

Name of person interviewed: Galon “Skip” Barlow [SB}

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September 25, 2011

Interviewer: Markham Starr [MS]

Transcriber: Laura Orleans

Abstract

Galon “Skip” Barlow retired shell fisherman and restaurant owner regales the history of his “notorious” family on Cape Cod dating back to the 1600’s. Skip talks of his commercial fishing days, his summer restaurant business, and the politics, biologics and techniques of coastal inshore fishing.

Demographic information

Sex: Male

Ethnicity: White

Occupation: Owner, seafood restaurant
Shell fisher (retired)

Born: Buzzards Bay Village, Bourne, MA

Key words

Role

Commercial fisherman (captain crew)

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Family, Family roles, family organization

Gear and Fishing Technology

Tongs, rakes, scrapes

Dredge

Business and Economics of Fishing and Other Maritime

Business and economic effects of regulation

Off-season occupations and activities

Seafood, retail

Species Type

Shellfish

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MS Please feel free to talk as long as you want about any particular subject. It's much more interesting than one or two word answers. I know some of those are inevitable, but the point is to talk, and please feel free to talk as long as you want. When you stop answering the question or stop talking, I'm gonna leave sort of an awkward pause there which

SB That's ok

MS Just so that the sound engineer can cut it off when I ask you

SB The next question

MS That will make it easier for them. So if you're done talking just don't talk for a second or two and I will pick up on the next question, but it is a little awkward at first

SB Alright. I'll be ok.

MS yeah

MP You guys are good to go. It's recording right now

SB I do a cable trivia show on the Cape. I've been doing for, we've done over a hundred shows so I can stop. I can stop and wait for the next question [laughs]

MP So the next one is up at eleven? I'll be back in time for that too. But I'm gonna hop out and visit the rest of my stages. Alright thanks guys.

SB Take care.

MS So I'm just gonna start off with I'm Mark Starr and we're here at the Working Waterfront Festival in New Bedford in the year 2011 and I'm interviewing Mr. Galon Barlow who goes by Skip generally.

SB Yes. Yes My name's Galon Skip Barlow.

MS And where are you from?

SB I'm from Buzzard's Bay Massachusetts

MS And I see you've got a very long family history

SB Yeah I do. Actually Buzzards Bay is a village, the town is the town of Bourne. I'm from Cape Cod. My family goes back on Cape Cod to the 1630s. They had one of the more notorious families of the Cape, particularly upper cape, Sandwich area.

MS Notorious as in famous or actually notorious

SB They're actually notorious. The first one that came in the 1600s was a drunkard and a real mean person and his duty was to drive the Quakers out of the colony. And he was very good at it and he was very well hated and we still are approached by Quakers and claim to be direct descendants of the devil himself. So we are notorious and have lived in the area and been involved in politics and fishing and earning our living from the water since his time because nobody else wanted to do business with us [laughs]

MS What types of water born activities were those from early on

SB Well early on they were coastal traders and then they of course during the revolutionary period they became privateers and Nantucket actually remained British during the revolutionary period and because they did,

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people from the Cape, particularly the Barlows would sail out there and loot all their stores because they were British goods and they were illegal goods and they would take them back and they accumulated a significant amount of wealth doing that. So there was five brothers involved at that time. There was five brothers pretty much spread out through the coastal area after the revolutionary period and established themselves in different parts of the colonial area particularly Rhode Island and Mattapoisett which was Rochester at the time and of course Sandwich which is now Bourne.

MS And they got into fishing?

SB They got into anything they could to make a living from the water. They got into fishing a little over a hundred years ago when quahogs became marketable and then as fish became more marketable they became more involved in different types of fishing as they moved from coastal trading and whaling into you know fishing. And they did. They were involved in whaling and they were involved in coast trading particularly back and forth to South America. My great grandfather hauled lumber back and forth to South America on a three masted schooner on a pile of sand he displaced four hundred tons, pretty good sized sailing vessel.

MS And the whaling was that done as shore based whaling or was that at that point sailing?

SB They sailed around the world and then of course they got involved in other things they were involved with East India Company going to China and bringing back goods, whaling wasn't a big thing with the Barlow family, but they did participate now and then.

