



NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MANUEL SILVIA

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

INTRODUCTION

The Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, 1930-1987, an oral history project, was implemented under the auspices of the Newport Historical Society and the University of Rhode Island Sea Grant Program.

Through question and answer format, the tape-recorded transcribed interviews document the fishing industry from the point of view of its complex traditions and changes. They provide a body of unedited primary source material focusing on priority issues of local concern and those beyond the geographic area under study.

Interviews were conducted by Jennifer Murray of the Newport Historical Society and were transcribed at the Center for Oral History, University of Connecticut. Narrators include representatives of the floating fish trap industry, the inshore and offshore lobster industries, the inshore and offshore dragger industries, the swordfish industry, the wholesale and marketing sector, and fisheries conservation and management.

Oral history enables us to learn about our heritage from those who usually don't write about it. It supplies what's often only hinted at in written historical documents. Readers and researchers using these oral history memoirs should bear in mind that they are transcripts of the spoken word and that the narrator, interviewer, and transcriber sought to preserve the spontaneity and informality inherent in such historical sources. The Newport Historical Society and the University of Rhode Island are not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoirs nor for the views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

Copies of tapes and transcripts are available for research at the Newport Historical Society. Copies of transcripts are also accessible at the library of the University of Rhode Island, Narragansett Bay. As stated in the release form which accompanies each transcript, the memoirs are to be used for scholarly and educational purposes only.

MANUEL SILVIA

Manuel Silvia served as president and spokesman for Fishermen in Newport (F.I.N.) and played an important role in the establishment of the State Fish Pier in Newport by the state of Rhode Island in 1985. Mr. Silvia's manuscript contains valuable information concerning changes in Newport harbor and the impact of tourism, yachting and development on the fishing industry.

In addition to his work as president of F.I.N., Mr. Silvia worked extensively on offshore draggers and lobster boats during the 1960's and 1970's. He now works as an inshore lobsterman in Newport.

Tape I Side I

Biographical Interview

Early involvement in the fishing industry

First job in the fishing industry on an offshore dragger that went to the Northern Edge of Georges Bank (late 1960's)

Species caught

Size of yellowtail catch then and now

Description of offshore trip

Russian boats

Birds

Fishing as a dangerous occupation

Work Silvia did

Perceptions of the fishing industry prior to establishment of the 200 Mile Limit

Not much interest in 200 Mile Limit then because fish were so plentiful

Domestic fishermen didn't realize impact foreign fishing would have on them

Depletion began to be evident by early 1970's

Oil companies, not fishing industry, were responsible for the 200 Mile Limit

Silvia's work in the offshore lobster industry beginning in 1978

Depletion of offshore species and factors responsible for overfishing

Description of technological advances in the fishing industry, 1970's

Government involvement in the fishing industry

Offshore lobster industry

Wooden and wire lobster traps

Comparison of the number of lobster pots needed

per boat for the offshore lobster industry 1970', 1980's

Decrease in lobster population offshore

Increase in effort

Longer trips

Newport fishing industry 1960's, 1970's

200 Mile Limit

Politics and the fishing industry

Fishermen and political involvement

Fisheries management set up by the 200 Mile Limit

World Court decision concerning Northeast Peak of Georges Bank, 1984

Oil exploration on Georges Bank

Georges Bank

Ecological richness

Society's lack of awareness concerning importance of Georges Bank

Silvia's reasons for getting out of the offshore lobster industry

Inshore lobster groups, offshore lobster groups

Inshore lobster industry

Tape I Side II

Work in the inshore lobster industry, contd.

Boats
Equipment
Changes in the industry
Navigation
Number of pots needed
The work of inshore lobstering
Length of the work day
Support services
Marriage and family life
Knowing where to set pots through experience and lucky accidents
Inshore lobster grounds
Gear conflicts with draggers
Gear conflicts among lobster fishermen
Profile of people involved in the inshore lobster industry who have varying degrees of experience
What it takes to be a successful inshore lobster fisherman
Cyclical nature of the inshore lobster industry

Learning the fishing trade

Old timers who taught Silvia

Safety of inshore fishing

Danger of offshore fishing-- most fishermen don't talk about

Inshore lobster regulations

Size of lobsters found inshore and offshore

Lack of enforcement and consistency of lobster regulations a big problem in the industry

Involvement of fishermen in political decisions affecting the fishing industry

Marketing lobsters in Newport, R.I.

Changes in Newport Harbor and implications for the the fishing industry

Dock space in Newport Harbor

Tourism, development, and yachting in Newport and their impact on the fishing industry

Future of the State Pier

Tape II Side I

State Pier, contd.

Fishermen in Newport, F.I.N.

Plans for expansion of State Pier

Fish dealers in Newport who have sold out or will sell out to developers

Fish and lobster dealers in Newport who are important to the future of the fishing industry

Transient boats bringing catch into Newport

Economic importance of the fishing industry to the state of Rhode Island

Local lack of awareness concerning the fishing industry and economic benefits it brings

Economic impact of the fishing industry on Newport, R.I.

Perceptions of occupation

Plans for future

Interview with Manuel Silvia for the Newport Historical Society's Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, R.I. conducted by Jennifer Murray on September 21, 1987.

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

Silvia: Certainly.

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

MS: I was born in Newport in 1942. I've been here most of my life. I've done a little fishing in other areas, but mostly around here in Newport.

JM: What are your parents names?

MS: My father, Manuel, is deceased. I'm actually the junior. My mother is Rose and she's still alive.

JM: What did your father do for a living?

MS: My father was a welder all his life.

JM: Did his family come over here? Or did he come himself?

MS: No. He was the first generation born here in this country. My mother was also. The exact date they came over escapes me at this moment. [It was] probably in the late 1880's or somewhere in there.

JM: Did you meet those grandparents that came over? Were they Newport people?

MS: No, they were out in Middletown and Portsmouth. Previous to coming to this country, they were all fishermen in the old country.

JM: Which was Portugal?

MS: Right. They were whalers, not so much fishermen. They still do it over there like they did it 150

years ago. But everyone has gotten away from the fishing industry. I'm probably one of the few out of the second generation here that is still involved in fishing.

JM: Really? That's pretty special.

MS: I think fishing is special. It's hard to explain. It's like having a second woman or whatever you may call it [chuckles]. It's special. You don't mind getting up and going to work. There aren't many people who can say that.

JM: That's for sure. Did you have a lot of relatives around here who had come over with your grandparents?

MS: I don't really think so, no. There are very few. That would be two generations back. I don't recall many of them. My mother's and father's generation, aunts and uncles, all grew up in this country. Before that, not many at all.

JM: Did your parents speak Portuguese?

