

Interview with : Leticia Pearsall
Occupation: Registered Nurse
Port Community: Point Judith, Rhode Island
Interviewer: Azure Cygler
Date: August 29th, 2012
Catch Share Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries
Logger/Transcriber: Matthew Schult
INDEX: [minutes:seconds]
Brewed Awakenings, South County, RI

Interview

[00:00]

AC : For the record my name is Azure Cygler and its the 29th, of August, 2012, and we're here at Brewed Awakenings Coffee House in South County Commons in Rhode Island. And Letitia if you could, just for the record, state that you agree to do this interview, and looked over and signed the release form?

LP : I did. Was that good enough?

AC : Okay, perfect, yes. And what is your full name?

LP : Leticia Marie Pearsall.

AC : Pearsall. And your residential address?

LP : Is 434 Klondike Road, Charlestown, Rhode Island, 02813.

AC : And your husband is a fisherman?

LP : He is.

AC : Is he in the sector or a commonpool, do you know?

LP : (Sighs) I don't know, let me see I hear about B days and C days, and Days at Sea.

AC : November he was in the sector, so I wonder if...

LP : Yeah, if he, he stays, he probably has stayed in, I don't think anything has changed or I would have heard about it, but it sounds like there's so much detail to it, it makes my head spin.

AC : Okay.

LP : So I'm just like, "Okay, you go ahead, uh-huh, I hear you." You know?

AC : You just try to be a listening ear.

LP : But it doesn't always make sense.

AC : I gotcha, well we can double-check on that. For the record I interviewed Niles, Letitia's husband, back in November, 2011. At that point he was in Sector 5, but we can double-check on the current involvement.

LP : I couldn't tell you the number, but I'm pretty sure he's involved in a sector still.

AC : Okay, and his homeport?

LP : I'm sorry? Point Judith, Galilee.

AC : Point Judith. And his boat's name?

LP : *Black Sheep*.

AC : "*Black Sheep*". And if you don't mind my asking how old you are?

LP : Forty.

AC : Okay, gotcha. So just, yeah, we ask everyone to start out, is just give me a little bit of background about yourself, where you're from, you know, your family structure, if you have kids or not. Those kinds of details, how you came to be here, how you guys met (laughs). In whatever order is comfortable for you.

(3:36)

LP : Well, I'm originally from Massachusetts. I was born in Stoneham, Mass(achusetts), raised in Medford until I was nine, with my mother, my parents, I don't remember them being married, ever. My mother moved us to Tucson, Arizona-on a whim, as my mother does many things on a whim-and she drove us out there, my brother, myself, my mother, a station wagon full of stuff, and a cat, out to Tucson. And we stayed there for, I was nine when we moved, I remember having my tenth birthday there, and I left when I was fifteen, I believe. So, then I moved with my father who lived in Rhode Island at the time, but he didn't have room for me. So I stayed with my grandparents in Medford, Mass(achusetts) again. I did half a year of school there, high school, and I moved to Rhode Island. So I finished high school at South Kingstown, and I have... my parents [are] both married to other people, so I have one full sibling and two half-sisters and two half-brothers? (laughs)

AC : Very close family network.

LP : It's very confusing. Okay, so anyways there are five of us.

AC : And are they all in New England?

LP : My brother, David, my brother from the same mother, is in Florida. And Matthew, who is my father's son, is in the Navy in Georgia. Brandon, I'm not sure where he is, he lives, his father got custody of him, and they moved to Oklahoma I think, and then, so I haven't spoken to him in years and years and years. And my sister Brooke lives in Massachusetts with my father, that's the youngest, and then my sister Wendy lives here in town, my mothers' daughter.

AC : Okay, and any fishing, do any of them do any fishing?

LP : No, nobody did any fishing, my father likes to rod and reel, but I don't think that counts, so, no fishing. No fishing in the family. I dated a fisherman prior to my husband, and I was in the car with her and she's married to a fisherman, and we went down to the Point to see her husband, and I was broken up with her brother at the time, and I...we're sitting in the parking lot and I looked up and I saw this very nice looking man, not...he was very young then, this is going back, back, back. He was painting the rigging on the *First Light*, and I said, "Oh my God, who is that?"

And Jackie said, "Who?"

And I said, "Him over there."

And she's like, "Oh, that's Niles." She said, I know him, you want to talk to him?"

And I was like, "No...!" and so, I don't know, next thing I know he's at the car, like, oh God, it was very embarrassing.

AC : Friends are good that way.

LP : Well that was my ex-boyfriend's sister (laughs) that should've told me.

AC : And did that lead quickly to a relationship?

LP : Yeah, we dated, we went on our few dates, and I said "Oh, you're too much, you're too much for me." So I went back to my ex, and we were together for awhile, and then eventually when I was twenty-three, that was...I was probably eighteen at the time when I first met Niles, when I first went out on a date with

him. But I was twenty-three when we started dating this time, so we've been together since then.

AC : And did he and your ex-boyfriend fish, or know each other, fish together?

LP : Mm-hmm, they didn't fish together, but they knew each other.

AC : Okay, small town.

LP : Oh very small town, very small community.

AC : And you've been married now for how long?

LP : I couldn't tell you, we forgot our anniversary a couple of years ago, isn't that terrible? Um, we got married in '99, so I think this is thirteen years, I think, so, we've been together for maybe seventeen years, twenty-three to forty? So, long time.

AC : And you have kids, tell me about them?

LP : We have Eva and Danielle, Danielle's our fourteen year-old, and Eva is our ten year-old, girls, good kids. Pain in the butt, like most kids.

AC : (Laughs) Now did you do any sort of higher education in terms of college or technical school?

LP : I went to, I attended CCRI (Community College of Rhode Island) for nursing program, which is what I do now, but I was a late-starter. I should have done that much earlier but I was too distracted by boys (laughs).

AC : (Laughs) We're all guilty of that, we get around to it eventually.

