

Tia Retherford Oral History

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Location: Toledo, OR

Length of Interview: Part 1: 00:14:42 Part 2: 00:54:33

Interviewer: SC – Sarah Calhoun

[Begin Part 1-- 0:00:00]

SC: Okay today is August 19, 2015. This is an oral history for the Voices from the West Coast Project and I'm with Tia Retherford. Tia would you mind stating your name for the record?

TR: Tia Retherford.

SC: Awesome, thank you. So I figured we could go back to the beginning and I'd like to hear a little bit about how you became a part of a fishing family? How did that start for you?

TR: Okay. My dad is actually a fisherman out of Alaska. I was raised in a fishing home; he was gone 8 months out of the year. In high school I met my husband who also was the son of a fisherman and he went into the fishing industry. Every man in my life is a fisherman.

SC: What is that like? What's it like being part of a fishing family?

TR: Well for me I don't know anything different because that's been my life. My dad was gone in Alaska so my mom is very independent. We had to help around the house a lot, I have a little sister who is also getting married to a tugboat captain. He's a fishing captain out of Alaska as well. She even went in to sort of the same lifestyle. When my dad was gone, he was gone. When he's home, he's home. Now Mikey and his family, they fish locally out of Newport so the only transition for me was that I see my husband more than my mom saw my dad, if that makes sense. But I don't know any other lifestyle, so I was raised as a strong, independent woman that you do things for yourself. For me it's normal. When I have friends who have husbands that work 9-5, I kind of chuckle because I wouldn't know what that life even looks like. I wasn't raised in it, I've been with my husband for 18 years now and even in high school he fished. I have no clue what "normal" would look like.

SC: Are there any particular highs or lows that come to mind when you think about it?

TR: Lows. Lows would be that you do have to be independent. You terribly miss the people that you love and their job is dangerous. You put that out of your mind so you don't think about the what-ifs. You know they miss things. Sometimes a birthday. You can't do anything over Christmas holiday because it's crab season. All of your scheduling revolves around their fishing schedule and they don't even get to make their own fishing schedule. The plants make their fishing schedule. So you can't plan anything. We do plan 1-2 big vacations per year, but nothing is really planned. Everything is spontaneous. That can be fun, but it's also frustrating, especially if you do plan something and it doesn't work out. It's devastating. The highs would be the money, definitely. My husband works really hard and we live a very comfortable life. Another high would be our kids get to go to work with their dad if they want to. They can hang out on the boat, they can be at the gear shed. We can go see him when he's in, that's a high.

SC: Yeah, that's great. So I'm wondering, besides being a wife of a fisherman and being a mom, what kind of roles do you have with the fishing business?

TR: Just this year, in 2015, my mother-in-law, who does all of the bookkeeping for the 3 fishing vessels that the family owns, she started training me in the payroll. So now I do the payroll for the boat, all three boats and eventually we'll do a little more into the boat-keeping. My sister-in-law, she's also training. She's taking the boat bills. And that just started this year, where we've really stepped in to more of a role in the family business.

SC: So kind of a transitioning time?

TR: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun.

SC: Good. What about your kids? Do you have kids? I guess I sort of assumed.

TR: Yes. We have 3 kids. We have a daughter who is 15, a son who's 12, and a daughter who's 7. My 12-year old son actually goes out fishing with his dad. He's gone shrimping and he's gone crabbing. He wants to become a fisherman. You know after he's a professional baseball player and possible motocross [laughs]. But he would live on that boat if they let him. He would rather spend all his time on the boat. My daughter, she's gone on a fishing trip, but she doesn't like it as much as my son. My oldest [daughter]. She has gone down and grinded on the boat, when they were doing an overhaul on one of our boats. She went down there and spent the whole day just grinding rust off of the boat and she doesn't mind it. And then my littlest is a daddy's girl and she would give anything to be able to be on the water with him. But the rule is you have to fit in a survival suit. So we have a youth survival suit and she's just not big enough yet.

SC: Well that's a good rule. Safety's number 1.

TR: Safety's number 1!

SC: Do you have any concerns at all about safety with your kids being out there?

TR: No, they have a survival suit that fits them, that's number 1. My son wears a life jacket; he has a working life jacket. He has neon rain gear.

[Pause—children talking quietly to her]

TR: My husband definitely is... he's very safety first and I think because he started out so young, he really knows the rules of what you can and cannot do. He shows a lot of respect for the fishing vessel. He knows that it's dangerous so he's been taught well. You don't walk over here; these are the rules. The crew members all look out for Ashton too. He doesn't really just sit there; he works alongside of them so I think that he has some respect from the crew. He'll make his dad sandwiches. He'll sit up in the wheel house. Who knows what they do up there, I just know that he would rather live on that boat with his dad than be at home with us. They send home pictures, and he always has his life jacket on. I think with anything, when it comes to... I was definitely stressed the first time my son went out there because the 'what-if' and I think my husband would probably... this makes me want to tear up, but I think he would probably give his life in order to save, in any situation, but that thought even crossed my mind. Okay, if something did happen, I'm going to lose one of them. Or what if I lost both of them? And I just had to go, Tia, stop thinking about that. It's not good for you because then you're just really worried. So whenever that comes up I just put it out of my mind and I pray about it. I pray every night or if I think about it through the day, I'll just pray that they'll be safe and to give me peace so I don't really think about it a lot. That would make you go insane, I think.