MS: Yes. That was our basic language until we went to school as children; my grandmother lived with us, and she only spoke Portuguese. We spoke Portuguese through our childhood until we got into school. We still speak it, but not as much as we did before. My grandmother has since passed away.

JM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MS: Just one brother.

JM: Where did you go to school?

MS: I went to school in Portsmouth and went to high school here at Rogers. [Rogers High School in Newport, R.I.]

JM: How about religion? Was that pretty important?

MS: Probably more important due to our nationality than any of the others, I would guess. With the Portuguese people, the Church is more a part of the home than the home being part of the Church. It's just the way it is.

JM: What do you mean by that?

MS: It's because of your upbringing. You don't think about not going to Church, it's just automatic.

JM: Was that carried through in your home?

MS: Not as much now. The children tend to move away from that. You try not to force the children as much as probably I was forced. It's done differently now. You leave it up to the child.

JM: How old were you when you had your first job?

MS: About twelve years old.

JM: What was that?

MS: I started farming for Fairholm Dairy. [It] used to be one of the larger dairies on the Island here. [I was] milking cows while I was still in school. That went on until I went into the service.

JM: What branch of the service?

MS: I was in the 101st Airborne. After that, I came back from the service into Newport here. There wasn't

much going on. I got away from farming finally. That was a slowly dying industry. I went into mason work for a short time, three or four years. [I] didn't really care for that [chuckles]. I had my own business for a short time.

JM: Your own masonry business?

MS: Yes, I guess that went on for about seven years. It just got old very quickly. I was about 26 or 27 years old, and there didn't seem to be much future in it. One winter we had a real cold winter, and there wasn't much going on. I happened to be in town talking to a friend of mine, Anthony Bucolo, and that's how I got started in fishing. I made two or three trips on one of the offshore draggers, and that was it. That was the end of it. I would never think about doing anything else ever again.

JM: Where did you go on that offshore dragger?

MS: We went to the northern edge of Georges, maybe 160 miles from here.

JM: Was that a groundfish trip?

MS: Yes, we were working on flounders -- yellowtails -- that winter. Wintertime you don't get many people working too far to the east'ard because of the weather.

JM: How abundant were the yellowtail on that trip?

MS: We put a trip on which would have probably been sixty or seventy thousand in four to five days. I'd hate

to think how long it would take to put that many on now. In fact, a trip that size is unheard of now.

JM: That's for sure. Tell me about what it was like out there?

MS: Very, very hard to describe. Pick the best day you've ever had in your life, and that was it. Whether the wind is blowing, whether the sun is shining, raining, it doesn't matter. It's just the prettiest place you can be. There's no smoke, no houses, no trees, nothing. It's just wide open ocean. It's beautiful.

JM: Do you see anything out there?

MS: Nothing other than the people you're with. At that time the Russians were fishing pretty heavy in that area. There were probably fifty, sixty boats, but other than other boats, you see nothing. A few birds . . .

JM: What kind of birds are out there?

MS: What they call gannets, which is a little bit larger than a seagull and has a yellow ring around its neck. Seabirds -- what they call a sea hag. It looks like a scruffy-looking seagull. I don't know the terminology of it. That's about it.

JM: It's pretty rough out there at times. Did that ever bother you?

MS: I think you have to have a certain amount of fear in you, otherwise you're just not human. The beauty

offsets it sometimes. As long as the fear doesn't override your confidence, I think you'll never have any problem. I don't think there's anyone that can say they've been at sea and never been afraid.

Either that or they're absolutely mad.

JM: What was your job out there? What boat was that?

MS: That was the Mariano Bucolo. In fact, that boat was brand new that year. That first trip, I went cook. After that, I went cook and iceman which meant you iced the fish down. That's how it all started. I started in this business on the dragging end of it because there wasn't anybody lobstering offshore at that time. It was a fairly new industry, the lobstering end of it. Of the industry, the main staple was yellowtailing and groundfishing at that time.

JM: Was there talk about the two hundred mile limit then?

MS: No. At the time, there was no interest shown in the two hundred mile limit due to the fact that fish were plentiful. We never realized how much impact the Russians and the Japanese and the Spanish were going to put on the fishing industry at that point. We're talking back in 1967, 1968. There wasn't anybody doing much research at that time. As time went on, by the early 1970's, it was starting to show up. We had no real lobbying power to do anything with the two hundred mile limit. The only thing that helped

the two hundred mile limit were the oil companies. They were trying to buy up the leases, and to protect the leases, they went ahead and pushed it through. We rode along with the oil companies with their lobbies. We didn't have that kind of money to go into Washington and lobby.

JM: How many trips did you take out there?

MS: On the draggers?

JM: Yes.

MS: Oh, I can't even count [chuckles]. I was dragging until 1978. Then I started lobstering on an offshore boat. That's when lobstering was in its heyday. A friend of mine that used to take out here at Aquidneck Lobster was buying a new lobster boat in St. Augustine (or was building it at that time), and he asked me if I wanted to go with him. I signed on, and I was there nine years before I got off.

JM: What boat was that?

MS: That was the Doctor Robert. Dave Spencer.

JM: Getting back to the offshore fishery, when did you first start noticing depletion?

MS: Actually, you could probably say that they started noticing it in the early 1970's, but fishing technology had increased so much more that the gross catch was still up. It was just taking longer to put a trip on. They knew so much more about fishing. Watching the Russians and some of the others fish,

they started copying the way they went fishing. Our technology increased [and] it helped catch more fish even though the stocks were depleting. I would say in the early 1970's.

JM: What new technology was starting to be used?

MS: The size of nets, stern trawlers instead of the old style beam trawlers, making nets out of lighter materials so you could cover more ground, and things to that effect. Heavier doors, spread the net, just make the fishing better. When I was first in the business, they were still using old wooden doors. That's a rarity now; you don't see a wooden door.

JM: Were they using real rope for the nets?

MS: No, we were on cable at that time. That's about it as far as technology, is size of nets and fish finders and things like that. Still, I don't think that any of the guys that are still dragging (and the fleet has gotten much larger) fish with the technologies that the foreigners do. [It's] only due to the fact that we're individuals and can't afford to fish with that kind of technology.

JM: What's the feeling about government subsidy?

MS: I really don't feel that the industry can stand the government's interference. I think the government could help the industry by doing something similar like they're doing with Japan now, and slow up some of this Canadian market. We don't get much foreign

fish here that's fresh other than Canadian. I think the government would serve us far better doing something to that effect, but it's hard to get the government involved partially. Once they get involved, they get involved totally. When you're dealing with individuals, each boat is owned by an individual. They're not big corporate boats or things like that. It's hard to have the government involved. It just never works.

JM: When you were doing that in the sixties and seventies, what did the fishing industry consist of in Newport?