MS And your more immediate family, say grandfather, do you remember

SB My grandfather was a real character. He was a sea captain and one of his particularly memorable trips was during the I'd say the late 1930s there were a significant amount of Africans that wanted to return to Africa so they bought a ship and they rigged it out and about four hundred of 'em sailed back to I'm trying to think of the name of the place, but they sailed back to Africa and it was a Cape somethin' point. I just can't remember the name, but they sailed back there and their purpose was to sail back there and establish a village and send the ship back to the United States. Well they got there and they established their village and they enjoyed it so much that they never came back. Well the ship was mortgaged and after World War I ships became very rare because they were a lot of them were sunk. Well this particular ship was sitting off the coast of Africa anchored for a number of years and a mortgage company that held the mortgage on the ship

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auctioned the mortgage off and a company in New York bought it and that company my grandfather happened to work for. Well they signed a tug to get their ship it was named the Charles Morgan. Well the Charles Morgan went to get their ship and was never heard of again. They sank on the way or something it got lost. So my grandfather was on the way back from Genoa and they, when he got back to New York they said look we want you to go to Africa and get this ship. So he actually went to Africa it was Cape Three Points and went to Cape Three Points and he went about twelve miles south and there was this huge ship aground, you know. And then he went ashore and he talked to the natives there was King Sam and King Sam was actually was educated in England and had lived in New Jersey and gone back to Africa and King Sam had established this village so I know this is a long story, but he towed the ship back. It was the longest tow on the Manilla hawser, from you know Manilla rope, in history. He towed this ship back from Africa. It was a huge ship. He towed it back to New York and he stopped in the Azores and had natives dive on it to scrape all the barnacles off, but it have over five inches of barnacles on the hull, but he got the pump on the ship workin' and he towed it back and he had to go south of the equator to cross the ocean 'cause it was such a heavy tow. And along the way they were, his ship was powered by coal and they got a fire goin' in the hold and because you can't put it out, he sailed all the way back, you know towing this ship, his ship on fire. And it's a good story. And he actually wrote a story and it was published in the Mariner's Gazette in 1941 about this whole story. But the sad part of the story is that in 1972 during one of the uprisings in Africa, these people who immigrated back to Africa were all slaughtered because of the racial problems over there and the natives didn't feel that these people were real natives and it was a horror, you know some fifty years later. So that's the sad part of that story. But the good part was he did claim to have made the longest tow on a hawser rope in history. So that was his forte.

MS So he was in shipping and what did he do during the war?

SB Well he, in World War I he was the captain of a mine sweeper in Europe and then when he got away from that he became involved in the merchant marine. He was a captain and he captained many ships including the Stockholm for awhile, the Stockholm was a ship that collided with the Andrea Doria in 1956. He wasn't, he had retired by then so he wasn't involved with that, but he often talked about that ship and its fate.

MS And then during World War II was he still involved or

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SB No he was retired by World War II because he had arthritis terribly but he was just a, you know, he was a real skallywag. He was a real sea captain. He owned and developed some land down the Cape. He developed a lot of land and sold the land off but he, in the agreement when you bought the land you had to buy your water from him. So in his retirement he owned a water company and sold water to some of these people. And he did pretty good at it. But he was a real womanizer and in his older years, my grandmother lived in her own home in Buzzards Bay. He lived in his little water department office in Pocasset. And I used to go visit him. You know I was thirteen, fourteen and he drank a lot of whiskey, smoked a lot of cigars and his office and his house was plastered with pictures of pin up girls which of course to a young boy was very attractive. All the kids used to go visit him! [laughs] But my grandmother was the very, she had been a school teacher and principal and she was very straight laced and they just, I don't know how the hell they ever got together, but they had quite a life.

MS And how about your father what was his, how did he get into the waterborn

SB Well of course my father grew right into it as his grandfather had captained a sailing ship before, a hundred ton sailing ship, so he travelled with him a little bit in his youth and then as he grew older of course his father was a sea captain and his father always wanted him to be a sea captain. He was the canal pilot for awhile, but he had no interest. And he was gunnery instructor in World War II. You know he served in the navy and he retired from that. I myself was never in the service but not for any other reason than I wasn't, but my father always loved the coastal habitat and shellfishing. He grew up in Pocasset right on the water. His father was a sea captain and he just really enjoyed shellfishing and he did that his whole life. He really enjoyed it. He enjoyed the coastal habitat and the peacefulness of it and he had eight kids and he involved all of us kids in his fishing activities and it was a good life.

MS So what's the t you remember going out on the water?

SB Well actually before I even went out on the water, probably five or six I'd go out with my father and cull scallops you know in the winter and then thing I remember the most was that we, we didn't have rubber gloves, my grandmother would make us woolen mittens you know and we would sort the shellfish. Because that's what you wore then was woolen mittens and my fingers would get so cold. I remember that. I used to think why does he do this? This is nuts! You know. And of course my feet would get wet and we were in a little wooden skiff and you know we would go out on the weekend with him. He'd go lookin' for new beds of scallops you know on Saturday and Sunday when he wasn't workin' and my younger brother and I would go with him

12:00

and we both thought you know, what is wrong with this picture? [laughs]

MS Somehow you must have changed that opinion eventually.