SC: Yeah, it's good to have a strong amount of faith, and trust.

TR: Yeah! And trust! It's all going to... they're going to be protected. They're going to be safe. He doesn't go out when it's storming either. He's not allowed to go out when it's really rough out.

SC: Your son or your husband and your son?

TR: Nope, just my son. [Laughs] Any of my children. And that's his dad, his dad will say, no it's going to be rough this week so you better stay home with your mom. Wa-wa. [Laughs]

SC: So as they get older, I know that your children are still young, but do you think that you'll encourage or discourage them to continue on the fishing business?

TR: Yeah. I said I wouldn't. [0:10:00] I don't really see my daughter going into the fishing industry just because she doesn't really like it out there. My sister-in-law loves it out there. So my daughter hasn't shown any interest in that. She wants to be a forensic investigator. Right now, that's what she wants to do. My son, that's what he wants to do. At first I told them, well you need to go to college first. Go to college and then you can go fishing. Go to college and learn welding, refrigeration, something that will benefit your fishing career, but go get the experience. I think I want them to have the experience more than the degree. That sounds horrible coming out of a mom's mouth, but my husband did one year of college and the experience was amazing. He went for baseball, for college baseball. So of course he's going to do that and then he had a baby! Once Makayla, our oldest came, it was like okay my plan is, I want to fish so why waste time trying to struggle through college when we can just start our life. So with my son that's kind of the way I look at it. I want him to have the experience, but I know that he's not going to be handed anything. Because even now, he just did a fishing trip, and he gets paid. He had to pay for his own rain gear so he had to go in and pay his bill and that was \$220 that he had to pay for rain gear. He always says, why do I have to pay for everything? I tell him because I'm making you a good man, that you will learn to make money and pay your bills. That nothing is handed to you for free. I know that he won't be handed anything for free, but he has a spot. There are three fishing boats in his family that are very, very good fishing vessels. We produce a lot. They're very safe, they're beautiful, they're well-maintained. I know he has a spot and there's potential. The whole point in working so hard for my husband is so that he can give a legacy, something that is sustainable and will carry on to the next generation. We're not pushing him to do it, but if he wants to then it makes it worth more putting in the time now. For all of our kids, I mean we're putting a lot of work for college and for their future and to help them later. But to have a son who is interested, that's even more exciting. We have friends who went to college and they have lots and lots and lots of college debt, and student loans, and the job market... we know that it's hard to... we had one friend who changed his major, I don't even know how many times he changed his major because he'd get it and there was nothing available. So back to school he went, more debt. Why waste time if you don't have any intention to do something that will benefit what you want to do later? If he wants to become a doctor, then yeah! Let's do this. We're going to push him for whatever goal he has in life, but let's not just waste time, money, if this is your plan. I have a brother-in-law who is 23 and he owns his own home. He owns 2 vehicles. Probably more toys than, you know [laughs]. He pays his bills, his taxes, and he bought into a boat at 23 years old. He was like, I want to fish. So why waste time? This is what I want and he's already setting up his life. How can a 23-year old have their own homes already?

SC: That's pretty amazing.

TR: So I want that for... [*Some whispering, talking to her kids*]

[*End Part 1 00:14:42*]

[*Begin Part 2 00:00:00*]

SC: Alright, we are back.

TR: Okay.

SC: So I'm curious about... so it sounds like there's a lot passion and there's certainly a lot of potential for your kids to continue on in the fishing business. But I wonder if they didn't make that decision and your family has three vessels, what would? Would they stay in the family?

TR: The vessels? Oh I'm sure they would. First of all, there are 6 grandkids. Well, but there's only 2 boys. I'm not sure what my nephew... he's only 9, but he goes out fishing with his dad as well. We still have two more siblings that have not started their families yet so we'll see what happens there. But I don't really know, I don't know if my husband would ever get out of it. I think he's probably going to be on there until he's just old! We talk about how we could retire early and travel or whatever, but really, his heart and his, is out on the ocean. It's definitely a part of him. He could never do an office job. He's an outdoors person. Maybe construction, but I don't think so. He's not much of a... I built a deck with him [laughs] I don't think

he's going into construction! But we tease him that he's going on vacation. When he comes home and our schedule is so hectic and we're just going 100 mph and there's so much to do, it's overwhelming to him. He's so used to... well and he's the captain. So he gets to boss everybody around. I tease him that I'm the captain of our ship at home. [Laughs] I mean he is the head of our household so everything goes through him, but we do joke around that I'm the captain of my ship and that he's just a crewmember, but he's used to having his own space. He's on his schedule and that's a whole different stress. A mental stress, a physical stress versus at home. So when he leaves, I say he's just going on vacation. He's like that's right, I'm out of here! Going to my world! So I don't know, he could say that he'd love to retire, but he would be so bored.

