

Name of person Interviewed: Reidar Bendiksen [RB] and Kirsten Bendiksen [KB]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known) RB: 58 KB:

Sex RB: Male; KB: Female

Occupation Gear business (net making, mending, etc.)

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

New Bedford; Norway

Residence (Town where lives)

Ethnic background (if known) Norwegian

Interviewer: Millie Rahn [MR]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

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KEYWORDS: Norway; Fish gear; New Bedford; Technology; Regulations; Communications; Fishing family; Family business; Scalloping; Dragging; Herring; Mackerel; Norway fisheries

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TRANSCRIPT

[Start of Interview]

[00:00]

MR: OK. Let's start.

Why don't you—for the tape, I know who you are but tell me your name, and a little bit about your background, when and where you were born, how you got to New Bedford, how you got into gear work, which is what you're doing now.

RB: It's a change of occupation. You know...

I was born in Norway in 1946, just after the war. And, I went to school in Norway. Actually, I didn't come to this country before I was sixteen years old. I finished school in Norway.

And my father was a fisherman, over here. He came here in '51, I believe it was.

And, you know, from that time he came back once in a while, for a few months.

And one time—I think in 1954 he came back to Norway for about a year. And did some modifications on the house and things like that.

And then, he went back again. Then he came back in 1960. And then my oldest brother went to this country, together with him. And he was only, seventeen I think.

MR: And was he fishing in New Bedford? Or, in other...

RB: Yes. Yes, he was.

But, like I say, I didn't get there before 1963. That's when I was sixteen years old.

My father wanted me to finish all my schooling in Norway before I come over here. And, sixteen years old, I was headfirst right into the scallop pile. [laughs]

MR: [laughs]

RB: [laughs] Yeah.

02:08

MR: Did you fish with him?

RB: Yeah, he fished for the first few years I was fishing. Yeah.

We'd go on a couple of boats together. Of course, he was one of the part-owners of the boat that I first started on. Which was a hundred and ten foot sub chaser from—built in the war. And then converted to fishing. So I guess I started scalloping, ended up, later on that year we switched over went trawling, dragging they called it. For fish.

And then from that time on I'm—you know, I've been on different boats. 1966 I brought my first in a boat, a boat named the Moby Dick. That we owned, you know, as a family business there for quite a few years, until about '78. That's when we sold our boat. So I spent quite a few years on it. And in them years I took probably all the positions there was on a boat [laughs]. From cook to deckhand to engineer. To mate. And skipper.

MR: And always dragging? Trawling?

[03:46]

RB: No. Actually, every year we did both things. Some years there looked like it was good, going scalloping, we would change the boat and go scalloping. Things like that. Even had a couple of times I went *off* the boat and ran *another* boat. For somebody else for a while. Skipper, you know. I did that. I was skipper on a boat

named the [Captain ?] in 1972. Then in '75-'76 I was skipper on another boat named the Narragansett, that was owned by Jack Jacobs out of Fairhaven. And then after that, I was skipper on a boat named the Chivas Regal [laughs]. Not about the whiskey, but, [laughs] whiskey name. They called it the whiskey boat. There were two of them. There was Crown Royal and Chivas Regal. So I ran one of them for about a year. And the owners was a guy named Paul Saunders and Biffy McLean, the Senator, MacLean. From Massachusetts. He came from Fairhaven.

MR: And then how did you get into your gear manufacturing.

RB: That's quite a few more years after. In 1980, I bought, part into another boat, half partners with my brother. And then my father, boat named The Viking, we had built. So, I was skipper on her for two, three years. Then we bought yet another boat, General George Patten was the name of it. And I was skipper for like three or four years after there. That way, my brother and me had one boat each [chuckles].

[06:12]

RB: And about, '87, '88, I begin to—kind of had second thoughts about fishing. I was driving it too hard. I had a lot of trouble sleeping out to sea. And I could feel that it was kind of getting taxing on my own body. You know, then I'd already been fishing for twenty-five years.