LP : Better late than never.

AC : There you go, there you go. And so, when you met Niles he was fishing, so this was in...?

LP : I wouldn't even, couldn't even tell, a long time ago, seventeen years now, no, when I first met him was even longer than that. I was probably eighteen or nineteen years old.

AC : Right, okay. And, what kind of fishing has he done, what's, sort of the course of his fishing career?

LP : He has been a dragger most of the time, he did some lobstering I know, when he first got into it, but mostly dragging.

AC : Okay. Inshore, offshore? Was he gone for multiple days, or just day trips?

LP : No, not very frequently day trips, even now he doesn't do that many day trips.

AC : So he's gone for awhile?

LP : He's gone for a couple of days.

AC : A couple of days, okay.

LP : He's been on long trips, I know that he went on a couple of the big boats out of Quonset, and they make long trips, fourteen days.

AC : Is that herring that they're fishing for?

LP : They freezer fish, they're freezer boats so they go out, I'm not..., I don't know what exactly they fish for out there, but those are big boats.

AC : Does he do that currently?

LP : No, absolutely not, you could not, the money...no, it's not worth it. He likes to be with his kids.

AC : Okay, so he wants to be home at night.

LP : Well, not every night, that's not possible, but you know, he wants to be home, he doesn't want to be gone, so that's nice.

AC : That's a good quality.

LP : That is a good quality.

AC : And has his role or position changed over the course of the last three years since sectors began? For instance, was he a captain and now he's a crew, or...

LP : No, we have owned the boat, um, since, I was pregnant when we bought the boat, so it's been almost eleven years I think since we owned the boat. So he's been owner-operator just for that time.

AC : And his crew members, does he have crew?

LP : They've changed.

AC : They've changed...

LP : Like, a lot. None of the...

AC : Okay. Are you as close with them, do they interact with your family or is it more like working, keep work separate?

LP : No, it's more like, it's more of a working kind of, and it depends on who it is. I mean right now he's got Josh working for him, we've known Josh for years, Josh was in our wedding party, I mean I don't see them a lot, I'm very busy. His, you know, his wife and himself, they have a totally different schedule, I mean, you know, but it's not because it's like, "Oh my God, you know, you're, gotta stay away, you're the crew." it's not like that. And the other crew member I don't know him.

AC : And their wives are, it's the same sort of thing, everyone just has separate lives that you...

LP : Yeah, pretty much, I mean we don't really, we don't really do anything (laughs) we're homebodies, we don't do much of anything. We keep saying we should have people over this summer; it never happened (laughs).

AC : Well, probably once you get done with work and he's home you don't want to plan some event, and that's understandable.

LP : I get every other weekend off, the thought of spending that every other weekend cooking like a mad person, entertaining and then cleaning up and then going back to work does not sound appealing.

AC : No way.

LP : I'd rather go to someone else's house (laughs).

AC : Enjoy the fruits of their labor (laughs). Now, Letitia you live in Charlestown, is that, is it a fishing community, do you consider that a fishing community?

LP : Charlestown, no, I consider Point Judith and those that make their living from Point Judith the fishing community, where...regardless of where they live. That's the fishing community, the people who actually work there and have to, you know, make their living from the boat, from the sea. I don't really consider Charlestown a fishing community. It's just a little town that has, probably some fishermen that live in it.

AC : Are your neighbors aware that you're in a fishing family?

LP : Oh yeah.

AC : Is there resistance to that? Is there...

LP : Absolutely not.

AC : ...they understand, that you feel like...

LP : They, there's no resistance at all. I have a really good neighbor on one side of me, John, if my husband is gone and it snows, he sometimes comes over and plows the driveway. If I need anything, you know, "Can you help me?" he'll lift this, or you know, he's there to give me a hand or he'll send his son over to help me. And then down the road is Dan Machesky who was one of, he was a fisherman, but now he does, he got into another occupation, he does solar, and he was Niles' old boss on one of the old boats before we purchased the *Black Sheep*. And Danny comes over and plows the driveway and I can call him if I need anything, which I don't very often, but if I do, I know, you know, that I can.

AC : Okay. Now is Charlestown, was the decision to live there and not, say Point Judith, financial, or...?

LP : Well, there's not really any housing in Point Judith, it's all commercial down there, and there's, I mean there's like Great Island, but it's expensive to live on Great Island. Maybe fifty years ago you could have purchased a place on Great Island... And the neighbors are really close, we did live in Wakefield for awhile, we looked for a house for probably three or four years, and we just didn't, Wakefield just got so big and crowded and busy, and we were like, "Let's get out of here, where can we go? This looks good."

AC : Good taxes, taxes are...

LP : Taxes are good.

AC : That does make a difference.

LP : Schools are decent, and your neighbors are there, but not, not "Hand me the cup of sugar through the window." to their hand, you know, "Here, just open the window, honey." Well, no thank you.

AC : Good, so gives you a little room to breathe.

LP : Yes, room to breathe.

AC : So, in terms of social circles, you mentioned it's, when you guys are home it's nice to be home, but, which is understandable entirely, but do you think that your..., the majority of your friends, or any of your friends from fishing families? Let's put it that way, any interactions you have with the fishing community?

LP : Well, I mean I know, like my girlfriend Catherine, she's one of my very closest friends, her brother is a lumper, and she used to be a baitgirl, years back. Let's see, I just know so many people, but mostly, my girlfriend Kelly does a lot of the lettering and painting of the names on the boats. She used to be married to one of the Gallup boys. I just know, there's so many people that I know down there that, I mean, we don't necessarily have, my closest friends I see all the time, like I see Cathy all the time, I see my girlfriend Kelly all the time. But I've met a lot of people from nursing school that I hang out with a lot now. Some of my older friends have gotten married and, you know, moved to Cranston or, who were involved in the fishing community due to the men they were involved with, but no longer involved with.