SC: He loves being out there. And that's actually one of the questions here is, are most fishing family kids, or young adult fishermen, you guys are still young adults, are they satisfied with their work?

TR: Oh yeah. So my husband is very driven. Everything that he sets out to do, he accomplishes it. He's very goal oriented. There was, when we were really young, the goal was we're going to own a house by the time we're this age, we did it. I'm going to be the youngest captain in Newport, he did it. I'm going to buy a boat, we'll own a boat by this time. And we did it. I actually get nervous because he's always making goals. He has big dreams. So we just bought into a second boat this year. It's a lot of work. They're a million dollars and we paid off the Winona Jay as a family. We were able to pay that off a couple years before we planned on it. So there were a couple years of just, relief. The weight was off your shoulders because that payment, that bill was done. And we were really comfortable. Then it was, hey we're going to buy into another boat. Really?! But I like not having this stress that we've had for 7 years. And now we're going to do it again, and now all that we've saved up is going to be gone. It's a gamble when you do this. But I knew [laughs], I joke around that my husband plans on owning a fleet I think because he won't stop until he owns every boat in Newport or something. Still, when he says he's going to do something, I know that that's what we're going to do. It never fails, he won't stop. He's very driven and very goal oriented. He also has, out of our family, he has stepped into different roles in the fishing community. He's president of the crab marketing association, he's on the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission. We traveled to Boston to the Seafood Expo with the Crab Commission. The plant that we fish for actually paid for my husband and myself, and my mother-in-law and father-in-law to go to Europe last year. We went to Europe to the world expo for seafood. To get to see that side of fishing is just crazy. Eye-opening and exciting all rolled into one. But what an experience! How many fishermen have paid trips to Boston and Europe? He's just a voice. We do the NOAA survey, our fishing boat does the NOAA survey. We're bridging that gap too.

SC: Do you find that there's a lot of value in that involvement?

TR: I think there was. The last few years my husband has only gone on and done a week of it because he runs our other boat full-time. But when he used to do it, he got to see all of the coast from Canada to Mexico. He can tell you fish by their scientific name. We challenge him at the Aquarium. We cover the name and make him say it and check him. He's learned a lot and he's built some friendships with some scientists that work for NOAA. He calls them with questions. He wants to sustain this fishing too because, well for one, we want to fish for a long time and build our dream up. The older fishermen, they got to build their dream, they got to fish and build boats, their lives, and build their dreams. Well now it's our time as a younger generation to get to build our families' dreams. And then pass it on so other people could build their family dreams. So he's really passionate about that aspect of it and he voices that a lot. It's pretty neat. He stands up to older guys and says, hey what about us?!

SC: I'm wondering if you can talk about going to the seafood expos. Are you close with the processors or processing sector at all?

TR: Well that's the thing, we've built relationships with some of the people that work for the plant through the Dungeness crab commission, and my husband is very smart and well spoken. They like that, they respect that so when he does say something, they listen to what he's saying. And he actually listens to what they're saying. There's that idea that fishermen are just dumb, not educated, and angry, whatever, drunks! That's not the case in a lot of boats right now, these are businessmen. These are million dollar

businesses and I think people forget that. Yeah your crew members aren't building a business, they're just working and making a living, but the owners of vessels, or the owners of fish, or quota, they're businessmen. So they respect that. He is a top producer for the plant and what the processor was doing by taking us, is they wanted to show... so they have a buyer from Russia and they want that buyer to see, firsthand, their face and the people who are fishing for their product. And then they ask questions. They want to know how you get it. How do keep the product, the quality really well? How much ice do you put on your shrimp? How much? They're intrigued. They're also intrigued I think because they have that mindset of what fishermen looks like with the yellow hat, Gordon's Fisherman?

SC: Sure.

TR: Then here walks a 34-year old young man in a business suit and they're like, you are the fisherman? How?! [00:10:00] How are you the guy that's fishing?

SC: Do you think that's something that has changed over time? Why does society have this perception of a fisherman? From experience, I've met a lot of fishermen over the past couple of years and they're not like that. They're businessmen, they're smart, and they're intelligent. They care a lot about what they're doing and the people they're feeding.