MR: That's dangerous when...

RB: And in the meantime, the kids were starting to grow up. And I had this idea, if I was going to change occupations, I better start thinking about it now before I get too old. And at that time I was like maybe, forty, forty-five, forty-three, somewhere like that. Yeah, forty-three I sold. And... I started making gear. You know, little stuff to begin with. You know, I sold it out of my garage, actually, you know? And it just became bigger, and more, and bigger. Next thing you knew I grew out of the garage. So I had to, to rent a place on Fairhaven Bridge here from R.A. Mitchell. I rented a place from him and started to build nets, and trawls, and sweeps and things like that. Created a few customers and... So, today, in Fairhaven, I've had this shop in Fairhaven now for about ten years. And my son works with me now. Both of them. My wife, she does the books. [laughs]

MR: Perfect timing. [KB enters]

KB: I'm breaking in.

MR: Come sit.

KB: I can't even know if I can think Millie. They just had us up on the stage and gave us each a big bouquet of flowers. And we're... [Crying / sighs]

RB: And you've done such a wonderful job.

KB: I'm OK [still sounds like crying]. I'm OK. It's just the end...

RB: [chuckling]

KB: I'm OK. [deep breath] It's been so fabulous!

RB: I didn't get to see that.

KB: [deep breathing] That's OK. You've seen me enough!

MR: [laughs]

KB: [laughs]

RB: Not last couple of weeks. [laughs]
KB: The last year! Oh, I'm sorry, you've got a tape going in here
MR: That's all right.
RB: You can always cut that out.
MR: Yes.
RB: Have anymore questions? I forgot where I was.
[08:44]
MR: Well you were just saying that you've been about ten years in Fairhaven and it's a family operation.
RB: Mm hm. And, I'm lucky I got a couple of sons. Especially the oldest one, he has worked with me. And I think that is probably why he was interested. Because he started early. You know?
If I had kept on going until he was older, kept on going fishing, he would probably end up fishing.
MR: Yeah. Is this Tor?
RB: Yeah. That's Tor. So when I started the gear business, he got interested in *that*, really young. And today I think he really has a creative knack for it. He's got the—he understands the gear much better than *I* do. So it must be because he's got a young mind and very enthusiastic and everything else.
I've never seen anybody really as *good* as that guy is.
MR: Well, you know, he amazes me. When I met him, the year we did Lowell, and he was—Oh, I talk about him all the time as this guy who's, what? Twenty-five? And [?]
KB: [laughs]
RB: Yeah.
KB: He is. He's special. They're all special. It's not that. But I mean Tor is---
RB: He sounds like he's forty.
MR: He sounds like he's eighty!
RB: Yeah, eight.
MR: He hangs around with the old guys.
KB: Yeah! Yeah!
RB: Yeah, but, you've got to respect him. Because—you know, I've never seen anybody with that much enthusiasm. And he's really nice-spoken. He never swears.
KB: Very diplomatic. Very diplomatic with the public.
RB: Very diplomatic with the public. He can explain stuff.
KB: He gets frustrated with people, he just—
RB: You know, I get—I get hot under the collar.
[laughter]
And he's right there to calm me down. And you can't do that. [laughs]
MR: That's why it takes all kinds.
KB: That's right.
[10:45]
RB: So he's a diplomat. Just like his grandfather. He was a diplomat too.
KB: So much like my dad. Yeah.

MR: Well tell us for the tape, Kirsten, a little bit about... you know, your name, and your family background with fish. And how you—you grew up around here, right?

KB: Mm hm.

MR: Tell us a little bit about your background.

KB: My name is Kirsten Bendiksen. I was born in New Bedford, but I grew up in Dartmouth. My dad was a fisherman. He didn't care for it though, would you believe it?