AC : Yes. Relationships change quickly in this changing industry I'm sure, huh?
(laughs)

LP : Yes, they do. Well, it just, in any, I think in anything people tend to move away, you know? Move away, people get busy, it's not that you don't like them anymore, you just don't, you're in different circles you don't, you know, they work one schedule you work the other, everyone's busy with kids. And then when you get home you really just want to have dinner, do homework, and go to bed. (laughs)

AC : Absolutely. How about, thinking about since sectors started, are you familiar with, it was about three years ago they started, I guess Niles has been involved in sectors from the beginning from what he said last year, so I don't know how much you're..., but you say you're a listening ear?

LP : I couldn't give you any specifics, he could give you more specifics, like I said it makes my head spin. But, I can tell you that since they did tell us that, first they told us that they were going to institute these regulations and they weren't going to take any Days at Sea away. Then it was something like they were only going to take this many Days at Sea away, and now we have almost no Days at Sea, so, I mean he went to making decent living - for a dangerous occupation, mind you - to...half, maybe even more than half of what he was, I mean less than half, excuse me, less than half of what he was making. You know?

AC : In the last, how recent is this, could you?

LP : Every year I look at the tax income, and the taxes, the forms, and say, ha, ha. All I can say is thank God I have, that God I went to school, thank God I had an education, thank God I am gainfully employed.” Because we would be probably living on the *Black Sheep*, the kids and I, yeah.

AC : And I’ll ask actually, a bit more questions in a couple of minutes about kind of how you’ve coped with those changes, but before that, how about long-term life plans, have those changed since sectors started over the last three years? Have you seen yourselves thinking about retirement differently or other kind of bigger, life plans?

LP : No. Retirement, well, I mean yes, we were thinking of retirement before, and now it’s probably out of the question.

AC : Okay. And is that because less is going into savings, or it’s just...?

LP : That’s because we don’t have anything to go to savings.

AC : Okay, so income is going to sustaining livelihood?

LP : To bills, and trying to make, I mean, little comforts. So we have no savings at this time. I’m going to start a 401(k) plan at work because it’s very good, they match very nicely and it’s coming up, so that will probably be our only savings. We keep saying we should have the boat, you know, do something for, but the boat always seems to need something, and then it doesn’t, there’s never anything left. I mean he’s been working for almost a month free, with no pay, because the boat has to be, you know, has needle-gun, has to be done, all the rust has to be taken out, steel has to be cut and welded because it’s worn so thin in spots that it’s not safe, you know, and I don’t want him in a boat that’s not safe. And we can’t afford to pay, say, Pro-Met or someone else like that, you know what I mean, to do it. So he has to do it himself, and he comes home every night, for the last three weeks anyway, can’t move his hands, he’s filthy, dirty, his lungs hurt because he’s inhaling toxic paint and I keep telling him, “You should get a respirator, you should get a respirator.”

“Oh well, you know, that means more money and I don’t have it.” And it’s...
(sighs)

AC : And does his, is his crew helping him, but does he have...?

LP : Yup, the crew is helping, I mean that’s, I mean really, back in the day you didn’t get paid for boat work. Boat work was not something you got paid for, it was expected because that’s, you made plenty of money throughout the time, you

- could save your pay, save your money and you're expected to do boat work. But you know, you're not making a lot of money, so, yeah.
- AC : So he doesn't pay, so now he, you're saying now he has to pay his crew to help him?
- LP : Well, no, he's not paying his crew to help him, it just stinks because nobody has any money, the crew doesn't have any money to be not making any money, and we don't have the money for him to not be making money, but, and it's taking probably triple the time that it would take if we could just pay someone to do it, but we can't. So, that's just the way it is.
- AC : I gotcha. And if the boat's at the dock being worked on, you can't take it out in between because it's docked, that's it.
- LP : Yeah, you can't, no. It doesn't even, I mean it needs to be painted, if you took it out on the ocean that salt water would make fast work of that steel, it would just defeat the purpose.
- AC : That's a good point. How about your quality of life, would you say, overall, is that better or worse?
- LP : Well, it was worse before I got a job, because we were really hating it, I mean, it was bad. When I was in school, I don't even like to think about it, it was bad. But it's much better, I wouldn't have bought this hot chocolate then, that's for sure, you know? And we're not starving by any stretch of the imagination, there are people out there that have it way worse than we do. I feel bad for them.
- AC : Well tell me a little bit about your work then, where you work and what you do?
- LP : I have a thirty-two hour position as a Registered Nurse at the Westerly Health Center, in Long-Term Rehab, where I am the Head Nurse for one of the - we have teams - I am the Head Nurse for one of the teams over there. And I have twenty patients, but they're long-term rehab, so sixteen of them are, you know, it's their home. So it's not like they're critical care or anything like that, you know, it's their home, I give them their medications, I, you know, help them if they need anything, you know, try to raise their spirits because I wouldn't want to be in a nursing home, you know?
- AC : Is that's stressful? Is that stressful for you in terms of coming home and coming into a potentially stressful fishing side of life? How do you manage and balance that, and stay happy? Because you..., amongst it all you have a great smile and it seems like you have a positive outlook, so how do you manage it?

LP : Sometimes you don't; I don't know. What are you going to do, you know? You can't walk around being miserable all the time. I mean, positive thinking.

AC : That's true. And tell me about your role in terms of the fisheries side of things with Niles' business. Do you play a role?

LP : I don't have much of a role in the business, so to speak. All of our accounting is done by someone else because I would probably botch it badly. I have enough to worry about with the house bills because I take care of all the finances with the house.

AC : That's certainly a role.

LP : I did..., I took care of all the bank stuff when we got our second loan. Because we were partners...

AC : A house loan?

LP : Nope, oh, that too, but we were partners with my father initially. So we bought him out and I did, I took care of all the paperwork for that, I did all the running around and stuff, you know, to do with the banks, and workings and dealings with paperwork, and find this, do that, attorneys and all that stuff. Aside from that, I don't have much to do with the boat, which is okay. We go down there, "Who wants to go see Dad?"

