, when she sunk. I got knocked overboard two or three times.

JM: In bad seas?

MG: Yes.

JM: I was lucky, they always got me back. But I've got a lot of friends that have been lost. One guy, one night, was going out. He was drinking pretty hard while he was ashore. I guess he got into what they call the DTs. He was laying in the bunk or sitting at the table. Some guys would be playing cribbage or somebody would be reading a

book. This guy was always kidding all the time. When he came down, he said he's going to go uptown and get himself a beer. Everybody looked up and laughed. He got all dressed up, put his good clothes on, went up the ladder, and disappeared - little realizing he was having the DTs. So he must have went up and caught his taxi. He walked right overboard.

JM: That's quite a story.

MG: My brother, he died last year - a year ago last month. He died in a bunk.

JM: Did he?

MG: Yes. They were fishing. One guy went down to call him to a watch. He shook him. He died in his sleep. He was a young man, too. He was in his fifties. So you never know.

JM: No, you don't.

MG: I've been on Georges and had the helicopter come out and take a guy off the deck. Cleaning fish, working on deck, he fell face first down in the fish.

JM: Heart attack?

MG: It was a stroke, I guess. His name was Herbie [ ] something. He worked with Carl Johnson on the Dorothy E., I think it was. We was already to go out. He come down about 1:00 or

2:00 that afternoon. He come right from the doctor's office. He had a physical examination. He might have been fifty or fifty-five. He said, "I'm all set. The doctor says I'm in perfect shape." He was. He was in good shape for his age. So we went out there, and the first day we were fishing, he's face first.

Called the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard come out. He was still breathing when they took him off the boat, but he died before they got him in. But, it's a very interesting life.

JM: Well, it's good you can say that.

MG: I hope if there's such a thing as coming back again, that I remember it, so I won't do it no more.

JM: [chuckles] I guess we all feel that way in one way or another.

A lot of people say it's real tough on their legs.

MG: That's the first thing that goes. Yes. Pretty near all them old-timers, years ago, their legs would go. A lot of them had trouble with their hands. I never had trouble with my hands - arthritis. I have arthritis in my back. I've always had that. But your legs go in old fishermen - pretty near all them.

JM: You have a lot of things that you're doing now that you're not going out on the boats anymore. You have your painting.

MG: I make a few small nets for the guys around the rivers here, and make nets for the lobster pots. I go down around the water in warm weather. Sometimes the boats come in and they've got their nets tore up. I work on the nets - fixing the nets up for them, whatever. I just take it easy.

JM: How do young men who want to get into the industry learn today?

MG: Well, just go down and ask for a job. That's all I can say.

JM: Do you think it's an art, learning how to be good at it?

MG: Oh, yes. When you first go on a boat and go out there, actually, you're not worth nothing to the skipper or the crew. It takes a while. A good, smart, young fellow that's got any brains and has got a little initiative and wants to learn - after a few trips - every trip, you learn a little more and a little more. I'd say after a couple of months...

I had both my grandsons with me - Richie and Eddy. They turned out pretty good. The last trip

there, when I tied up when I quit fishing, Eddy was with me. That's Richie's brother. I was giving him full pay. They learn quick. For the first few trips, they ain't worth nothing, actually, because they don't know what to do. It's like putting somebody on a computer who's never seen a computer in their life. They're worth nothing.

JM: Forget it. [chuckles]

MG: Yes. I mean, it takes two or three weeks or something before they have any idea at all of what to do with it. Fishing's the same thing. There's different things you've got to go through - setting the net, putting the net overboard, hauling it back. It's all dangerous work, too, because you've got wires going through ropes and lines going to winches. I mean, it's real dangerous. It's hard.

But a guy with half a brain -- Like we always say: A strong back, a weak mind, that's all.

JM: I don't know about that.

As you look back on all those years, what do you think you liked the best about it?

MG: The best part of fishing was coming home, getting paid. The worst part of it was going down and going out.

JM: Leaving the dock.

MG: I think the best part of fishing is the last tow - when we used to haul the net back and start for home. That was the best part of fishing. The only trouble with going home, you've got to come out again.

JM: Well, I've gone through most of my questions. What do you want to add?

MG: Ain't much I can add. Like I told you, I'm very boring.

JM: No. You're one of those people that I know I've just scratched the surface... I really want to thank you. It's been quite an experience, getting to know you.

MG: Oh, thank you.

End of Interview