SB Yeah, yeah. My opinion changed as when I got to about fourteen and I was in school and I didn't really care for school and decided I was gonna quit school and so I quit school and he got me a commercial shellfish license, this was in the early 1960s and I went quahogging for a year or two and he taught me how to tong and how to bullrake and it was, it was not an easy way to make a living. So I went back to school. [laughs] But the lesson he taught me of course was, you know, to work. He taught me some good work ethics. And he had done that since I was big enough to shuck scallops when I was probably six or seven. I would join my sisters in the shuckin' shed and shuck scallops and then my job was always to clean the shed every night and bleach it down and get rid of the shells and I hated that! But I didn't realize that it was a whole part of the process and it was part of the life. Everybody workin' together to make it work.

MS Can you describe for people that don't know what bullraking and tonging, how that works?

SB Yeah well tonging, tonging is using like a giant pair of scissors to pick shellfish off the bottom. This giant pair of scissors had a little basket at the bottom, you kind of pick them up as you're workin' and they almost float so you're diggin and pullin' it together all the time and you're tryin' to roll quahogs together so you pick 'em up in the basket when you pinch it together kind of like salad tongs, like you were gonna pick up salad with salad tongs. And you work it together. In New England of course we have more rocks than we have shellfish. So you have to very carefully work it all together. And some shellfishermen used to bring the big rocks ashore so they would never have to catch them again. But you always pick up some rocks and some quahogs and that's a lot of work. And then in areas where there aren't so many rocks, somebody invented what they call a bullrake. And the bullrake is just a rake about three foot wide and it has hay like tines, tines on it and the, it's just like a giant scoop, but it's not really a scoop, it's a rake. And you would pull that through the mud and eel grass on a pole. In the beginning, they used wooden poles and they had different length poles as the tide came and went. In other worlds you have a twelve foot pole and a fourteen foot pole and a sixteen foot pole. You have a whole bunch of wooden poles with the little t-handles on 'em. Some guys didn't use t-handles at all, they just used a straight pole. And as the tide came and went you'd change the length of your pole and you used a, it was like a round metal pipe fittin' on the bottom and a steel wedge that you'd drive in to lock the rake to the pole and you'd just knock it off and change to the next pole because things like radiator hose clamps and hose clamps hadn't even been invented at that time.

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This was really a raw industry. The blacksmiths would make the rakes and they wouldn't weld 'em together they would heat 'em and hand hammer 'em together and we just happened to have a hand hammered one across the street at the waterfront festival as part of our display. And tongs when they were first out again they used valve stems from old cars and again the blacksmiths would heat 'em and hand hammer 'em together and

fashion these tongs and we have an original set of tongs too. I'm also involved with the historic society and I don't throw much out. But I hang onto this old stuff because you could never get it nowadays. And you know maybe some day they'll be a museum of commercial fishing and I'll send 'em there.

MS And what kind of depth of water did the tonging take place?

SB Well here in New England, we tong in relatively shallow water. Eight to ten feet would be the deepest we would fish in. Because you'd have to have a longer set of tongs. But when you get into the Chesapeake Bay area, they use the same tongs to harvest oysters and their tongs often reach forty foot in length. So they have to change where the pin would go to make the scissor action, but again when the tongs had wooden handles, to push a forty foot piece of wood down to the bottom, takes a great effort once you filled it full of oysters it would come up really easy. It wouldn't be lifting it. The big problem would be pushing it down. Here our tongs we managed to balance them so that they're almost weightless when you're using them. And it's easy to handle them and pick them up. And of course when you pull them up the boat, you have to lift one side of the tong handle up and the other one rests on your boat so you can reach in and get you quahogs and then you tip 'em sideways and dump 'em out. And a bullrake on the other hand is about three foot wide so when you throw that out, you have to kind of jerk it along and feel the bottom and you can actually kind of feel the quahogs when you catch 'em. And you can also feel the rocks if you're catchin' rocks. So that's a big problem. You stay away from the rocky areas and try to stay on quahogs. And again, when you pull it up, you shake it, if there's a lot of quahogs, it makes a lot of noise. And we have videotaped these things and sometimes in a foggy mornin' you can't even see the people but you hear the rattles of the quahogs and their rakes and it's really, if you're a fisherman it's kind of exciting to listen too, you know. And it goes on today. Harvesting, wild harvesting the quahogs goes on today. The bullrake technology has come, advanced a lot just like everything else in designs and weights and balances and sharpness of the teeth, but you still throw it out and people who don't understand it say they see a jerk on one end jerking on the other. I mean that's how they describe it. But in fact most fishermen, or coastal inshore fishermen

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who bullrake and they scallop and they do a whole host of things, it's really a labor of love. You know. They harvest predators, they really enjoy the environment, they enjoy the quietness and there's not a lot of comradery. There's a lot of competition. If you find a spot, you don't want anybody else to know. [laughs]

MS How much or maybe through time one person bullraking or tonging what kind of a load would be a good day's work and has that changed over time?