"Okay, let's go see Dad!"

AC : Okay. Do the girls like that he's a fisherman, and do they, how do they see that? How do they see their Dad and what he does?

LP : I think it's just, it's not that they like or dislike, it's just the way it's always been, Dad's a fisherman, you know? He's gone for days, which was tough when the girls were going through the "I love Daddy more than you" phase, it was tough for them. (Laughs) All kids do that, they'll go through phases like that, where they're Mommy's girl, and then they're Daddy's girl, and well, when it was Daddy's girl then it was hard, because they would cry when he was gone for a couple of days. But now the fourteen year-old isn't anybody's girl, she is her friends' girl, so, that's what she's all about.

AC : But they still go down and visit him at the boat?

LP : Yeah we go down, we go down and see him. Not tons, but usually if we're in the area we'll stop down and say, "Hey what are you doing?" and of course when the seals come into the harbor we have to go down and see the seals. But

- generally it just depends on what he's doing, where he's docked. You know, because some docks are harder to get to than others, and we don't want anyone slipping and falling and breaking their necks or anything.
- AC : No way. Now did they ever express the interest in doing any fishing-related lifestyles? Or they ever want to be fishermen?
- LP : My oldest one would...never, that means getting dirty and that is out of the question.
- AC : Okay, gotcha.
- LP : My younger one wants to go fishing with Dad when, at some point, when she's older I told her that she could, but not at 10. Too young, too many things could happen; stand in the wrong place, you lose a finger, you know, you lose a..., you get hit on the head with a can.
- AC : And have you ever been out on a trip?
- LP : Not on this boat. I did, I went on a day trip years and years ago, before we were married. We had gone out the night before, and I wasn't feeling very well, but I went anyway (laughs).
- AC : Well, that's not a good place to be, on a boat, if you're not feeling too well.
- LP : It was just, a short trip, it was okay, it was a beautiful summer day, it was flat calm, but I couldn't go inside, couldn't get myself to do it. I set the doors and I picked fish. Yup, he was mad at me though, because I kept saying, "Can I save this one? How about this one? Can I, can I save it? This one looks funny, what is it? Can I throw it over?"
- AC : So you were interested, it was an interesting species...
- LP : Yeah, I would go with him again, in the summer. You know, if the girls, I didn't want the girls to go, but..., Danielle could go if she wanted to, my older daughter, she's fourteen, I think she's old enough to do that, but she has no interest. But when Eva is old enough she'll go, maybe her and I will make a trip in a couple years.
- AC : And has Niles ever encouraged them one way or the other, or discouraged them to be more involved in fishing in any way, or has he just sort of let them view it as they want to view it and decide what they want to do?

LP : My husband would never encourage his girls to become anything that has to revolve around the fishing industry, because there is no future in it.

AC : Okay.

LP : It is dying. It will be dead.

AC : And you have the same, you feel that same way?

LP : I do, if something doesn't change there will be no fishing industry left. And we're very fortunate that we, you know, we didn't spend \$500,000 on a boat, like some people did, you know? Our expenses aren't what some other peoples' are, or we probably wouldn't have our boat right now. Keep things low, as low as you can, I mean look at him he's doing the work himself, you know, and he's killing himself, so that he can, not that we have the money to do it, have someone else... But anyway, you can't, I mean, some of these guys went out, and when the fishing was good they bought these \$50,000 trucks, they paid top dollar, they didn't haggle when they bought the boat. They bought the best of everything and then they lost it all, because the government took away our Days at Sea, they took away sectors, they took away...they took away the fish. And people lost everything.

AC : Do you see a change in him, in terms of how he perceives his profession and his career, is he...

LP : Yeah, my husband hates fishing now. He hates it, he absolutely hates it. If we could afford to have him go to school and do something, of course, you know, he's never been a scholar. He's got a high school diploma, you know? He doesn't even know what he would do if, he doesn't know anything but the water.

AC : Now is the boat paid for?

LP : No.

AC : No, so still boat payments.

LP : Yeah.

AC : The boat insurance, is that something?

LP : Ha, it's very expensive.

AC : Is it mandatory, or is it a choice?

LP : I would imagine it's mandatory if you have a loan, just like a car, or a house, you know? You'd be stupid not to have it though. We have it.

AC : Okay, and that's always been the case?

LP : Oh yeah, I would never let him go out on that boat without insurance. He had talked about it, you know, "Maybe we shouldn't." And I was like,

"Oh no, not ever, ever, don't drop the insurance, you pay it, pay it, pay it, because you never know."

And then what would we do? I mean not if anything happened to him, I mean that, I don't know what we would do then, that would be awful, but, you know, how would we pay to repair the boat? How would we pay the note off? I like living in my house.

AC : Right, right. And is that the same for health insurance, do you...?

LP : I have health insurance through work.

AC : Maybe you always have

LP : Thank God, we went two years without health insurance of any kind, that was hard, awful. Sorry, can't go to the doctor's.

AC : Was this before you got your position?

LP : Yeah, when I was in school, the boat could no longer afford to pay for our health insurance, so we had to go without health insurance.

AC : What year was this, or roughly?

LP : I couldn't tell you, I started work three years ago, I've been at the same job, um, so two years before that we had no health insurance. The kids had State insurance, but he and I had nothing, so we just didn't go.

AC : Okay, and your career choices, has that been influenced by his fishing? I mean it was your choice to go to school, and do your career?

LP : Well, I started school when I was like 24, I believe it was 24. I tried to go to school when I was 23, couldn't do it because I couldn't supply my parents' income, so they wouldn't give me financial aid, so I had to wait until I was 24.

And I started, and I did a couple of semesters, and like I said, I was too interested in boys...

AC : ...got distracted

LP : So I stopped.