TR: I have no idea. Because for me, I've only known my dad, and he's really smart. He literally is genius. He came out of a family of seven and he went into the fishing industry and his siblings were professors, worked for NASA, and [laughs] he chose fishing out of Alaska! I've never seen the "Gordon's fisherman". Well even my kids, the funny thing about Gordon's fisherman. My kids wanted fish sticks and tater tots, because people have fish sticks and tater tots. Well I didn't know what kind of fish sticks to buy because I never ate fish sticks. So we picked the Gordon's fisherman [laughs] with the yellow hat, so I even stereotyped. I should have researched it, but I didn't have google on my hand at the time. So we got the fish sticks and the tater tots, they took one bite and would not eat it. Like, this is gross. They were like, what is this? It's a fish stick and tater tots. They liked tater tots, but we've never bought them since. I actually even went with the, well Gordon's it's on TV all the time! But I do think that as much as I don't want to use this production show, but Deadliest Catch and Wicked Tuna and... don't they have Lobster Man? All these new reality shows, even though some of them aren't realistic and they're put on a show with it. The fishing is real. The fishing aspect, like the crab pot, what it looks like, how they do it, pulling it up, that's all real stuff. I think society is seeing, oh that's how it is! But then you have people on the show that are larger than life characters and so they see that [too]. I think when they see captains on the boat, and usually they're boat owners and they're business men, I think they [society] get more of an idea of what... I don't if that is helping us. I think it is. I have a lot of people say, oh so you're like the deadliest catch? No. We have a fishing boat, but we don't king crab, we Dungeness crab, our pots are smaller. You go into this whole like... they just stare at you, huh? Well, kind of. What do you say? Yes, we're out there, but we're out of Oregon. Oh so you're safer? A lot of people think we're safer. And I say, no, actually we're not, we're one of the most dangerous fleets on the coast because we don't have little islands to get out of the wind. They're like, oh really. So, I don't know if it's changing or not.

SC: Well, while we're on the topic of change, is there anything that comes to mind that you see has changed in your lifetime from being a fishing kid to now being a fishing adult family?

TR: Yes. Cell phones. When I was growing up, my mom would write my dad letters every night. Then they would send little recordings of themselves talking to each other. I would lay in bed and you could hear her listening to my dad's recorded messages to her. Or little tapes, like songs. They were young. Anytime that I got in trouble, I knew it was going to take a while before he found out so that was a benefit. I used to write him letters telling on my mom, she's so mean! [Laughs] But he would have to wait to call you when he came into port. Then he got email and it costs 10 cents a character. Per character. So it was all gibberish. They had their own little coding. So I decided to send him an email and I had perfect punctuation. That cost a lot of money, that email was a lot of money. Then they had the tag phone. It used to be when you talked to your husband on the boat phone all the boats could hear your conversation. You kind of didn't want to say really bad news, or talk about personal finance or something because all of the guys, they loved hearing everyone's talks at night. They knew everybody's business.

Now you have cell phones and text, snapchat and Facebook. I usually can get a hold of him, I can get ahold of him if I need to, immediately. That's a big perk compared to what my mom had. What else? It's a little different because my dad was out of Alaska. I find it a perk that my husband fishes locally. I know that I'm going to see him at least once a week. Shrimp season has been really... he's worked really hard and so it has been like one night a week, which isn't a lot, but it's something. You still get to see their face and you still get to give them a hug and a kiss and the kids can see him. I make it a big deal... well your dad's going to be home tonight, so we should really stay home tonight. The next six nights you can go with your friends. So for me that's a big change. A downside, when my dad was home, he was off. For like 3 months! He was off. And we would go and make camp trips and he was home every day, every night. My husband is never off. When he's in, then the gear shed is 3 miles from our house and he's working constantly, working.

SC: There's always something to do?

TR: Yup. Go get fuel for the boat, ice, to get ready for a trip. Oh the weather's nice, we have a little bit of a break, let's paint the boat! This last year, when we bought the Mandy J, and that was... everybody was working, all hands on deck, getting that ready to go shrimping. My husband had some stuff he needed to go shrimping. The boat, we had some rain and he couldn't paint when he needed to and it was grinding. So my mother-in-law, my sister, 2 sister-in-laws, myself, and my best friend and the crew, 3 of the guys on the boat, we painted the whole boat for my husband. Because time was so crunched and everybody was overworking. We painted the boat! That was so much work, it is hard to paint a boat. I'm a perfectionist, I struggle painting a room. I go around and am like, who painted right here? [Laughs] I mean how neat? He was really proud, and excited. How many women go down and paint their husband's boat? Their son's boat? Their brother-in-law's boat? To help him out. Not all fishermen's wives are like that.

SC: It sounds like you have a really strong family.