SB It's a funny thing in Massachusetts and while we're talkin' about Massachusetts right now you have local control of the shell fishery so the selectmen in each town determine what the shellfish harvest is gonna make. Now in a town like Chatham where there's a lot of shellfishermen who also some run fish traps and some fish off shore for codfish and

they have a real well rounded fishery, they have no limit. At that, you know you could harvest as many quahogs as you possibly could to feed your family. Other towns would have limits as probably around two hundred pounds or three bushel. Most towns adopted that because the selectmen in those towns felt that was enough money for a shellfishermen to make his living on so if he went out and caught two hundred pounds in an hour, you have to go home or you could spend all day gettin' that same two hundred pounds. But it was set at that. Quahogs interestingly were worth more money at different sizes. So a small quahog was worth the most money a middle size quahog was, say, well say nickel, dime and fifteen cents. The smallest quahog was worth fifteen cents, the middle sized was worth a dime and chowder quahogs were worth a nickel. Course you could catch two hundred pounds of chowder quahogs very fast because quahogs live to be a hundred years old, they get very big. So it doesn't take too many big ones. But it takes a lot of the little ones to fill the basket. And most commercial fishermen will fish for the little ones. So it takes a lot more to fill the basket so it takes more time.

MS If you were out, how long would it take to fill a two hundred pounds or would it vary?

SB It really varies on where you are and like many commercial fishermen I've learned a lot about the biology of the shellfish and quahogs, once you know where they are, most of them, smaller quahogs, so quahogs as they're small they have a foot and they can move. They never move away from the food source. They always move closer towards it. So they'll be on edges and in the edges of channels. The more water flow there is in an area, the more food that's available, the more quahogs they'll be there, the faster they'll grow.

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So fish, you'll notice that fishermen work more near the channels and less out in the middle of nowhere where there's not a lot of water current that moves around. It's kind of like farming. It's very much like farming.

MS And are you still quahogging today or what do you do today as your primary

SB Well I retired from actually shellfishing full time when I turned to about fifty which a lot of people do. When you get to that mid life crisis thing you say you know, I'm gettin' older, my clam digger isn't worth so much. I can't sell this for retirement. I'm gonna need a business to sell to retire against. So I opened a little restaurant and twelve years ago and the restaurant does fine. And I shellfish in the winter. In the summertime I run a clam shack on a highway down the Cape. We do fair and fishin' to me, because I'm a coastal inshore fisherman, isn't just about fishin', it's about spendin' time with my kids and my grandchildren. And I've got eight kids and I've got twenty two grand children and I spend a lot of time with them. And so I look like the restaurant I have a lot of grandchildren that work there and kids that work there. I get to spend a lot of time with them. And it's not about the money. It's about the time and the quality of time. And you try to teach your children good work ethics just like I tried, my father taught me. And that's what I pass on to them. And I try to make 'em go to school which is a struggle

sometimes, but it was a struggle to keep me in school. So I guess I got off track, I'm sorry.

MS No, no. So eight kids are boys, girls, some of both?

SB Well there's three boys and five girls and I have four and my girlfriend who I've been with, might as well be my wife, we've been together thirty five years, she also had four from a former marriage and we kind of joined the groups together and we've, we, even though our kids are, our grandchildren are, they never knew anything any different. We were just nana and papa to them which is good.

MS And do any of the kids get in to any fishing activities

SB Our kids did, but our grandchildren didn't. And all of our kids went in as teenagers and some of 'em went to college and some of 'em went in the service but they all know how to fish and could go back shellfishing if they had to. But they all do different things. But it was, but they enjoy fishing and they enjoyed growin' up that way. But there lives have, you know one's a paralegal and one's a dental hygienist and my son's a recruiter and the other two boys are carpenters. Everybody went different directions, but we all still get together at the restaurant [laughs]

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MS Yeah so it must be a lot of fun to have the grandkids in the restaurant and see them grow up and have them around.