AC : This was always the field that you pursued?

LP : I started nursing school. I was a CNA for years, Certified Nursing Assistant, I did, probably six years of that, I did homecare in this area, and I loved that. I liked driving to different places, it would kind of give you a little break in between, I liked helping people, so, I don't know, I just, so maybe I want to be a nurse, maybe I'll try to be a nurse. But then the distractions occur, and then the kids, and then, you know, whatever. But I decided to go back to school just because the restrictions and stuff like that, it was something that I always wanted to do, but then the kids would come, and oh, when am I going to...but when Eva got to be, I think she was about 2, I started taking one class at a time, pre-req(uirement)s, you know, with her, get that done slowly, but eventually did finish. Which I'm glad that I did, a nice little pat on my own back there. It's good for the family.

AC : Yes, it's a great accomplishment.

LP : It's kept us off the street. I like my full-time position, I like my little elderly folks, they are some funny people. So funny.

AC : Has it always been fulltime?

LP : Yeah, I started out fulltime.

AC : Okay, so you just dove right into it once you got your credentials.

LP : I did, and my kids, my girls got to see me, you know, do the schooling, you know, I graduated with high honors and my kids saw how hard I worked for that, and I kind of hope that maybe it rubbed off a little bit, "Well look, you know, Mom can do that." I'm hoping, you know, maybe it touched them a little encouragement, or something.

AC : You would like to see them...

LP : I would like to see them go to school.

AC : Are they talking about it? They're still a little young.

- LP : My fourteen year-old started ninth grade this year, and they need to start getting their, everything that they do from now on counts. And I don't care if she goes to CCRI (Community College of Rhode Island), I don't care if she goes to URI (University of Rhode Island), I don't care if she applies somewhere else, as long as she goes, you know? My little one, she doesn't know what she wants to do, but she loves animals. She wants to be a zookeeper I think.
- AC : Me too! That sounds great.
- LP : I don't know if she'll be able to get a job doing that, but, that's what she wants to do.
- AC : Well, we do have our great little zoo down the road, so, Roger Williams...very good. How about your traditional gender roles at home, you know, as a woman, how do you perceive yourself? Has that changed over time? What is it like being married to a fisherman in terms of home dynamics, and just, some thoughts on that?
- LP : Well, I don't know if it's any different being married to a fisherman as it is to being married to anyone else. I don't have anything to compare it to. I've never been married before, so, and my parent's weren't married for very long, I should say. I don't recall a time together, so yeah. I don't have anything to compare it to. I can tell you, I don't, I think no matter how much you love somebody it is kind of nice to have them go away for a couple of days (laughs). You know, you get your bed to yourself, you don't have to...
- AC : Yes, time is...
- LP : You look at the clock, you can say, "I don't care about that laundry."
- AC : Yes, actually something, a lot, most women have said, that I've interviewed, it's the same, the little, you know, space, and now, how do you, because it's not consistent, right? He doesn't go away constantly, it's sort of sometimes he's home, sometimes he's not, so how do you kind of keep a schedule, or a routine, amidst...
- LP : You...don't. You..., I have learned...
- AC : (Laughs) You've got to be flexible.
- LP : ...since I started nursing school, really, that the way this works is you work around our schedule, when you come in, you fit yourself in, because I cannot try

to re-work everybody else because what we do stays the same, all the time. The kids get up, they go to school. I get up, I go to work. We come home, we go to softball, we do homework, we eat, we, you know, get ready for the next day, we go to bed. That doesn't change. The only thing that changes is whether he's home, or he's not home. So, he needs to fix himself in that scenario when he's home. Otherwise, it's a mess, trying to re-arrange everything for when he's home, it just, it's...awful. I tried doing that, it doesn't work.

AC : He's amenable to doing that, and is he able to make that happen?

LP : Yes. He has to be. We have plans to do something, or, you know, "Come," you know? "Hey we're going to my father's this weekend. Are you coming? Are you going to be home?"

"I might be home."

"Okay, well, do you want to go?"

"I don't know, we'll see how tired I am."

"Okay", and then he decides whether or not he wants to go, if he doesn't, "Okay, we'll see you when we get back", or, "Great, let's go!" That's the only way you can do it. Because otherwise you'd be calling every, I used to be like, "I can't make any plans, I can't make any plans because I don't know if he's going to be home or not." And then it got to the point where we didn't do anything, ever. I didn't see family, and we didn't go anywhere, we didn't do anything, I finally said, "You know what, how long have we been together? Yeah, I love you but I'm used to you now. The honeymoon period is over, we're going to my fathers', do you want to go? No? Great, see you when we get back. Okay."

AC : That seems like a great solution.

LP : It's the only way to do it.

AC : And then, in terms of his fishing and his friendships, is he...does he sort of connect with people at the dock and hang out with other fishermen that you know of?

LP : He does not. He comes home after work, thank God. He's not, you know, I mean, back in the day he'd go to the bar something like that after work, but he doesn't do that anymore. He comes home after work and he hangs out with us. He sees, you know, he sees the guys down the dock, most of those people are the people that he talks to, and he doesn't really..., he goes to the gym, not since he's done the boat work, but most days that he's home if he's not, you know,

he'll get up in the morning and he'll go to the gym in the morning. But he doesn't really like, go hang out with anybody; he comes home.

AC : He wants to see you guys.

LP : Yeah, he comes home. He's tired, he comes home, he eats dinner, we watch TV.

AC : Mm-hmm, just chill out. That's a great thing.

LP : Sometimes we have people over for dinner, but really, we're boring.

AC : And does he talk a lot about fishing when he's home, or does he leave that at the boat?