MS: I would guess at that time, Newport was probably servicing anywhere from 80 to 100 boats.

JM: What was the breakdown of what they did?

MS: I would dare say that sixty or seventy percent were draggers. It's probably fifty/fifty split now with lobster boats and draggers because the lobster industry has grown so much since the late seventies.

JM: By that do you mean the number of boats or the amount being caught?

MS: Number of boats and the amount being caught. There has been a decrease in the lobster population as far as we can tell. The effort has become much greater. In other words, boats like I was on -- like the size of the Doctor Robert which would be about a seventy-two, seventy-five foot boat -- when we originally

started, the effort was 600 traps. The effort is over 1,800 traps for that size boat now. Instead of being gone two and a half, three days, they're gone six, seven days.

JM: Has there been a change in the kinds of traps used?

MS: It seems to run in a cycle. Some of the offshore boats today are going back to wire gear. They originally started with wire gear. In 1977 or '78, some of the boats went to wire gear and they did fairly well with them for a year or two. Then there were a couple of strange years and the wire traps did well. After that, some of the people went out of business trying to fish wire traps. Everybody went back to the wood trap. Now they're going through a cycle again where some of the boats are changing over to wire traps. The industry or the type of business that you're in, whether it be dragging or lobstering, you have to go at with one specific idea in mind. If you think you have something that works, you stay with it, and over the course of a fishing cycle -- which is probably anywhere from three to six years -- you'll make as much as the other guy that's changing or more because you're not making so many changes. It's very similar to farming in that sense.

JM: It must get expensive when you start changing.

MS: It can get very expensive.

JM: What was the feeling among fishermen and lobstermen

once the 200 mile limit was passed? Did people have a pretty good idea of what it was all about?

MS: People in general on the coastal states, didn't have much of an idea of what the impact was. People involved in the industry did know what the impact was, but you have to understand that even with the 200 mile limit, the only thing that was secure were the oil leases. The state department will trade any part of the fisheries away for just public relations. Maybe that's something you don't want to hear [chuckles], I don't know. I'm sorry. It's part of it. This country and this state of Rhode Island by itself here is --probably we have the last natural resource, which is fishing. Right here in Newport, and Newport will not really take a strong stand. We've gone for a couple of bond issues to secure a dock and one thing and another, and the people in Newport are in favor of it. Yet the people in power tend to turn away.

JM: That goes all the way up to the federal government?

MS: Yes, the federal government has gotten a bit better, but it's cost tons of money to lobby. When you have to spend a lot of money in Washington so that you can be heard, I think it's quite ridiculous because these people are supposed to be working for us. By us I mean people in the U.S. here, I don't just mean the fishing industry. It's very difficult. People just

don't understand it. You send someone to Washington to work with a lobbyist, they spend three to four weeks, and before you know it, you've gone through \$50,000 or \$60,000 that everybody has to take out of their own pocket out of 30 or 40 boats and chip it in. Most of us in the industry don't have the knowledge to do it, and you don't have the time because if you're trying to pay for a boat, you can't pay for a boat and spend your time in Washington.

JM: How effective do you think the management system set up by the 200 mile limit has been?

MS: I think it's been effective as far as protecting some of the species. I think they have to go further. They should go back to Canada and change that limit because that hurts some of the bigger boats that work up to the northeast there.

JM: You're talking about the Northeast Peak decision?

MS: That was a mistake on the U.S. part. There again it was a state department decision to let it go to the the World Court. It should never have gone to the World Court. There shouldn't have been an argument about it. They should have just left things as they were. Progress doesn't always improve.

JM: That's for sure. What made you decide to get out of the offshore lobster business?

MS: I was coming on my 40th birthday, and I had about enough of it. I'd done some inshore fishing before.

It's actually a young man's business, offshore fishing.

JM: What effect do you think oil exploration out there would have if they actually were drilling for oil?

MS: I don't really know. It's very difficult to give you a yes or no answer on anything to that effect because you don't know what can go wrong or if anything will go wrong. Down in the Gulf, they've had an awful lot of trouble with the wells leaking, and the government not doing their job to make sure the people drilling have all the safety factors in place. It's very difficult, and if they have trouble in the Gulf where most of the time you don't see much of a sea over eight or ten feet, I don't know what you're going to do in the North Atlantic when 20 or 30 foot seas is nothing out of the ordinary.

JM: Given your feeling about the Georges Banks and what an incredible place it is, do you think other people know about that?

MS: They don't even know what they have here in Newport. These people have lived by the water. They don't understand that with the small fleet you see here in Newport, the amount of lobsters and fish that are landed locally, I don't really think they know what Georges is like. They wouldn't have the slightest idea.

JM: I changed the subject quickly when you were talking

about getting out of the offshore industry. You had turned 40 and you'd just decided you had had it. What about it had you had enough of?

MS: Just probably being away from home. On most of those boats, if you spend 40 days a year on the beach, you're doing well. I just wanted to spend a little more time around. I would never get away from the industry, but it's for young men. The other factor was that you were spending more time at sea instead of when we first started. Like I said, it was three day trips, then they'd go into five days. The people on deck, the guys on your boat, were making less money because of the harder effort of fishing because it was being spread thinner because of more people fishing. Maybe it was just time to make a move.

JM: Do you get really exhausted from those trips?

MS: You'd be surprised that you get very accustomed to it. Sleeping three or four hours a night for five days. Your body can do it if you get accustomed to it.

JM: Are there different groups of lobsters offshore -- different from the ones that we find in the bay?

MS: I say yes. There are many schools of thought. There was a study done in Massachusetts about a year and a half ago (I can't remember who did the study), but they tend to believe that lobsters don't stray very far. We've always gone with the idea if the females

were there, the males were there and vice versa. The study they made showed that the males stayed pretty much to their own territory, and the females move into where the males are. That's one study. URI [University of Rhode Island] has done a couple of studies, and both of them are different. It's very hard because they move so quickly; it's hard to keep track of them. In the late to middle '70s, they were bringing lobsters in that were egg-bearing. The state of Rhode Island was paying \$1.00 a lobster to bring them in.

JM: From the offshore area?

MS: Right. They would tag them and return them to the water. Return them here. Within two to three weeks, we'd be picking up the same lobster back up offshore.

JM: How far is that?

MS: I would say 120 miles where we were fishing.

JM: That's pretty amazing!