SB It is. It's extremely satisfying to me although they do things that I, you know they text and they have cell phones and these game boys and they're so you know, when our kids grew up and they shellfished, they all had shellfish licenses and you know, that was really probably some of the best times of all of our lives and they all talk about it because we'd go out in the boat and bring a big cooler of fried chicken everyday and when my kids got older most of my shellfishin' was done by diving. I learned to dive. I enjoy diving. I learned more about the biology of shellfish and I taught it to them. And of course I had them become certified divers and we did really well with that. And we learned, I'm gonna throw this in a different direction. We learned the importance of knowing the biology of shellfish. Things like quahogs, the first half of my career, you kind of go out, like most fishermen, you just dig 'em and you don't really pay attention, you just try to find the spots. But once you learn to dive, you realize that quahogs actually live in a burrow and they go up and down. They come up and feed on the coming tide and then when the tide's goin' they drop down again and they're less, they are not as easy to catch. And the same thing with steamer clams and all that stuff. It all feeds on the coming tide and they're much easier to catch than on the falling tide when they don't feed. And once you learn that and you learn you know, when you're diving you actually realize that they actually move. Most people didn't realize that before so we learned a lot of things and we learned these different habits of these animals and used them to our advantage of course to make money. And then of course when, you know, when the tide was going, we'd kind of goofed around and water skied and knee boarded and just partied and we didn't fish as

hard. And then when the tide would turn and start coming, we'd get real serious and harvest. Usually about fifteen bushels of clams in very short order. Only because we knew what to do. And they all knew what to do. They all worked together as a team. And you know they all ended up with pretty good lives from it. They went to college, they went to do whatever they wanted to do. And they always have this to fall back on.

MS So is the, I would assume that diving for 'em would be less efficient and more expensive, but it's apparently a better way to do it.

SB Yeah. Well it was more efficient because you don't, when you're workin' with the tongs or a bullrake it's kind of a chance thing. Particularly a bullrake. A bullrake is kind of like trying to sweep the floor by hanging from the ceiling on a rope.

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It really is. That's what it is. You know it's really hit or miss. Tongs you can kind of zero in on a spot and work on it but it's a lot of work because you're picking up a lot of rocks and a lot of other debris. If you were diving on quahogs and harvesting them, you're only gonna pick up the quahogs. You don't handle anything else. If you can see them, it's even that much better you just use a knife and you pop 'em out and it's very quick. It is the way to do it if you wanna catch a lot of shellfish fast. And that was pretty much it and again with the hydraulic clamming or sub tidal clamming which was somethin' the state of Massachusetts promoted in the 60s, most towns didn't pick 'em up until the 80s that's a real fast fishery because when you wash 'em out, on the beach you can only see the holes, but if you wash 'em out with a, with water pressure, now you can see them all and you only pick up the legal size ones. You leave the little ones to dig back in. You don't break any. So that fishery just continues to get better and better and better. Cause you never kill any seed. And divin' of course is an excellent way to do it because you know when the tide's comin' it clears right out you see the shellfish, you can put 'em in your dive bag and catch a lot of shellfish fast.

MS Now were you doing steamers as well?

SB Yeah

MS How are they caught?

SB We, we caught those by washin' 'em out with water. We did it for about fifteen years. In fifteen years we actually caught over a million pounds of steamers. So it was very efficient. I mean way over a million. You know, probably a million and a half. Very efficient. Very productive. You never broke any seed, so the fishery kept gettin' better and better. You aerated the coastal habitat because when you're usin' water jets you get some air, and when you aerate the coastal habitat it becomes more productive because the nitrogen levels, from nutrient loadin' on the bottom sometimes become, no dissolved oxygen at all of course this kills off juvenile shellfish. When you reverse the cycle of nitrogen loadin' and you end up with a lot of shellfish, they consume the nutrients 'cause that's what shellfish do and it kind of rejuvenates the coastal habitat. And it works very

well. The other side of this is politics. The politics are that people who live near the water, they don't wanna see fishermen. They don't wanna hear a pump running. And it took fifteen years, but they kind of slowed this fishery down and made it a six month fishery. Well within the first year, 80 or 90 percent of those subtidal resources just died because of loaded dissolved oxygen. And it was kind of like havin' an aquarium and aeratin' it every day and then unplugging it for six months and then pluggin' it back in and see what you got. You know. You don't have anything. So that fishery kind of went by the wayside and at the same time,

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I wasn't as concerned about what happened because I had opened a restaurant, but the fishery went...it's hard for people to make a living workin' six months. And it's not good for the coastal habitat either. But that was all documented in the studies, they're all done, studies were done by Woods Hole and by people in Connecticut and biologists with the county. So the documentation is all there should anybody wanna get behind it and reopen this. You know it was a year round fishery, but, I don't know people would rather put in sewerage than address the real issues of the coastal habitat.

MS Now along the Cape is there still a fairly healthy population of fishermen working in the shellfish industry? How has that changed?