He met my mom on the ocean liner. He worked on the ocean liners. And my mom was going back to Norway. Her mother and father came over from Norway. And my grandmother used to come back for visits to see the family. And of course you had to take the ocean liner those days.

So my mom was on the liner and he was their waiter. And, it was, just like that [snaps fingers]. They knew they were for each other right off the bat [laughs]. So when it came time that they were going to be married, they had to decide whether my mom was going to go to Norway and live. Or he was going to come to America and live. Because he wouldn't continue on the ocean liners. And my mom was a professional musician and teaching piano and playing for exercise classes and dance classes. She was a pianist and organist. So, she was already established here, and he was going to leave the ocean liner anyway. So he decided to come here.

And... What did he do? He went to Fairhaven, met some Norwegians and went out fishing.

And it's funny my mom always used to tell that story. She didn't know anything about fishing at the time. And my dad didn't. He worked on the liners. So the first trip he went out she packed him pajamas.

[laughter]

Not knowing that he wasn't going to be able to get into him.

[laughter]

So that's how much they knew.

And he fished... Well, he fished—he retired early. But he fished until his sixties. Sixty-two I guess it was.

RB: He went fishing with me.

KB: He even fished with Reidar on the Moby Dick.

RB: Yeah.

[13:00]

KB: In fact my dad and Reidar were good buddies. Were good friends.

RB: [?]

MR: But he did it all that time and didn't like it?

KB: Yeah. No, he didn't. But he didn't know what else to do. But you know? He was like Tor. He was such a decent—call him the Mayor of Dartmouth because he was so diplomatic and everyone loved him.

And... He, he talked about opening up restaurants. Where he did bartending and serving he knew—but I think he just kind of got cold feet at times and [?] fishing.

MR: And what was his name?

KB: Arne Edvardsen. Tor's middle name is Arne, after him. And it's funny. He died when Tor was born and we gave him the middle. And... But, yeah. So he did fish.
And he was a *good* cook. So he was a galley cook a lot. He was a *good* cook. I can remember him being home in the kitchen in between trips. Sitting at the kitchen table with his coffee, writing the grub list. For the next trip. And planning his meals. It was very important to him to have his different meals.

RB: This galley cooking would have been perfect for that guy.

KB: Yeah. To talk to people...

RB: Talk to people and everything else. Because he was a diplomatic [laughs].

KB: But he—oh, every trip had to be different meals. It wasn't the same old thing. He took it very serious.

RB: Yeah.

KB: They were good cooks back then.

MR: Yeah.

KB: So that's what he did. Yeah.

MR: Well, food is the center point. Right?

RB: [laughs] Food is the center.

MR: Especially when you're out, for days on end.

KB: Right.

MR: You had to have good food.

RB: [?] lack of food. I mean there was, plenty to eat.

KB: But you know, as far as the fishing industry and learning about the fishing industry, I've learned more since we had the gear shop I think. Being involved...

RB: Oh I think, as far as learning *gear*, and you know, nets and stuff like that. I can honestly say that I spent twenty-five years fishing. But, now, the last ten years, inshore, I've learned twice as much about gear as I did in the twenty-five years fishing.

KB: He was very inventive always. I mean you always had ideas and you always did things different and it worked well. But now, being in the shop and having customers and working with different *boats*, and different *fisheries*...

[15:20]

KB: And of course when I was home with the children, he was out to sea, yes, and he was in. We didn't *talk* a lot about the trip. They don't want to when they come home, I don't think. Because I'd even say, "How was the weather?" "Eh, it was all right. A little sloppy." And then I'd find out years later there was a hurricane with 145 mile an hour—

RB: [laughs]

KB: And... wouldn't say too much about the fishing. It was more what happened on land that we'd talk about.

RB: But the hurricane, that was 145 miles an hour... That's the stuff that sticks in our mind. But you know, you go out there and almost every trip you're into *some* kind of weather.

KB: I know. So they didn't want to talk about it.