MS: It is. They really travel. By the same token, if they waited until the lobster was ready to bear her eggs, and then returned [her] to the water, it would stay here -- bear but then leave. That would lead me to believe that my theory is half right anyway. That they tend to go back to where they were. You take the different species of lobsters (they're all the same species but different types of lobsters up and down the coast) that are landed here in Rhode Island,

whether it be from Newport, Point Judith, up the coast a short ways, all the stuff that's dragged up offshore and potted offshore can be shipped almost anywhere in the world. Maine is listed as probably the biggest lobster center and it's actually not because Maine lobsters don't go much further south than Boston. They just can't be shipped, they're not hardy. The Canadians can be shipped, but they're caught in our waters -- supposedly -- without the new change.

JM: What's the difference in them that makes them not as hardy?

MS: The water temperature changes more here so it gives you a more active lobster to begin with. The Maine lobster doesn't have to move around that much. They come out of a cold water, and unless you have refrigerated systems to put them into, they become very weak even before they hit the market.

JM: What are the best seasons for lobstering inshore?

MS: Inshore? There's actually not really a season. They become scarce during February and March. Then they start to come back in April. If you want to fish out front now, you can catch a few out off the Ocean Drive. The price is sky-high. You can make a week's pay year round except for two or three months.

JM: Where do they go?

MS: They tend to come in up the river here. In July, you

can do pound and a half, two pounds a pot in here and up the river or around Jamestown.

JM: Do you fish at different places at different times of the year?

MS: I've covered an awful lot of ground. I'll fish from Sachuest Point, and I'll work my way all the way up to Mount Hope Bridge coming up the West Passage here.

JM: Depending on the time of year?

MS: Yes, just keep moving along, following them. I can remember when I fished inshore in the early 1960's with a small skiff, 75-80 traps was all you needed. Now we've increased our effort inshore. I'm fishing a one-man operation with about 500 traps, 550.

JM: Have you ever had a crew?

MS: At times. Through the summer months you hire a school kid or something.

JM: Are they closer in during the warm months, the summer months?

MS: As near as we can tell, they move into the mud to feed, and they go into their shed. You probably know already, that's how a lobster grows. They have to shed their shell and come out with a new one.

JM: How long does that take?

MS: They say, in a natural habitat, it probably takes anywhere from 4 to 10 days, depending on who you believe. In captivity, it seems to take 3 to 4 weeks. Why there should be a difference, I don't

know.

JM: Is that when all the reproductive process takes place?

MS: Right. The lobsters cannot mate until they're in their shed -- the female. They come in here to choose their female -- shed and choose their male lobster, and that kind of holds with the Massachusetts study. It gives it some merit.

JM: So it's only the female that sheds?

MS: At that time. The male may shed through the winter months when the water's cold because they won't shed in cold water. The females won't, the males may.

JM: What happens during those months when you don't see lobsters? January and February, where are they then?

MS: The water's gotten cold enough - as near as we can tell - they just dig into the mud and they just don't move. They tend to hibernate as the water temperature cools down.

JM: Do some prefer one kind of bottom over another?

MS: Depending on what they're doing. In spring, as the water temperature is changing, they're involved in feeding. They look for the hard bottom where there's a lot of seaweed and stuff like that, to work around and feed. When they're going into their shed, they look for the mud so they can dig into the mud and stay cool while they shed and all. Moving around looking for feed is basically they're doing.

JM: What do they eat?

MS: You name it [chuckles]. They'll eat anything. There are times you can catch them on crabs in a lobster trap. They're strange, they'll eat anything.

[End of side one, tape one.]

JM: Have you always had some kind of a boat to do inshore lobstering on even while you were involved in those other fisheries?

MS: Yes. For a while there, I wasn't active at all inshore because we were too busy offshore when we started lobstering. When I was dragging, I still fished inshore. You always had a couple of days to do something. Once you got involved in the offshore lobstering, that was seven days a week. I always had the boat, I just never had much time to do it.

JM: What was the name of your first boat?

MS: Actually, the first boat didn't even have a name. It was just registered. No names.

JM: How about now? What kind of a boat are you using now?

MS: I just bought a fiberglass novi hull last year and started fishing that late last summer. About 23 feet, one-man operation, cabin, the whole works.

JM: Has the kind of equipment you use changed over the years?

MS: It's improved. I wouldn't say it's changed an awful lot. Basically they're using the same equipment as

they have in the last thirty years.

JM: What's that?

MS: Depth finders. In lobstering, you don't need as much as you do when you're fishing. Depth finders, lorans so you can find your gear -- and they've just changed that around -- but it's basically done the same way.

JM: What would happen if you were out there and you didn't have the loran or the radar?

MS: You'd have to do it like you did years ago -- all land bearings. Whatever you can see from the land is where you work from. Most of the guys inshore still work that way, but they've all got the lorans on so that if you happen to go out in a fog, you can find your gear in a fog. Or if it starts raining, and you can't see your bearings. . . .

JM: Can you find your way without that if you have to?

MS: Oh, I think so. I think everybody's been around long enough. Most everyone around on the water here could run everything on a compass course. We used to run 12-13 miles off the beach there just on a compass course and find the gear.

JM: How many pots do you need now to make a living?

MS: That's up to the individual. I'm fishing 500, 550 to do the same as what we were doing five, six years ago inshore here.

JM: How often do you have to get out there and haul them?

MS: The gear doesn't set more than two days. In other

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words, with 500 in a haul, 250 every day. I'll haul one sector today, the other sector tomorrow. That means you go all the time whether it blows, rains, or whatever it does. You have to go. Otherwise, if you're not tending the gear, it's not fishing up to its potential.

JM: What time do you have to get up in the morning to do that? What are your hours like?

MS: Everybody sets their hours pretty much to what they like to do. Some people leave eight, nine o'clock in the morning. I like starting early. I like to start at daybreak. That means around three o'clock through the summer months. That way I'm done by noontime, one o'clock. It gives me the rest of the day to run to New Bedford for bait and do the normal stuff that you have to do.

JM: Do you have to get all that stuff in New Bedford? Are there any support services here?

MS: There are some. When the trap companies are catching porgies, it's no problem. But when they're not, you have to run to New Bedford daily to pick up fresh flounder trimmings and stuff like that.

JM: How many hours a day do you work when things are really in full force?

MS: Well, you probably sit down at the supper table about eight o'clock at night and you start at three in the morning. That's long enough [chuckles].

JM: Are you married?

MS: Yes.

JM: That must be sort of tough at times.

MS: I've been married twice. It takes a special woman, I'll tell you that. My first wife didn't like the time away from home, and that's one of the reasons I got off the boat when I turned forty and tried to save the marriage. That didn't work either because it was worse when I was home all the time. [Laughs] You can't win.

JM: How do you know where the best places are to put your pots down? There seems to be more places where they wouldn't catch lobsters.