SB It's changed significantly. Most towns have, just because of local politics and neighborhood groups have changed regulations to pretty much push the commercial fishermen out of the picture, the commercial shell fisherman. Aquaculture has really come onto the scene so areas that are out of the way like Barnstable Harbor or down in Wellfleet where there's a lot of area where people don't live right next to it, they go into aquaculture and they can grow a significant amount of shellfish in a short period of time and of course here in New England it's not as big a deal when you get down to the Virginias and the Carolinas, it's not unusual to have a shellfish lease up to 50 acres and at one shellfish a square foot. You know that's forty thousand shellfish an acre. They can really control the market and provide enough shellfish for the market so the wild fishery has really been significantly reduced. And it has a lot to do with politics.

MS What affect do you think that's had on the society, the change over from what used to be very common where seeing people shellfishing was just part of the normal day, what affects do you think that's had on the society itself that's now on the coast in terms of cohesion and...

SB Well society changes quickly with generations. So when I was young and in the town of Bourne, there were over a hundred families involved in the commercial shellfishery. Now there's about one or two, maybe even just one full time. And society like everything else, I don't think really notices. You know when an area's closed, they don't notice. They just think the area close to there home has been closed. And that excludes the shellfish area. They only look at their neighborhood. They could look at the big picture, say a town, you may find that most of the town's closed.

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A lot of times people don't understand that when you close an area to commercial shellfishermen, that area often becomes stagnant because there's no commercial shellfishermen harvest predators and they do positive things and it just kind of goes by the wayside and the area becomes non-productive. If you look at the broader picture of the world or the offshore fishery, when you're the offshore fishery, your black back flounder and your codfish and a lot of other species spawn near shore and they need a good healthy coastal habitat. Plymouth Harbor in Boston used to be some of the most productive spawning areas for black back flounder in the world and those areas once they became polluted and became I'd say saturated with low dissolved oxygen, in other words the area from the bottom of the substrate to the surface substrate up six inches has no dissolved oxygen at all. It's very difficult for the fish species to reproduce. They'll lay their eggs, flounder in particular don't like to lay their eggs in a place that they don't feel like they're gonna survive. So they go into an area to spawn, if it's not suitable they leave and absorb their eggs into themselves. They don't even spawn. So a lot of these areas that have been unintentionally, I'm not sayin' anybody did it intentionally, but they've been degraded by, mostly road run off, lawn fertilizers, that's the two big problems. Sewerage really isn't a problem because it just isn't. In most places have sewerage and even when sewerage did run into the water it didn't have the effect of run-off from rain and fertilizers, because it didn't accelerate nitrogen blooms like fertilizers do. And it's immediate. It doesn't filter through the ground, it's immediate. So there's a huge effect, really. Much greater than people realize. There were studies done in Plymouth Harbor a hundred years ago by a fellow named Dr. Belding who was one of the best known and still is, biologists on shellfish on the east coast and he's world renowned for some of his discoveries. And he did studies in Plymouth Harbor, approximately a hundred years ago on clams that were really exceptional. But today a hundred years later, people in Plymouth don't even know his name. And of course they don't really care about their harbor other than the fact that they got the Mayflower there. That's an awful thing to say, but it's true.

MS Now have you ever done any offshore fishing, dragging, or any other type of fisheries?

SB Yeah it's kind of funny because most offshore fishermen will shellfish just when they're home. A lot, most of them started shell fishing in like in Dartmouth or New Bedford or Fairhaven. When they're home for a period of time, say a month, they might go quahoggin' for a few days

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and have a commercial license because it's good exercise and you make some money and the comradery and seeing guys, and it's a good thing. I on the other hand, when times get tough, I come over to New Bedford and get on a boat and go out and make a couple of trips 'cause you make good money. And shellfishing was my life and I fished on offshore or inshore, lot of times I fished on inshore draggers to make money, 'cause you made more money workin' on a dragger or a scalloper than you did shellfishin'. But

shellfishin' you were home every night with your kids and that was kind of important to me.

MS Did you like anything about the dragging or no?

SB I enjoyed workin' on the inshore boats, not so much the offshore boats being gone for you know eight, ten, fourteen days, I didn't care for that too much. And, but it was a good thing, I'm not sayin' it was a bad thing, it was a good thing. And I enjoyed bein' off shore, but I really am kind of a homebody so I worked on inshore boats out of Plymouth and Sandwich and down around Menemsha, Bighton that way. And I owned an inshore boat at one time in the early 70s. But the inshore fishery just like the shellfishery has been really run over by politics which is a bad thing to say but it's true. You know when I was involved in the inshore fishery, you could fish a number of different species. So you could go fishin' black back and cod in the wintertime, sometimes you'd get into yellowtail up around Plymouth. And then in the summertime you'd switch right over and you'd probably go flukin' down the islands or you might go squiddin' or you might go scuppin'. But what they did in my opinion, and it was good that fishermen could move from one fishery to another was when it wasn't economically feasible to chase say codfish, you'd switch over to another fishery. But now they sell permits for each fishery and you're restricted for that fishery. Now a lot of times, you know they say fishermen overfish. Well if you only have one permit and you're only allowed to fish one type of fish, you're gonna fish it down a lot further than if you could just switch over to another fishery like our forefathers did. So I don't agree with the one permit thing for one specific fishery. And I don't agree with a lot of the changes that have been made. But they've been made, in my opinion, to reduce the number of fishermen. And that's what they're doin'.