TR: Because it's a family business. We're all in this together. We're all business-minded. I know when my husband worked on the back deck, I didn't think about the business side. I thought about, you're always fishing! I nagged and complained. And I was young, our kids were smaller too. Then it flipped, we're all in this together. I helped paint on the Mandy-J. I have an hour or two, I was down there. Again, my mother-in-law... it's our family business. If we don't do it, then it won't get done and then we're not going to be able to make a boat payment. And we see how hard our men are working. They're exhausted! If I can go in and help during the day, then maybe he won't work till midnight. He can come home and have dinner. If he can't come home and have dinner, then I'm going to take dinner to them. I think that's the way that it should be. I think that if you work alongside your husband, and you support them in their business side, for one they support [0:20:00] you more in your family... I run the family home and he runs the family business, but he supports me more on that side. Our relationship is better. I'm not competing with the job. A lot of girls compete with their husband... They're jealous. It comes down to, you care more about the boat than me and your family. That's not true. If they didn't care about the boat and paint it, then it's going to rust and get holes, then it's a safety issue. And you should have pride in your business and take care of it. That's a good thing. You should support your husband; he's working really hard to support your family. A lot of women don't have to work. We get to raise children. I think even with Fishermen's Wives (Association) with me about that group, is we're all fishermen's wives so we're all strong, independent, type-A personality. Sometimes [laughs] it causes issues, but we all get it. Nobody has to explain our lifestyles to each other. But your friends who have the 9-5 job and they complain, that their husband is hunting more than usual, it's like... Or they're not doing the dishes or taking the trash out and you're like, well mine isn't either. I don't know, just different thought process. But there are a lot of fishermen's wives or girlfriends that they don't get that either and they just complain and it doesn't do anything, but cause division and heartache. I'm glad that I learned that early on. So I take pride in my husband's work and his boat and our family.

SC: Do you think some of that stems from you growing up in a fishing family? Having that understanding? Versus other women that may not?

TR: Yes and no. My mom's was a little different. With him being gone all the time. And I saw a lot of what she went through and I told myself, I am never going to have a daughter like me that puts [laughs]... and I did! And I am! Her, at that time, her lifestyle was so hard, you didn't have anybody. She couldn't vent to anybody and all of the women around here, she felt like she couldn't really connect with because they had local fishermen and hers was out of Alaska. She even felt a little different too. For myself, what happened was, when we first, when we were really young, I was fought all the time. You're always on that boat! I was that girl. We never see you, you never help around here. Just nag, nag, nag. Then I had an epiphany of my happiness can't come from him. That's not fair, he's human, he's going to fail me and I'm going to fail him. But I can't have my emotions and the way that I feel for the day revolve around what he's doing and how he's making me feel. Because that's just too much for a human to even... I don't want his whole world to revolve around what I'm doing. I just had this, no more. Yes, he didn't take the garbage out, but if he was fishing you'd be taking this garbage out anyway. [laughs] so what does it matter? It's garbage, it isn't that big of a deal. When it comes to the big stuff, he's here. And he's trying to make a life for us, we're 19 with a baby. Really my issue wasn't what his fishing was doing or what he was doing, or anything like that. It had to do with being a 19-year old mom and all your friends are at college. I mean it's completely different. It had nothing to do with him. Nothing to do with him. So when I realized that, it was like freedom. Not that I never complain. And when I do, I always bring it back to, hey, you'd be doing this anyway. Or, that's not his responsibility to worry about making me happy. I'm spoiled rotten. What I want, I get. And that's horrible, but I am [laughs]. It's about giving, not taking. Once I realized that, things have gone really, really good.

SC: Sounds like a lot of wisdom over the years.

TR: Yes! I actually... because my dad still fishes. He's 58. So my mom still has her moments too and then I'll, you know, hey! And I'll give her a thing and she just looks at me. We both know it's true, but you just have that moment where you want to vent and you're frustrated because your cars broke down and you want a guy to deal with it. You want your husband to have to deal with the stuff... I tell him every time he goes out. It's like the kids get sick or [laughs], he doesn't have to deal with the horrible stuff. Or our scheduling, we have a big schedule. But he would give anything to go to every sport meet. He'd give anything to lay around on the couch all day with a sick kid and watch cartoons. He'd give anything to do it. So we have to remember that they miss out on a lot more than we miss out on that's for sure.

SC: Going back to your parents, are they up in Alaska? Is your dad fishing in Alaska? Does your mom still live in Newport?

TR: She lives here in Toledo. So when he's home, he came early this year, my sister's getting married. So this weekend, we are going to Vegas, tomorrow. With my little sister and her bridesmaids and my mom is going to go. My dad is watching all 3 of my kids and my two dogs and my cat. So that we can go [laughs]. Because he's not used to... for one, his kids have been out of the house for over 10 years and so yeah, he's not used to having little schedules. And he's used to running a boat. [Laughs]

SC: So would your family ever consider fishing Alaska? Or are you happy in Oregon?