MS: There are some areas that are just dead. There is nothing there to be caught. It's just through knowledge. You'll fish an area and you'll do well, and you'll note it, and you'll go back next year and the year after. It's actually trial and error. That's why so many of the new people that start usually don't stay in the business. Because it just takes so long to learn the different areas. A lot of it is experimental; a lot of it's purely accidental.

JM: Is it? Do you look for certain things?

MS: You look for certain things. You look for hard bottom which would be rocky bottom and stuff like that, and it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be there. There are places out off of Nantucket

Shoals that, at certain times of the year, you can do the biggest kind of lobstering you could ever see.

I've seen two traps come up with a bushel of lobsters. Ten and eleven thousand pound trips out of maybe a thousand traps. It's unheard of, but there's only one little particular area that will do that.

JM: How far out do you go?

MS: I hold myself now to three, four miles off the beach out front here and in the River here anywhere.

There's no reason to go any further. I can make my year's pay in that area.

JM: Is there ever any conflict with draggers?

MS: At times. It's not as bad as it used to be. There are some areas that have just been taken away from the draggers. I shouldn't say because a lot of people won't believe that, but draggers were here first. Then the lobstermen came in afterwards, and there are areas that have been taken over by the lobstermen. They try to stay out of some of the prime drag areas because if they go into them, they just get towed up. There's a conflict. Last year we had a couple of boats that just came into town, and they gave us a few problems for a while, but it doesn't last long.

JM: How are those conflicts resolved?

MS: Pick a way [chuckles]. Whether you roll up on the dock or you call the Coast Guard -- basically, you

have to take care of it yourself.

JM: You do?

MS: Yes.

JM: Are there ever any bad things that happen over the gear conflicts? Fights or people wrecking other people's [boats]?

MS: There are fights continuously. As far as boat damage, I don't think anybody really gets into something like that here in Newport. Even Point Judith, they stay away from the boats because everyone still has to earn their living. I would imagine on occasions, things have happened. We have more trouble within ourselves with people setting over you or you're cutting each other. It's a real rat race.

MS: Is it? So you've had trouble with that?

JM: I think everybody has. Everybody has. It becomes a survival of the fittest. Whether you're called a jerk or a nice guy, I'd rather be called a jerk. That means I'm making my share [chuckles].

JM: Does it change much? The people who are out there working the Bay, is it pretty much the same people?

MS: I would say that in the last twenty years, the guys that have been in the business, let's say twenty years, are still there. So many new people have come and gone. Like I say, it's through the knowledge that they stay. There aren't many new people that

last more than two or three years. Five started up last year, five went out of business this fall, and five new ones will start this year. It's an ongoing circle. Once in a while, one guy will get successful, and he'll stay at it. But at the time he stays in, somebody gets ready to retire. It just goes on.

JM: What does it take to be successful at it?

MS: I look at it so that I have to fish 250 days a year to be successful. Some people look at it differently. Some people look at 350 days. It just depends on the person. It's basically going every day is what it amounts to. You haul the numbers. You haul the pots.

JM: Have there ever been any years that have been really tough?

MS: Two years ago, we had a real bad year. Last year wasn't quite so bad. Two years ago, inside here at all, there wasn't anything to be caught. It was quiet, but that's when you lose the new people. They just can't meet their payments, and they're gone. You have to have that. It's like farming. They have droughts. We have droughts, too, with lobsters [chuckles].

JM: What do you do?

MS: Just bang away. Haul everyday. You haul everyday, you pay the expenses hopefully, and maybe there's

some left.

JM: How many other people are involved in the inshore lobster fishery would you say roughly?

MS: I would say in Newport here there are probably 100 boats under 40 feet that fish locally. Out of that, there may be more. There may be some out of Jamestown; may be some out of Wickford; there's some out of Point Judith. You could say 500, 600 boats. I could be underestimating, I'm not sure. The state of Rhode Island doesn't break it down that way. They just work on license issued, and I think they're in the neighborhood of somewhere around 8,000 licenses issued. That's quahogging also. So I don't know. It's very difficult to pin it down.

JM: Did you mostly teach yourself?

MS: No, I had some pretty good teachers, some of the old timers. In fact, I learned a lot right down the road here from where we're doing the interview at Ronnie Fatulli's - Bowen's Wharf. Carl Johnson, Buddy Grey, Johnny Harper -- all captains of boats I first worked on. I learned most of everything I know from them. I had an old neighbor that when I was about five years old, had been a fishermen all his life and maybe that's where the whole disease started, I don't know [chuckles].

JM: Did he take you out?

MS: No, he was already retired. Stories. At that time

quahogging was the big industry. You hear the stories. Like I say, it's something that happened. It wasn't just that trip I made on that dragger that changed my mind. There must have been other things involved.

JM: That brought you to that in the first place. Have you ever had any close calls out there?

MS: I've been on a couple of boats out of Aquidneck here that we got in trouble in. But never anything we had to do more than call the Coast Guard for pumps.

JM: You've never felt in danger right out in the Bay here?

MS: No, in the Bay here you can always run your boat right up on the beach and walk home. You have to remember that [chuckles].

JM: That's kind of nice.

MS: Yes, it is. Offshore, it's a little different story. I think everybody has to make up their mind to how they're going to handle it if something was to happen. That's up to the individual.

JM: Do people talk about danger much?

MS: I doubt it. I never did. It's no different than driving a race car or driving down the street or walking out your front door. If you're going to talk about it, you can become paranoid about the whole thing.

JM: What kind of regulations are you operating under?

MS: We're operating under a unified gauge size now as of the last three years because Rhode Island finally brought their gauge size up. We're not really regulated by the federal government. It's the individual states, but they've kind of uniformed it. We're in the process now of taking another gauge increase up and down the coast for conservation purposes. The people involved in lobstering figure that (and I think most of the people in the industry agree) the egg-bearing lobsters bear more often in their younger years than they do as they get older or larger. They're increasing the gauge size to see if we can get another yield before we catch them and bring them in. We try to stay ahead of the federal government on that end of it so they don't step in and try to control us because if they controlled us, who knows what they'd force us to do.

JM: What are the different kinds of lobsters as far as size goes?

MS: I would say the majority of lobsters caught in here are probably anywhere from a pound and an eighth to a pound and a quarter.

JM: How long does it take to get to that size?

MS: A pound and an eighth or a pound and a quarter, anywhere between seven to ten years depending on water temperature again. Offshore, I've seen them up to thirty-five, thirty-six pounds.

JM: Is there a name for those?

MS: No. They're big. They've got a claw the size of two hands. Enormous. You stop and think, that lobster's probably 150 years old when you consider how they grow.

JM: How big is a select?

MS: A select is where they consider a pound and a half to three. That changed several years back. It used to be a pound and a quarter to three, and they picked the size up to a half to three.