MS What do you think on the Cape, what would be your long term forecast for fisheries, all fisheries on the Cape?

SB If you're involved in the recreational fishery, and they've taken a lot of fisheries that were commercial fisheries like the tuna fishery and they try to turn it into, and they've successfully turned them into recreational fisheries, you've got bigger recreational boats,

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more high powered outboards and I have no problem with that. But they turned a lot of these fisheries into what they perceive as recreational fisheries. And there's a lot more money made, a lot of people perceive that the money is made on the short term with the sale of a boat or a motor or tourist, and I own a tourist business right now so I'm not gonna knock it, I make real good money for five months and then I just lock the door and walk away. But I see the, it's evolved, it's evolved. And it's not just on the Cape. You can go, you go to North Carolina where twenty years ago there was a few boat ramps that commercial fishermen would use to haul their boats, those same boat ramps now are ten times bigger and they're coastal access areas and they're all paved parkin' lots and it, you know, you couldn't find a place to park you're boat if you were a commercial fisherman

there. You have to find a new venue to fish from. And that's happenin' everywhere. I can't believe how quick it happened in North Carolina.

MS So do you think the commercial fishermen will survive that or do you think it's gonna be more recreational?

SB Well the state of the economy is that these recreational people are gonna run out of money and they're gonna have to eat so eventually it'll evolve back to the commercial fishery. I don't think I'll live to see that. But the economy, the economics of commercial fishing will make us have to go back to commercial fishin'. The baby boom era and all the money and all the investment and development of say fishing for fun and that's what it is, it's really good, and people enjoy it, but the economics will be eventually that we're gonna have to produce fish and food here again. We're gonna have to. And we're gonna have to, we're gonna have to rejuvenate our coastal habitat. 'Cause our coastal habitat not only supports the coastal fishery, but it supports the off-shore fishery as well. So politics aren't always the smartest thing to do. All you have to do is go to China and China takes our technology and I'll be perfectly honest with you, the hydraulic technology of aerating the water the Chinese took that and our bay scallops and in five years, they took our bay scallop that we grew here and the technology that we developed right here and their government used that and developed it and in five years they were producing 80 percent of the scallops that were marketed in the world! In the world! You know, but they were using the bay scallops because they grow very fast. Sea scallop has like a ten year life span, bay scallop 18 months. They can grow to a good weight in nine months 'cause bay scallops grow really fast and in about nine months, ten months, they're pretty mature and they spawn.

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And when they spawn, the meat actually gets smaller for several months while they spawn. And then during the next time period they rejuvenate and regain their weight. Well the Chinese are sellin' 'em on the first cycle, so in nine months, they can shuck 'em and sell 'em as long as they keep enough to spawn to rejuvenate their stock. They've done tremendous with our technology and we sit here like a bunch of ninnals lettin' the world go by. I hate to say that, but we do.

MS So you've also done scalloping?

SB Oh bay scallopin' is a big part of the inshore fishery. And always has been. In the 1970s here on Buzzards Bay it diminished significantly because nitrogen, when they built a lot of sewer plants on Buzzards Bay, they didn't remove the nutrients, they just kind of killed the bacteria and dumped the nutrients into the coastal habitat. In Wareham, New Bedford, any place else that had a big sewer plant, they would dump the nutrients right into the coastal habitat, not realizing that the nutrients of course would cause nutrient loading. Bay scallops were affected, not because of the nutrients, but bay scallops, when bay scallops spawn, into juvenile, the larvae doesn't sit on the bottom most of the time. When there's eel grass one blade of eel grass would have as many as fifteen, sixteen juvenile scallops would attach to that eel grass because they grow so fast, they need a lot

more dissolved oxygen. Eel grass number one produces dissolved oxygen, just like grass produces oxygen in our world, but by being placed from the bottom up as high as three feet in the water column, it gave them a lot more access to food and dissolved oxygen. Nitrogen loading, first thing it did was it created excess algae which coated the grass so the grass couldn't get sunlight to grow. So the grass kept growin' longer rather than developing a good root system to get through the winter like it should have. And the grass would die off. Without the grass to support the juvenile scallops, there were a lot less juvenile scallops right off. As time progressed, the scallops almost became extinct in Buzzards Bay. I mean it became very diminished and then we've had a couple of the really big sets in the, well actually one in the last few years, and it was kind of a, a deep water set off of Mattapoisett and Marion. But other than that, mostly the coastal areas haven't had any good sets at all. But once you've got the eel grass back and controlled the nutrient loading, we'll probably get the scallop crop back. It's much more probable.