TR: So when we actually purchased the Winona-J, it had a tendering permit out of Kodiak. It fished out of Kodiak. So when we were talking about this boat and my first thing was, well who's tendering it in Alaska? Because I don't want to be married to an Alaska fisherman. My husband, when we, I don't even know how many months before we got married, February, so like 5 months before our wedding. He went to Alaska for two months and we loved it. It was something new, a different scenery, different boat, try something out. But, I don't think Alaska's for me. I don't really like the long... I'd rather go 2 weeks and not see him than 2 months and not see him. It's just... I watched all that my mom struggled with, even though now technology and stuff is different than what my mom went through. You get really lonely, and your kids really start acting out. Mikey, if he leaves for a long period of time. So he used to leave for 6 weeks is the longest he would leave every year. My kids have been born into this, it isn't like I don't let the excuse... people will say, my kids are acting out because their dad's gone, they just really miss their dad. I'm like, that's not a reason, to me. They don't know anything different so it's not like they're acting out because it's something new. That would be understandable, this is all they know. This is their schedule,

their life. So that isn't a reason to... I don't get to be the meanest mom in the world because you miss your dad. I've never allowed it to be an excuse. That's not a good enough excuse, but when we would go on 3 weeks, 4 weeks, the whole feeling in the house changes. Because that is new. We all are missing daddy. Even that one night, that one evening that he's there, even if we just sit and watch TV and never even talk to each other, he's there that one night is like... for me, re-energizes [0:30:00] like a power boost. Then we can go on. So when it starts going like a long period of time and you don't have that re-energize, a lot comes up in a month. Not as much in 2 weeks, but a lot comes up in a month. Just even if you think about people's lives where you have a death in the family. You just want to talk to your husband about it, you're devastated. And you can't get ahold of him. Yeah, you have everybody else to talk to, but the one person that you want to talk to is unavailable. That makes it hard. So the longer you're apart, the more life stuff happens. I am not going... I told him, no, you are not going to Alaska. Anybody else can go in the family if they want to do this, but I personally do not want to be married to an Alaska fisherman.

SC: Well that's fair. You grew up with a dad that fished in Alaska. And there are opportunities here.

TR: I as a fisherman's wife, have respect for the women who do have... my sister, her husband-to-be, is not a fisherman, but he's a tugboat captain in Alaska. He's gone 2 months, home 2 months, 2 months, 2 months, like that. That's hard. And I don't live that life either so I don't claim to know how she feels. I mean I've felt it, so I definitely sympathize for the women whose husbands are in Alaska. I'm no better than they are. I'm not any better than the ones whose husband's work 9-5 either, because I don't think I could do that. I know [laughs]. If he's home for a month, we know it's time for you to go fishing [laughs]. The kids are like, when's dad going fishing? Because it's a different schedule, different dynamic in the household. I'm more likely to, go ask your dad, go ask your dad. Can't you make these decisions? You do it all the time, but I'm enjoying not [laughs].

SC: Where do you see your family in 5 to 10 years? Where are you guys going to be?

TR: Probably living in this home. I don't know. I don't know if my husband will find another boat, possibly taking another gamble on another fishing vessel. Definitely the goal is to have a bigger home. This is our next goal. My children will be graduated, except for one. That's weird. And I'll have a bigger home [laughs]. I will, I'll have a 20-year old daughter, and an almost 18-year old son, and just a junior high daughter. So I don't know. It scares me. I don't want my babies to leave my house ever. So I have no...

SC: Too far ahead, that's okay.

TR: Yeah! Only because of that dynamic. My world revolves around them. So I'll probably be more in the business, that's for sure. I know that. I'll be doing that. Maybe traveling more. That would be nice. But really, when I think about... my daughter got her permit this week and it's just weird. It's really coming, 3 years and she's moving out. What are we going to do? I don't know.

SC: Well you have some time, you don't have to figure it all out right now.

TR: Yes, I don't know if I have time. It's going really fast! [Laughs]

SC: So I've heard a lot about your business and where you guys are going, but I do have some questions I do want to ask around more of the intergenerational stuff that may or may not be happening to your family or may or may not be happening to other families. So I'm curious if there are obstacles or barriers that you can think of or know of for young people trying to get into the industry?

TR: I think that it costs a million dollars to buy a boat. To be young, you really have to save up a lot of money. That's a couple hundred thousand dollars to put down. Then you need permits and you need quota to fish so that's more and more money. Right there, that's a huge barrier. You have to work really, really hard. Number 2, I think that there are people who are driven and they start out on the back deck and their goal is to eventually run a boat and then maybe buy into a boat, buy a percentage from maybe a guy you fished for years is getting old and you have an opportunity to buy 10% at a time, slowly. Then there are guys on the back deck who never want to be a captain. They just want to be on the back deck.

They don't want the stress and pressure of a captain, or more responsibility. I think then there are captains who don't want the responsibility of owning a fishing boat. Then there are some people who think fishing won't even last 10 years. Why buy a boat when we can't even fish in ten years? So I think that makes it hard, but I think money is a really big barrier, a huge one.

SC: What do you think are perhaps the 3 biggest motivators for people to come into the industry?