LP : No, he comes home, you know, he complains about, crew members, and you know, the work that he has to do; mostly that's what I'm hearing these days is what has to be done, what he's done, "The rust, and the paint, and my lungs, and...tired, I'm tired, I'm tired, I can't feel my hands, I can't move my hands." Um, I feel bad for him. I wish we could afford to pay somebody to do this stuff. But, you know, then when he's fishing, it's, "Oh, I wish I could've brought home more fish because there was so much there, then we had to throw it all back, and blah." Which I wish he wouldn't tell me that stuff because it makes me mad because I look at my bill book and I'm like...

AC : Yeah, well, "I wish that you could've brought them home too."

LP : Yeah, "I wish you could've brought them home."

AC : And is it always kind of been...

LP : There has been almost, honestly, there have not been very many occasions at all that I could think of, that he hasn't, that he's come home and said, "Oh there wasn't nothing out there." You know what I mean? Like, that he's just... Once in a blue moon in the summer, he'll come in and he'll be like, "Eh, there's not much, got to kind of wait, the logbook says I should wait, I'll try over there." Because he keeps everything in a logbook, so he knows, where to go, what time of year, what he's caught there, what he caught here. But, then he complains, you know, "This has to be done, and oh, I wish we could catch more fish, I was knee deep in whatever and I had to throw it all back." I hate that.

AC : Because you see it affect your guys' bottom line in terms of...

LP : Yeah, and it's just frustrating for him, you know, frustrating for me.

AC : So, do you have a little bit more time?

LP : Yeah.

AC : Okay, how about involvement in, sort of the wider community, are you guys a member of any town councils or the boards, or coaching, or you know, not that there's a lot of time left over for those kinds of things, but... or fundraising events for the fishing community, anything along those lines, have you ever had?

LP : Niles, he attends some of the fundraisers for, you know, the fishing community, for the Fisherman's Fund, which, we have to start contributing something to that, because they gave me grants for school, they were so good to me.

AC : They did?

LP : They did. They gave me grants for...

AC : For you, not for the kids?

LP : Yeah, for me, for nursing school and they were wonderful.

AC : Is that something you had to apply for?

LP : Yeah, and then fishermen's families get first dibs for funding.

AC : What is this group?

LP : It's the Fisherman's Memorial Fund.

AC : Okay, yeah.

LP : Yeah, Andrea from the bait shop, she's one of the people who does some of the dealings with it, and I believe the Fowlett family is also very involved.

AC : I didn't know they gave educational grants, that's excellent.

LP : They do, and it was really helpful, it was really helpful.

AC : Do they still do that, do you know?

LP : They do.

AC : So it's ongoing.

LP : They absolutely do.

AC : That's super.

LP : Yeah, it is super, and because, I just hope that people take advantage of it, because it is there, and it's, you know, for fishermen and their families and Lord knows. Sometimes they make just, like \$10, \$500 too much, "Sorry you don't qualify for, anything." But you sure don't make enough to pay for your kids to go to school, you know, I mean not that they give out millions of dollars, but, I mean it was enough to be extremely helpful. It left me with minimal student loans.

AC : That's excellent. You can launch into a career without this weight of debt.

LP : Without tons of overhead, yeah, I don't have very much debt for my student loans now, which is nice, not compared to other people.

AC : Now do you, sort of a change in subject, but it just occurred to me, do you guys know anyone who's lost at sea, do you have any friends or family?

LP : "Lost at sea"? Like, ship went down, never found?

AC : Yeah.

LP : No, I know my ex-boyfriend's father was a fisherman who didn't go fishing one day, I don't, I want to say it might've been out of Wickford, but this is back in the day, he's a fisherman, he was supposed to go fishing, he didn't go fishing for whatever reason and the boat went down with everybody on it. He became a butcher after that (laughs). But other than that I've never known anybody lost at sea, we had, you know, guys die in fish holds from fumes, from the squid, I believe it was squid and bleach. Um, it made ammonia that they inhaled and I do believe one of the guys died, I know. Another guy was caught in the winch because he was fishing alone, not sure why he was doing that, could've been financial, could've been (he) likes to be alone, I don't know the total down-low on that. I do know people that have died, you know, overdosed, stuff like that. Unfortunately not everybody goes home to their families.

AC : Yeah, were any of these recent, in the last few years, or sort of more...

LP : No, they seem to, you know, one here, one there. No one, I haven't known...oh God, knock on wood...I haven't known anyone recently, which is just fine with me.

AC : Yes, we don't need that kind of news.

LP : No.

AC : Now, how are earnings distributed in your family at this point? You don't have to give me numbers, but in terms of percentage...

LP : Everything.

AC : ...you contribute versus he contributes, do you contribute more, or less?

LP : Everything goes...oh, you mean as far as who makes more?

AC : Yeah.

LP : I make more. It used to be..., he's lost about \$30,000 a year in his income since all these restrictions and regulations have started. He would still make a good \$25,000 more a year than I do if he, things were still the way they were.

AC : So that decrease started...?

LP : He's lost at least \$30,000 from his income since the start of this stuff.

AC : Since sectors, you think? Which were three years ago, or was this even before sectors?

LP : No, since the restrictions.

AC : The big management measures...

LP : Since the whole, you know, "We're not going to kill your Days at Sea, we're not going to do this."

AC : So over the last ten years-ish, or more?

LP : Yeah, right after we bought the boat, ha ha ha ha, how funny is that? Boy did we buy at the wrong time. Five years beforehand the boat probably would've been paid off, we would've been at least in a much better situation. But I can't complain, we're not in the worst situation, some people we know are worse.

AC : Right, but it's still an impact for sure, so...

LP : Oh yeah, but I do make more than he does now, which it shouldn't be that way. And I'm a new nurse, so we don't get that much, not in the state of Rhode Island; Massachusetts, Connecticut, yeah. Rhode Island? No! I don't know what it is.

AC : Not fair.

LP : Whatever.

AC : Now your responsibilities at home, when he's away and it's you, it sounds like. You do everything at home related to the girls, to their school, to your work?

LP : Yes.