MS So in scalloping, how are they caught?

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SB Traditionally they're caught with small dredges you know small scallop dredges which are basically the same as a sea scallop dredge but much smaller and you can tow, different towns have different regulations, Chatham, they allow one dredge. So the guys down there hold one three foot wide but really long dredge. Towns like Bourne or Wareham or Fairhaven, they allow them up to ten dredges and they're three foot wide. But they're a lot shorter and lighter so the guy's pull 'em one at a time and dump 'em on the cullin' board. Whereas in other towns like Chatham for instance, you usually have two guys on a boat to pull one dredge up. You know that's how big the dredges are. So it just varies town to town. But basically it's a small dredge very similar to a sea scallop dredge, but very small.

MS And how many, in bay scallops per pound roughly bay scallops per pound?

SB Well the thicker the grass bed would be, the slower the scallops would grow because once they get to be adults, they kind of break off the grass, settle to the bottom and there'd be a real dense population so on the edges, they would grow really fast and those would have forty sixty count, sometimes thirty forty count, which is a good size scallop. But the ones in the middle it wasn't unusual for real heavy graft scallops to not be any bigger than 80/hundred counts. They'd be really small. But they were really tasty. And our scallops here in New England were more tasty than the southern scallops, not because our scallops were better or worse, but from North Carolina down, they were always required to wash 'em in their shuckin' houses, it was a law and the water has a lot of phosphate in it and it was like, it just changes the flavor completely. If you got those scallops fresh, like North Carolina bay scallops and our bay scallops, they're biologically the same scallop, identical, but when you go south of Delaware, our scallops because the center of the scallop or the meat of the scallop is kind of off to one side of the shell, you know that on one, from Delaware north, they spawn with the water temperature rising and they live on one side of their shell. And the same scallop from about Delaware south, lives the other side up and spawns with the water temperature falling. So ours spawn as it

gets warmer in the spring; theirs spawn, the same scallop lives on the other side of its shell and spawns with the water temperature falling. And the scallops basically taste the same and shuck the same although up here we shuck 'em dark side up and top side up and down there you shuck 'em upside down. They have their eye on the same side. And because we happen to fish in both places,

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we noticed this and then kinda talked with biologists and learned the biology and learned that it was the same scallop just a different sub-species so to speak. It's kinda weird, but, you learn this stuff when you fish, whether you like it or not.

MS Would you change anything about, if you had to go back would you still go into fishing do you think?

SB Absolutely. Absolutely. I enjoyed my life. I enjoyed, 'cause I'm older now, I'm in my sixties. I have written about it, I've written some books about it. I've done a lot of, like a frustrated fisherman on the Cape, I did some videos and we sold 'em and we did a little cookin' show called What's Cooking on the Cape. And we teach people how to harvest and cook shellfish on the Cape. We did that and we had a lot of success with that and we did a television show that ran all over the Cape called "What's Cookin' on the Cape" And we had a lot of success with that. And we did it more to educate people the importance of the coastal habitat and a reason to take care of it. That's what we were tryin' to do with our cookin' shows was we tried to teach people how to harvest shellfish, how the shellfish would spawn and live and how they needed dissolved oxygen. And we tried to make people aware that there are other things you can do than just put sewerage in and say that's gonna be fine. 'Cause that's not gonna work. It's not worked anywhere else. It's certainly not gonna work on the Cape. So we have to be proactive and do positive things to protect the coastal habitat for eternity.

MS And last question, is there anything that you would like to add or say about any part of fishing?

SB Well I know that fishermen will probably be here involved in the fishery forever because it is a way of life. And it's part of a lot of the people that are involved in the shellfishery, whether you're an offshore fisherman or an inshore fisherman, even those most of us get involved because of the money and the competitive thing, as time goes on, it becomes part of you and becomes important to you. And it's very important to me. The whole big picture is. And I think as you get older, you see the whole big picture. I've talked to a lot of older fishermen here, people that have never, you know they fished off shore and inshore as a part time thing and they all see it. We realize it first. Society will realize it eventually, but we realize it now. And things like this big waterfront festival, this is not a showcase of fishermen, in my opinion, this is an educational tool to help society understand how important the coastal habitat and the oceans are. So that's why I participate in it. I've been participating in them [festivals] for over two decades and all over the east coast and I think it's really important to educate society as a fisherman, how important the coastal habitat really is.

MS Great. Well thank you very much.

SB Thank you.

MS I really appreciate your coming in.

SB I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

51:30 End of interview