TR: Money. [Pause] I'm trying to think of what other people would... to come in, to be on the back deck? Definitely would be money for sure. I think that they don't want to be in an office, they love the outdoors. That would be something, you have to love to be out at sea. You love hard work. They'd have to really... like physically hard, and mentally hard, and you like challenges maybe. But I think money is number 1. Sometimes that's a problem too because you are self-employed. Your taxes are not taken out of your pay check and you make huge checks, but I think they forget there's also downtime. November. Everybody's usually off for November because they're getting ready for crab season, locally here. Well you don't make money in November. So whatever you made in the summer, you need to... and if crab season goes on strike and is delayed, and it has until January. That's two months of no income. You have to budget your money because you're going to get a big lump sum and then nothing. I think they forget about that. And then at the beginning of the year, you have to file your taxes. Well you are charged self-employment tax so you pay huge quantities of taxes and they don't save for it. Then this whole really ugly circle starts. But they try to get out of fishing. I've seen a lot of people... some people have made it. They try to get out of fishing and they can't survive. Because they have accustomed their lifestyle and their bills according to what they're used to making. Then you get out of it and you don't make that kind of money. Now you can't afford to pay your bills and your taxes are due. So then they'll do one trip, they'll do a fill-in trip. They come in, do a fill-in trip, make a couple thousand dollars for four days of work, that's a lot of money. So if you're used to bringing in like 7,000 a month, then you go down to something that only brings in 2,000 dollars a month. It's like this never-ending, you can't get out of fishing because of that. You become accustomed. So, money.

SC: Yeah, that's huge, and the balance. So this one, I kind of brought up before we started the recording, but there's data that shows that the average age of a commercial fisherman here is in the 50's, I think the United States average. Do you think that this has always been the case or do you think there really is... do you see here in Newport trends that agree or don't agree with this graying? [0:40:00] Of the fleet as they call it, some people don't like that term.

TR: So captain-wise or just all across the board?

SC: I think it's just in general, the average age of a commercial fisherman.

TR: Yeah, because there are a lot of young guys here, a lot of young guys, in Newport. I think that the reason that the age would go up is they started really young, but they've maintained... they're getting older. Mikey started fishing full-time at 19 or 18. Obviously now he's 34. My dad started fishing when he was really young and he's still fishing, he's 58. But there are a lot of deck hands. There are older guys too, but there are a lot of young guys that are fishing out of Newport. Captains, there are a few... probably 6 captains in the 30, you know, young that are captains. But there are still a lot of older captains too.

SC: Do you see this happening in other towns, maybe in Alaska, or are you not sure?

TR: I'm not sure.

SC: That's okay. So the one thing you've kind of mentioned that some people are afraid that there just won't be fishing in 10 years and so this is completely hypothetical: if fishing were to completely disappear, if fishing couldn't exist in Newport anymore, what would happen to the family and secondly, what would happen to the community?

TR: Our family would be devastated. Definitely devastated. Maybe not... my in-laws would be devastated, but they definitely have built up... you know, we haven't built up like they have. So we would have no

income at all and all that we've gambled in purchasing boats and all of that would be in vain. I mean we would have lost everything that we put in. So that would be devastating. Newport especially, they had... there was something in the paper a few years back, but the fishing fleet brings in more money to Newport than tourism, than any other income-generated for our community. People have actually complained... parking is a huge issue on the Bayfront, a big one. You know they give fishermen a little parking lot, there are more fishermen than what's in that little parking lot and you have to pay \$40 dollars for a pass to park in there. Now they're wanting to make a rule, you can only park no longer than 72 hours along the docks. Well the fish trip is for 4 days, 7 days. So now we're getting tickets. They want us to park up the hill, so the tourists have parking. Well those tourists don't bring in... first of all, those tourists come because we're one of the last working Bayfronts. They get to see the boats; they get to see shrimp. They get to see the process. They're there because it's a fishing community. They're there because they want to taste the seafood. And sure they want to look at those sea lions on the dock, but not really. They didn't go, you know what let's go to Newport because they have sea lions on the dock. They go to Newport, and it's not like we're the prettiest town either. I've been to some beautiful harbors, but they're not really fishing, and I've been to some horrible fishing towns, and they're like a dying town. They do not have money. Newport, the fishing brings them the money. All year, the charter fishing, there are people who come here just to go and catch a halibut, just to crab off of the docks. It's everything, but you can't even let them park [laughs]. It doesn't make sense to me. So if Newport lost their fishing, they're going to have to go and get your seafood... I love seafood, I don't eat things that aren't in season and I know are frozen in somebody's little freezer for months because they had it shipped over. Newport would be a dying little town, and it would look gross. Unless, I mean the aquariums there, so there would be some things, but that's during the summer.

SC: Okay. Well I don't want to end on that because that sounds awful. So I guess, I just have a couple of other questions left. What are your greatest hopes for fishing?