JM: How long would it take to get to that size?

MS: It's speculation again. They're talking probably between twelve and fourteen years to be a pound and a half. Up to three pounds, maybe twenty-five years.

JM: Do you think there's enough enforcement of the regulations?

MS: That is one of the biggest complaints we've had from the industry as a whole in Rhode Island here. I don't know about Massachusetts and Maine. With the gauge increase, we had a meeting this past winter with the government people and the state of Rhode Island, and our biggest complaint was enforcement. The only thing we ever hear from the state is, "We don't have enough money to increase it." Because of the problems they've had with the shell fishing, the lobstermen have become second-class citizens as far as enforcement goes. Along with our gauge increase,

we're finally getting a bill tacked on that they would increase enforcement. The lobstermen in Rhode Island will not favor a gauge increase if they won't increase enforcement. I think you'll find that Massachusetts feels the same way. We have a problem a short ways down the coast here which is New Jersey that has actually very little in the laws. Up until last year, they were bringing in T & C which is just tails and claws. There's no way to figure what size lobster it is once they've taken the body away because we gauge the lobster body itself. We're not allowed to mutilate in Rhode Island. We never have been. Or Massachusetts.

JM: How about shorts?

MS: Judging by when they're around and how many people they do catch, it's pretty wide-spread. Anybody that has any common sense isn't doing it. Anybody that's in the industry to stay isn't doing it. But there are a lot of people come in and they just can't make a living catching them full size, so they'll take the short ones. They'll try to make a living that way. They're just defeating it for someone staying in the business.

JM: Have you noticed a lot of that around here?

MS: It's very difficult. You see stuff in places, and it's very difficult. I've gone into restaurants myself and seen what are very small-sized tails, but

that size is allowed to be shipped in from Canada which we can't even land in here and Canadians are allowed to ship them in. It's difficult. It could have been shipped in from Canada. Prove it, is the thing. It's very difficult. I say that if they don't do something with enforcement within the next year in Rhode Island (try to beef it up and hire more people) there is going to be awful big complaining real soon from the industry itself as a whole.

JM: Are there many people who are as actively involved politically like that as you?

MS: I try not to become apolitical, if you understand what I mean. [Laughs] Involved, yes. There are a lot of us involved in it. You have to understand, we have to deal with different administrations within the state here and we have to not come out for anyone that way. We all try to do that as well as we can, which sometimes means you don't get as much help as you should. It's very difficult. It's like being a city employee. You have to work for the person whether he be a Democrat or a Republican. It's just something you have to live with.

JM: Do you have to report your catch?

MS: We did for a couple of years when the state of Rhode Island was running a survey. Since then, no. The only reports are done through the dealers that buy them so that the state has some idea what kind of

poundage is being landed. Other than that, there is nothing.

JM: When you get your lobsters on board, how do you keep them?

MS: I have a live well. I keep them in water. I think the majority of people do.

JM: Who do you sell them to?

MS: I sell either to Aquidneck Lobster or Long Wharf Seafood. I tend to stay at Long Wharf Seafood because he's handy. He's right close to the dock, and the less you have to transport them and move them around, the better off you are.

JM: Let's get into Newport Harbor and the changes you've seen as you've been in the industry with less and less room for the fishing industry. Where do you dock your boat now?

MS: I'm tied to State Pier through a lawsuit that we started against the state of Rhode Island to purchase the piece of property.

JM: Who do you mean by "we"?

MS: Fishermen in Newport -- a group of us that were tied at the State Pier when they were renting it from Newport Shipyard. There was some kind of a lease breakdown in agreements, and the state came down and told us, "You guys have to go." I can't remember the exact date. That was two years ago. At that point, a group of about 35 of us, went out on a limb and

sued the state for some outrageous amount of money because they were putting us out of business. We arrived at that figure from what each individual did as far as yearly income, and we sued the state. In turn, the state said we couldn't sue, but we started the fight to buy this piece of land. At that point, Ronnie Fatulli approached Newport Shipyard, and they were able to get first refusal on the property. That was a good thing for us because the state of Rhode Island was looking at Brown and Howard Wharf [as an alternative] which was actually very small. It would just handle the boats that we had, and we're trying to increase the size of the facilities not just limit it to a certain amount of boats. We have a waiting list that has a hundred boats on it to date.

JM: Where are all those people docking?

MS: They're hanging any place they possibly can. Some of them are paying outrageous rent for their boat.

JM: Are they local people?

MS: Most of them are Rhode Islanders. They're just out of the way. They may be tying up the river, steaming three hours before they even get to the gear to go to work.

JM: Have you always kept your boat over in that area?

MS: In the area here, yes. Either at the State Pier or at Ronnie Fatulli's here. At one time, there was enough room. Before this was all built up here,

there was nothing. It was the old ferry slip. When the ferry stopped running, there were plenty of places to tie in here. The Treadway wasn't here. It's unbelievable what's happened. You could tie in almost any place you chose to tie on the waterfront. Now that's unheard of.

JM: When did that really start to change do you think?

MS: In the early 1980's, that's when it mostly took a hold here because everybody started building up and the Twelves were in full swing - the Twelve Meters -- and that didn't help at all. Newport was the place to come, and the facilities kept growing as far as yachts went. Even the mooring areas out here in the harbor - I can remember when that was a 250 foot square of moorings right in the center of the harbor. Now it's come to the point where you have barely a channel to come through the harbor.

JM: What effect do you think all this development and tourism is having on the fishing industry?

MS: The tourism, as far as I'm concerned, doesn't hurt it. We run a place that -- through the Friends of the Waterfront and some of the other people around that are involved in waterfront -- we run a facility that's pretty much wide open. You can drive in and walk through there any time you choose.

JM: The State Pier you're talking about.

MS: Right. That's because of the fishermen. The state

really doesn't want it open because of the liabilities involved. That was one of the agreements we had. I said, as we went along, we had so much help from the people in Newport. I mean private citizens -- as far as standing behind us and helping us acquire the piece of property, we felt it should be left open to anyone who would like to walk through, whether it be a Newporter or a tourist or anything. And that's the way we've kept it. We would never have any arguments about right of way -- having a walkway or anything. You can walk down through any time you choose. I think that will never change as long as the fishing industry stays there. As far as other things, it's been overbuilt is what it amounts to. They've really started building like crazy. Tourism is great. The people coming in here are not coming in to see condominiums. They can go anyplace else and see condominiums. I think Newport's hurting itself tourist route wise. The only natural resource they have here is this water and the shellfish, fish and lobsters and whatever else comes out of it. The state is letting it slide by and Newport is sliding by with it. They're letting it just disappear.

JM: Is the state doing very much to take care of that pier?