AC : Okay, when he comes home, how, like you said, the rule is, he has to fit in...

LP : When he comes home, I...

AC : ...but does he take over any of the responsibilities?

LP : Yes, my husband cleans! He cleans more than I do, because I'm like, I'm tired. Oh, Dad's coming home, alright let's get it together, great, okay. When I come home after work, I mean, I'm up at 4:00am, because I need that quiet time in the morning, I'm at work by 7:00am, I get out at 3:30pm and then it's, you know, homework, girls, softball if we have it, um, bed. I might fold laundry and then the next day I might sweep, and, but I'm not going to sweep and fold laundry and vacuum and, you know, I'm not doing the whole gamut when I come home from work every stinking night, which really, with two girls, a dog and three cats, among other critters, there is always something to be done. But I'm always more than happy to just do one thing and be happy with it.

AC : Can I steal that strategy, I'm going to actually take that "One thing only, per day, per night."

LP : That's it, that's all you get.

AC : Now how about, tell me a little bit more about sort of his outlook on life, you said that he hates fishing now...

LP : Yes he does, he really hates fishing.

AC : And what's that attributed to? I mean, you were sort of talking a little bit about this, but more directly...

LP : You mean where does this hatred for fishing come from?

AC : Or why is his outlook...

LP : Changed?

AC : Yeah, what's the reason?

LP : He never hated fishing before. He felt he was, the money he was making was worth the sacrifices he makes and the risk that he takes, and now, it's, like I said, sectors A, B, C, the D, Days at Sea. It's so confusing and they're always changing something, and, you know, you think something is open and then the next day it's closed, and you think you have this many pounds that you can come in with and then, you know, they're always changing something. It's just, it's so much of a hassle, and it's so confusing, and the money is certainly not even remotely close to what it used to be. That it's not worth it anymore.

It's, they work hard, I mean, you must know? You know, they work hard, he doesn't sleep because he's not comfortable with anyone really driving the boat, you know, there's tankers out there, those tankers don't answer. You can call them up twenty times, "Hello, hello, hello, you know, can you, heh, you're coming up on us." And they don't reply. They don't steer clear, they don't change course, so you move or you'll get run over. So he's not really comfortable going to sleep and letting one of his crew members who he could, you know, he can't sleep. He could lay down in bed and they could be dozing off, setting the bridge alarm, you know what I mean? No, you don't set the bridge alarm, you keep your eyes open and you look out for other boats, you know? But, he's caught a couple of guys setting the bridge alarm and taking little naps and that was it, so now he's up. He might take a couple-hour nap in the daylight, but basically when he goes out fishing, he gets maybe two to three hours of sleep in a twenty-four hour period, and he could be out for two to three days at a time, sometimes four, never any more than four, really. And he comes home and literally, he might as well not even be there because he will sleep for days.

AC : He's exhausted, yeah.

LP : I mean it's..., That's a lousy way to live, that's hard on your body, plus he's out on deck. He's not the kind of captain who just sits on his butt, smoking cigarettes and barking orders from the wheelhouse, you know? He wants to go out, he wants to make sure everyone's being safe, everyone's doing their job, everyone's taking care of the fish hold the right way, icing the fish. There's no need to be coming in with rotten fish, you know?

AC : How about safety at sea, has that changed recently over the last, say, three years? I'm thinking since sectors, is it safer is it less safe?

LP : Niles has always been safe.

AC : He's always been safe, okay. So have these regulations affected how, you know, how safe he can be at sea, how safe he is?

LP : Well, in the way..., the only way that it's really affected his safety is the fact that we don't really have the money to fix everything that we'd like to fix, that may need to be fixed or probably should be fixed, you know? Which, I mean, when you talk about something going out on the ocean, you know, everything should be right, you know? But you can't, you know, you can't do that all the time, but he's working on it. He's fixing it all now.

AC : He's there now, right now as we speak?

LP : Actually he called me right before I got here and said he was just going home.

AC : Oh, well thank you for still coming here, I'm so sorry. Precious time, so we're just about finished.

LP : It's okay.

AC : And I'll release you to your evening, of hopefully no sweeping, just out of that tonight.

LP : I'm not sweeping.

AC : No sweeping, no laundry.

LP : No, I did chores, I mean I did errands before I came here, then after I leave here I still have to get school supplies for my oldest, and cat food.

AC : It's never ending. Tell me a little bit more about his health, mental, physical health, whichever might apply. Has that changed? Have you seen changes in him?

LP : Yeah, he's entirely more stressed out than he's ever been, ever.

AC : Right, okay. So it's affected his mental health.

LP : Sure.

AC : Physically have you seen any changes or not?

LP : Uh (sighs), well, he's diagnosed with Lyme's disease a couple years ago, so the fishing lifestyle is not really the greatest for him. He does relapse, you know, his Lyme's does relapse, and then he has to go do a course of antibiotics which are really rough on his stomach, make him sick. So, he's not physically in top

condition, he's not, you know, what he used to be. Due to the Lyme disease alone is enough to do it, but he's 44 years old, almost 45. Oh, I'm going to have to, no, 44, well, he's 5 years older, 45, I think, this year (laughs). Ah, I love it.

AC : You do.

LP : I do, I'll always be younger. So, it's kind of, it's getting hard for him.

AC : The lifestyle?

LP : Yeah, just the lifestyle, it's hard, the no sleep, and the hard work, and the, you know, we were hoping that by now we'd have the boat paid off and he could, you know, stay home. But then the government fixed that for us.

{59:10}

AC : So in terms of his planning, he's going to fish straight through?

LP : Well yeah, we were hoping we could, he doesn't want to, but I don't know what else, I don't know what the other option is. We tried everything, we tried him being on the boat half the time, you know, every other trip, we can not afford to do it. We just can't.

AC : And having another captain, is that not, he cannot be...?

LP : That's what I mean.

AC : That's what you mean, oh, okay.