TR: My greatest hope is that it can be sustained for the next generation. For the ones after us that want to build their dreams like we get to do. I think that it's a culture, it definitely is a different lifestyle that we're really, really proud of. I'm really proud to be a fisherman's daughter and a fisherman's wife. My kids are really proud that their dad's a fisherman. It's a big deal to us, that all of our family is fishermen. So that pride is exciting for the next [generation] to come up. I want it to be able to be maintained. Regulations are good to some extent. We don't want to obviously fish every fish off. We want to keep it. But sometimes it's really extreme stuff and they don't think, the government, it's the government. Even down to, okay we're going to close the fishery for... or we're going to make you wait an extra month before you can fish. Okay, well we haven't... like I went back to, the money thing. We don't get paid every like normal people get paid. So you pushing it back 30 days, there are people who cannot pay their bills. There are people who fish on little boats, especially the little guys, who fish on little boats. They don't bring in the money that the bigger boats do. And if you're a crew member and you're not even a vessel owner or a captain, you're not going to make enough money to provide for your family. I think they don't really think about how it affects the fishing community, if that makes sense. Sometimes they just want to please a certain type of group without the effects. It's the same as the helo [Coast Guard Helicopter]. It was quick for the government to say, we're going to close North Carolina and Newport. Those are two little ports that nobody cares about, we're going to just pluck their helo, save 6 million dollars, and we're going to bulk up homeland security because that's what we're worried about. And no thought of what effect that had on the town, the people, the tourism. I mean it's a ripple effect. I think the government does that in other things too. Oh, we're going to close this little fishing ground and we're going to keep it closed, but nobody has seen that fish in that area for years, but oh well, nobody cares, it's just one little... We're going to do wave energy. That sounds awesome, I think that's a great idea. But why are you going to put your wave buoy in the middle of a fishing ground? Because I'm pretty sure the ocean has waves throughout the whole ocean, but you're going to put it in the crab grounds and no one can drive around it in how many miles. But we have wave energy. So they don't think. It sounds great. So you have a group of people who have no education or knowledge on what, who that affects or what it's doing, they go, wave energy, that's great. We're going to use less oil, yada, yada, yada. So they're for it, without any knowledge of where it's at. So they just say yes, they don't know. They assume, I mean I assume, they won't put it in a fishing ground. No, that's like exactly what they're going to do [laughs]. I don't get that part. Is it because the cliffs meet just right? I would like to see more of a relationship [0:50:00]. More of a

thinking about everybody as a whole, going forward. We are important to this community. And we're important to this government. Our taxes that we pay is a lot of taxes. There used to be a saying, you knew it was crab season in Newport because the car dealerships were happy. They're happy when crab season starts on time because Christmas is around the corner. Those guys don't have time to go shopping so they go locally. They go locally and they spend big amounts of money because they have huge checks and the local community, especially since the end of December, January, the tourists are gone. They rely on those crabbers making money. And their crabber wives who are lonely and spending money to fill the void [laughs], no. But they do. They're like you can tell its crab season: the car dealerships are happy because people are buying vehicles because they need a write-off.

SC: It's important to think about the larger effects.

TR: Yes, it's a huge, yes! It's the same thing with the helo. And we didn't let them take it. [SC: They messed with the wrong port]. Yes, and that's how I feel about, even with the fishing, but we're not allowed to get involved in that. This is off the record, not a Fishermen's Wife hat on, because it's kind of political. So I don't really get into the political stuff, and we can't voice on that. But, as a woman who is part owners in a fishing vessel, my family's livelihood depends on those little decisions that people make. This affects my children's future. My grandchildren's future. I would like them to look more into, put your wave energy in a spot that does not affect my business. That's how I feel about that.

SC: So I have one other question. It's easy. Maybe. If you had one word that you could associate with fishing what would it be?

TR: [Pause] That's supposed to be easy?!

SC: Not easy, it's short.

TR: [Pause] I don't even know. I think pride. I think I have said that we're really, really proud. I'm very proud of how hard my husband works and how hard our family works. I think that... and how hard I work. I put in... me, my mother-in-law, my mom, we put our blood, sweat, and tears into being strong women and supporting our husbands and vice versa. It takes everybody. So I'm very proud of myself. I feel like I've accomplished a lot in... I don't want to sound conceited, but I know a lot of women will look at my group of friends and myself and my family, and they're like, you ladies are just amazing. I don't want to be supermom, because I definitely fail at supermom, but we all strive to be... like we have it together [laughs]. So it's really neat when somebody gives you a compliment that, hey you look like you got it together, and you're doing really well with what you have. And then I say, thanks! I'm glad this face is putting that out there, because inside I'm not feeling that way. But I do, I feel proud of myself, when it's like, oh I just did that! I pulled my camp trailer camping, all by myself. And then my husband says, you don't need me anymore? I'm like, oh no, I need you! But I can't pity myself, and so I think pride. Definitely.

SC: Well that's all the questions I have. Do you have anything else?

TR: No.

SC: Well thank you Tia.

TR: Thank you.

[End Part 2 00:54:33]