MS: They're in the planning process now. We have

somewhere around \$1.4 million, \$1.5 million that they haven't even sold bonds yet from the last bond issue. We're in the planning stage now for Phase I which would be the south side of the dock. They're going to put in two new piers, repair bulkheads, and put in a float system for some of the small boats under 30 feet. Phase II entails going to the west, and we haven't really designed a configuration of what that's going to look like as yet. We're trying to encompass something to handle the Tall Ships when they come because we always host the Tall Ships there. Even if they only come once every ten years, we want to be able to handle six to eight of the larger ones. We'd like to give them a decent place to come and tie so that the people can get to them. We've always gone with that idea. It didn't make much difference where we were -- these fishing boats that are tied here on these docks sometimes go to Point Judith when the Tall Ships are here -- just so they have a place to tie. I think all of the fishing industry is in favor of that because the more people you have down on these kind of facilities and they see how the money is spent and how useful it can be, they're more apt to vote for something when you need help.

JM: Do you think there's a good chance that that area is going to keep being used as a docking place for the

fishing industry?

MS: With future development that we have planned. When I say we, I'm speaking of the fishermen and the state of Rhode Island. Some of the safety factors we had written in when we purchased the property with the state, it would take an act of Congress to change it from what its use is now to be anything else.

JM: That's good.

MS: I hope we did it correctly. I don't know. Between our attorney and the state's attorneys, I think they did a pretty decent job of it. Time will tell. Newport Offshore now has just been sold again, and their restrictions from the City of Newport are lifted in (I think) 1990. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see a hotel or condominium or something go in there. That would be to our north. We're in the process now of getting things together with the City of Newport so that whoever goes in there and whatever they're going to build or try to build, that they have to understand that they have to live with the neighbors that are there which would be the fishermen and the bait and the kind of actions that go on there. We all start at three o'clock in the morning, the majority of us. It's pretty loud, and there's nothing you can do about it. That's the way it is. Those diesels, when you crank them up in the morning, they make an awful lot of noise. And that

will be there every day. We're working with that. Like I say, that's still a couple of years down the road, but you have to start early because these people that are planning for this probably have this whole thing drawn up already.

JM: That's really how it was almost . . .

MS: Yes, almost lost. If the City hadn't gone against Rad Romeyn, we'd have lost that piece of property, and there would have been no way to keep it.

JM: Do you think they were on your side all the time in that controversy?

MS: I think it was touch and go up until the point that we took the state to court. I think, at that point, there were a lot of people on the council that were borderline, and when the fishermen decided to take the state to court, they kind of decided that maybe their next move might be taking us to court. That's something they didn't want. Maybe they didn't feel that way. Maybe they felt differently. But half the council was pretty cold to anything the fishermen wanted to do there at that point. There was enough good press for the fishing industry that had a lot to do with that. We were dealing with someone that -- personally he and I are friends, Rad Romeyn.

JM: I guess we should say what he wanted to do there.

[End of side two, tape one.]

MS: We were involved with Rad Romeyn at that point. He

was preparing to build a restaurant and a hotel or stores on one level there, and then apartments or condominiums up on the second and third levels. They had designated an area out on the west end to handle maybe 20 fishing boats. The big ploy at that point was that Rad said, "Well, we're going to give you this, and we're going to do this, and you're going to have plenty of parking." This, that, and the other. He went to a meeting before the Council, and they were going to agree with him and approve his detail or not that night. He put it before the Council, and the whole thing was totally different than we had all discussed. Rad and I had become pretty friendly because we had been talking for a year and a half at that point, and as far as business (I felt this was business at this time), he was pulling a shady deal and I wasn't going to go for it. I told the Council I wasn't going to go for it. At that point, I was representing the fishermen. I was president at that time.

JM: What was the name of the group?

MS: That was FIN. Fishermen in Newport. Right then and there, I told the Council that there was no way that that is what we had agreed on. I was probably a lot louder than I am right now. Actually I was quite upset. That ended the meeting that night. They had a couple more workshops after that, and after all

that had happened, we finally sat down with the Council and explained what was supposed to happen and what he had changed. We felt like we were being used. The Council was getting ready to approve it because we were going to get a place to tie, and he was taking it away at the same time. That went by the wayside. His financing fell through and all at that point. At that point is when Mr. Fatulli made the offer on that piece of property. Because at that time, the Newport Shipyard wouldn't talk to the state, and Fatulli was able to get a first refusal on it. The state bought the first refusal from Fatulli, and in turn, we ended up with a piece of property.

JM: How many boats tie up there now?

MS: We've increased to about 40 with no new dockage put in as yet. The new facility on the southern side, the Phase I, when that's completed, we should be able to accommodate maybe 55-60 boats on all good permanent dockage. Maybe even 70. I'm not sure. It depends on the size of the boats. Phase II, I think that would let the port grow to maybe 120-150 boat facility. I think when you're that size, you're in absolute control of the piece of land. Along with our restrictions we had written in between us and the state so some governor couldn't change things over to a pleasure port, I think it'll stay. It has to grow. And it has to grow within the next 7 to 10 years.

- JM: What are the boats that are there? What kind of fisheries are they involved in?
- MS: I would say 90% of the boats there are involved in lobstering.
- JM: Offshore?
- MS: Offshore and inshore. It's actually a very fine line. Forty footers are running 70, 80 miles offshore. I would call that offshore fisheries. Some of these people, through the summer months, run the small boats off quite a ways. It's a combination. There's no real big distinction now between offshore and inshore in boat size as there was years ago. There are forty footers fishing inshore and forty footers fishing offshore. It's up to the individual how far he wants to push what he's got.
- JM: Where do other boats tie up that can't get a place at the State Pier?
- MS: They're using Aquidneck Lobster; they're using Tallman and Mack's; they're using Parascandolo's. In Newport, that's it. There is nothing else.
- JM: Do you think there's any chance that those businesses will have to sell out to developers? How likely would that be in our time?
- MS: We've just seen one of the bigger ones sell out which would be Bucolo's, Anthony Bucolo's. Tallman and Mack, from what you hear, I don't think they'll sell.

They'll stay in operation because the children are interested. Parascandolo the same way. The generation coming along are interested in the business, and they'll stay there. There's about 7 or 8 of them earning their living out of it now, and they will take over. Aquidneck here, I don't really know. They're getting ready to expand, so it leads me to believe that they're not getting ready to sell. Smaller fish markets in town here -- Long Wharf is another one, in about three years it's grown four to five times what he started at. The increasing demand is there. Every time you turn around, there's another restaurant going in so that's another place that sells lobsters. It's hard to say. It's really hard to say. I don't foresee anybody selling out in the near future.

JM: Were you surprised when Anthony sold his operation?