LP : Yeah, having his mate take the boat every other trip, but that doesn't work out because the wind blows so you can't go. So someone always gets the short end of the stick, it's usually us, you know, because inevitably the wind blows or, you know, restrictions, oh, well, we can't, new game plan because this is now closed, or, you know, there's only that much quota left or you can only land on Sundays, or you know, whatever the stupid, retarded, ridiculousness is. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have used the word 'retarded' that's politically incorrect, that's not good. Anyway.

AC : Gotcha.

LP : Yeah, it's killing him, I think. It's really wearing on him, and I don't think he would mind so much, and he wouldn't have such a negative attitude if he could actually feel like it was worth the effort. But again we're stuck, because we have a boat that we have to pay for because it's not paid off, and we need household

income, so it's not like he can sell the boat. Who the hell is going to buy it? Who...oh sure we have people lined up, you know? Yeah, everyone wants to buy into a dying industry where they just keep taking, taking, taking from us and income gets smaller and smaller and smaller and they don't give anything back, and they don't tell us how we're supposed to pay for our bills and pay for our boats and pay for repairs and pay for insurance. Ha ha, yeah.

AC : And is there any supplements like research that you could do, fisheries research where he has scientists on the boat?

LP : Thank God, I can't even tell you, we got an observer on the boat, it was a research thing, they paid for the fuel...

AC : Oh?

LP : We couldn't keep the fish, they were tagging, and he brought, I think it was two observers out, they did the tagging program and they paid us, they paid for the fuel and they paid the boat, you know, a flat sum, and I, it set us, really. It was, he did two of them within two and a half, three months I think, and it allowed for him to stay home some. So, and get some break, you know, he needs, his body needs a break, you know? He came home with a decent enough paycheck, a couple weeks worth of a paycheck so that he could hang out with the kids, and stretch, jog, exercise.

AC : He, I remember him saying he jogs four miles a day or something, so he's still doing that whenever he's home?

LP : Yeah, he tries to do three to four miles a day, whenever he's home. Usually, lately though with all the work he's doing he's only doing maybe a mile down, a mile back because his body's hating it with all this boat work. He's still going though, he's still trying. Which is better than what I'm doing, which is nothing.

AC : It's always a hard thing to work in, exercise is the first thing to get cut, I agree.

LP : I said to myself, I'm going to get up and I'm going to exercise this morning. Nope.

AC : Tomorrow morning, is what I say to myself, often, we all do. And is there anything else you want to add, just in closing and wrapping this up, is there something I haven't asked you think is important for people to know, or even a story or an event or an experience that you remember that is interesting, or was pivotal for you guys? Anything like that?

LP : No, I just would like for, the National Marine Fisheries (Service) to, I mean, hopefully they'll listen to this stuff. I doubt it, I mean they'll listen to it, but they won't take anything into consideration. I would like to know, what do we take observers for? They're on the boat, they document and that documentation goes nowhere, it does nothing. They show that there's fish, they show what people are catching, and still, they continue to make restrictions, they don't lighten up, they've gone back on every single promise they have ever made. They've taken all of our groundfish, Days at Sea, I'd like for someone to tell us how we're supposed to, how are we supposed to do it? I mean if they keep going, what are we going to do? Someone needs to tell us what are we going to do, how are we going to do it?

AC : So there's a take, but there's not an option for a new lifestyle, or...

LP : There's no option, it's just, "We're taking this, and it's just too bad for you." They subsidized farmers, you know, "We'll pay you not to grow this crop." But, the fishermen who have to still pay their mortgages, it may not be on a piece of land, but it's a mortgage on a boat. They have to pay insurance on a boat, they have to feed their families, they have, you know, and it's not just the fishermen, it's the guys who work in the fish houses, the lumpers, the people who drive the fish trucks. I mean the guys who work at the fuel companies, the, you know, the Gallups Marine Supply, I mean there's so many people who are revolving around fishermen who's livelihoods revolve around fishing, I just don't see how these families and these people don't mean anything. They, how can they, why? Why do they say that they're going to do something and then not do it? Or say that they're not going to do something and then turn around and do it, and offer nothing, *nothing* for compensation, or, I mean they don't even say sorry, they don't say anything, they just laugh, I swear, I think that they...I think that they think it's funny. I almost think that it's a game to them, see how much suffering they can cause.

{01:06:50}

AC : And is that, so the future is...?

LP : No remorse, no, that I've...

AC : ...in your eyes?

LP : No.

AC : For the fishing industry in Point Judith?

LP : It would be like stealing, it would be like stealing a patient's narcotics, stealing a patient's pain meds, you know what I mean? It's something that they need and you're going to be causing that person a lot of pain, a lot of unneeded suffering. But yet there are people out here, there, who they mean, I'm sure it happens, you hear of it. It's the same thing, you're stealing someone's livelihood, you're stealing someone's means of supporting their children and living in a home and having a roof over their head and, you're taking a way of life away, and you have no remorse, no..., no care about it. There are people behind that, behind those rules and regulations that they make, there are people that those affect greatly and it doesn't seem like they care. And it doesn't seem like any of the government officials care either, because nobody does anything. Massachusetts government cares, I do see that they fight for their fishermen, but nobody here, anyway. I think that's the most important thing for people to know about the fishing industry, is that there are actually people behind it who have families, and that is the only thing that they know, it's a way of life for them. And it should be, they should be able to continue that and hand it down.

AC : Well you've had a very open way of referring to that...,

LP : Excuse me.

AC : Of course, and I think that that's something that's going to resonate in this interview, so it will come across.

LP : (Exhales) Sorry.

AC : No. Anything else you want to add, or should we wrap it up? That was the last...

LP : No, I have nothing else to add.

AC : Well, I'll just close by saying it's the 29th of August, 2012, and I thank you very much for your time.

LP : You're welcome. Thanks.

[01:09:17]

END INTERVIEW

[01:42:35]