MS: No, not really. None of the children were interested, and they were just ready to get out of the business.

JM: What effect has that had on the fishing industry in Newport?

MS: In the lobstering end of it, there's been very little because he didn't handle as many lobsters. I would say the biggest in the state of Rhode Island would be Aquidneck Lobster, the lobster buyer. He has cornered the market pretty much for the last 10 or 12

years. As far as fishing, Parascandolo is probably maybe not quite as large as Point Judith, but they're right there. They handle an awful lot of fish.

Anthony handled some fish. What's happened is some of the boats that sold to Anthony's just came over to Parascandolo's, and they're selling at Point Judith now.

JM: Are there many out of state boats that come in here?

MS: Through the summer months, as far as dragging goes, yes. You've got a lot of the New Jersey boats and a lot of the New Bedford boats coming here through the summer months instead of selling in New Bedford.

It's shorter to the grounds and things like that.

JM: Do you have any idea of what the fishing industry brings to Newport economically?

MS: I had the figures, and never even thought to bring them with me. The only thing I can say is that for every dollar that is spent in the fishing industry, you get \$4.00 in return or \$4.35 in return. That much I can remember. We're talking, probably next to the Navy, the second largest industry in Rhode Island in dollars and cents. You just can't believe the amount of poundage between fish and lobsters that are caught and landed in Newport and Point Judith.

JM: Do you think local people are aware of that?

MS: I know they're not. They weren't aware of it until a year and a half ago when we were fighting for the

dock. All these facts and figures came out. One of the reasons is everybody tries to keep it as quiet as possible because you don't need more people in the industry. The state of Rhode Island had figures that baffled me. I didn't realize it was as large as it was. I thought I knew how large it was and it wasn't. The facts and figures I had were thirty years old. [Chuckles]

JM: Well, that's not bad [laughs].

MS: In this industry it's not, no [laughs].

JM: What else does the fishing industry bring to Newport that you think is important?

MS: A lot of service industries. Not so much in big rope dealers or wire dealers and things like that. But you take specialty shops like your grocery stores and every boat that leaves here, you're talking \$700-\$800 food bill, oil. Most of the people that deliver household oil are offset with their income by pumping oil to the fishermen for their fuel. The crew members may not be local people, so they end up renting here. So many things get tacked onto it that I don't even realize at this point. If you have a hundred boats here, you're probably employing 700-800 people directly to the boats plus the service industries. They have to eat when they're here in town; they have to buy their groceries to go fishing; they have to buy their equipment to go fishing; they

have to buy their fuel; they have to buy their water. You name it. It all has to be bought. It's quite difficult to pin it down. Economic impact -- it would make a big difference if it wasn't here, I'm afraid, just for things that people just wouldn't do. Almacs runs a truck to deliver stuff. They never did until they started doing it for the fishing boats. Now the yacht people do it also.

JM: They deliver groceries?

MS: They deliver groceries to the fishing boats. They put on a truck or two a couple of years ago to do that. There used to be a few small stores that did it just specifically for boats, and they went out of business because they were just too small. They phased out, retired, whatever it may be. It's really hard to pin down as far as I'm concerned. I do know that as of two years ago, they figure for every dollar spent there was \$4.37 generated back from it within Newport here alone in the industry itself.

JM: Are most of the men you know who are involved in the fishing industry making a pretty good living?

MS: It's probably not as good as it was, let's say, seven years ago, but it's still a good living. It's better than out pumping gas or mowing lawns [chuckles]. It has a lot to do with the way you want to live. I would say 50% of the people involved in the industry are single. [It's] very difficult to spend money if

you're not here on the beach. You take all those things into consideration, it's a good living. I would guess that an average deck hand on either a dragger or a lobster boat would probably do (round figures) between \$25,000 and \$30,000 a year. That's if they fish the whole year. The guys running the boats (the skippers) will probably do \$60,000 and \$70,000, and the owners. . . it's really hard to say with the owners because some owners spend more money than others. It's very difficult to put a figure on what the owners will do.

JM: What is it that draws a person into that way of life?

MS: I personally don't think it's the money. At least it isn't for me. I just enjoy doing it. Some of the younger people get into it for the money because they don't have the education to get into something else. Some of them do. At that point again, it's a disease. Once you start doing it, it's hard to get away from it. It's bordering being an alcoholic - you don't quit. I think sailors feel the same way about sailing.

JM: What is the attitude of people here toward fishermen?

MS: As far as I'm concerned, I don't believe there is an attitude -- as far as the locals go. I think as far as some of the new people that have moved in and retired here, there may be some problems, but in general, with the local fishermen, I don't think

there is a problem. I don't think there's an attitude at all.

JM: What do you like the best about your work?

MS: Just the water end of it -- I enjoy being on the water -- running a boat, being on a boat. It's all the best part of it. The money is secondary at this point. I think it's a challenge to go out and try to earn a living on something that you just don't know what they're going to do next. It's very difficult to pin it down.

JM: What's it like out there at four o'clock in the morning?

MS: Beautiful! Beautiful! Inshore it's flat, you watch the sun come up. You can listen to the radio if you choose to, you can shut it off if you choose to. No telephone [chuckles]. It's beautiful. It's very hard to put into words. I know someone's probably going to listen to this and say, "Oh, you should be able to put it into words," but you can't. It's very difficult.

JM: What is your biggest headache? What do you like the least about what you're doing?

MS: Winter.

JM: [Laughs]

MS: I've never enjoyed winter fishing. I try, myself, to finish up the end of January and take February and March off. And I'm able to do that. Some of the

other guys just can't afford to do that and they have to fish around the twelve months there. I don't particularly care for that myself.

JM: Where do you see yourself ten years or so down the road?

MS: Still fishing. I have no desire to do anything more than that. I really don't. I feel that if I can stay healthy -- and most of the people in the industry seem to stay pretty healthy -- I would never retire until I had to. It would be a forced retirement -- your legs went or something to that effect. That happens a lot with fishermen -- they lose their legs. But other than that, I don't see wanting to do anything else.

JM: Is that from standing?

MS: You're never standing on something that's still. It's just very difficult, to think in your mind you want to do something else. I just can't think of anything else I'd like to do.

JM: I've gone through all of my questions. What would you like to add?

MS: I just think it's a great industry, and I think the City of Newport should protect it as much as they possibly can. And if you have any children, and you don't want them to be fishermen, don't ever let them go once, commercially, because you'll never get them away from it. It's terrible. It really is a

disease.

JM: I've really enjoyed hearing you, and I want to thank you very much.

End of Interview



NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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DATED: April 22, 1987

Margaret Schi
Narrator

Address

Jennifer Murray
Interviewer

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