RB: And in the winter time you [?] twice the trip. You know, they'd roll by and... You know, you forget about one storm after the other. You can't remember them all.

Because you see so many. Unless something extraordinary happens. That's when you remember. You know? Mountainous seas and stuff like that, you don't *care*. You can't keep that on memory.

KB: No.

RB: [laughs]

KB: No it's all the time.

MR: We talked a little bit about the gear. How is the gear used on board the boats?

RB: The gear is used to catch your catch, with whatever you're doing. Sometimes, a boat is scalloping. And then the gear would be scallops drags, links, and chains, and wires, stuff like that. If you're a fish dragger, it would be a lot of ropes, and nettings, twine. Completely different type of gear

MR: Do you have a standard stock or do you wait for fishermen to come to you and say what they need?

RB: It's fairly standardized. You know, but you don't buy a whole new gear package every time you come in and want to replace something. It's usually, you know, a piece of this and a piece of that that needs to be renewed. You know, you don't, renew your whole package all the time. So, to get—you do a lot of repair stuff, you know? So you sell a lot for the repair jobs. And when, finally everything is worn out, that's when you buy a whole new gear package. Like a new trawl, chain bags, and stuff like that.

[17:47]

MR: What's the process of designing a net?

RB: The process? Hmm...

Well, you kind of have to start asking questions. Of what the boat is like. Engine power, size of the boat. You've got to look at, size of the trawl doors, because that's one part of the gear package. And then you've got to go back to the drawing board. And look, and see how much of a net you can build, to fit that specifications. You know, towing power, and all that. And you usually come up with what they call twine surface area. That is the surface of mesh netting that is made into a trawl. The more surface, the more horsepower you have to have tow it. So you have to kind of figure that part of it. And the sweeps and everything like that. Once you come to that conclusion, then you just build your trawl after them parameters that you have established.

MR: So that's kinds of unique for each boat then?

RB: Yeah. This is what Tor is so good at.

KB: Yeah.

MR: Right. Because he does a lot of work on the computer?

KB: Yeah. Even before he had a thing on computer, he was good.

RB: Yeah. Of course, you can't have too big a net or too small a doors or too small a horsepower. Because it just doesn't work. You've got to have the right combination.

KB: And there's a lot of math to it.

[19:25]

RB: There's more math to it than people realize.

KB: That's right! Even the fishermen themselves.

RB: A lot of the fishermen don't understand.

KB: No! They don't. No they don't. I hear this in the shop. Yeah.
He's on the phone so much. He says, "You know, I can just be in the office on the phone now," he said. He loves to do the nets, but there's just—it's amazing how well he's doing.

MR: So the process is, talking, and then, finding out what their needs are.

KB: Right.

RB: Yeah.

MR: And then, sitting down at the computer?

KB: Yup.

MR: And then transferring that to ...

KB: Making the net, actually. Yup.

RB: Now... For scallop boats, it's a different story. There is a little bit of that. You know, you have to have certain size drags, and all that. But, you can only have up to fifteen foot drags on the boat. And that doesn't matter how much horsepower you have. It's the law. You see?

MR: Oh...

RB: So, fifteen foot drags makes thirty foot drags per boat. You know? It can be a boat that's a boat that's got [7 on the?] horsepower and it can be a boat that has 2000. It makes no difference. You just can't have them any bigger.
So there the sizing of the gear doesn't come into play anymore. But, the only place it comes into play is when you look at the smaller ranges, small horsepower.

MR: And, your materials... I remember from the day that I spent at the shop. You get a lot of things from abroad? Right? A lot of your net materials?

RB: Most of the netting that we make the trawls out of come from Portugal, overseas, yeah. And some of the—like the floats and the materials like that come from Denmark, or Iceland, or even Spain. Of course I don't know why they don't make them in the United States.

MR: That was going to be my question. Yeah. After all this time.

RB: There is net manufacturers here, too. But, you kind of have to have them special made. So, what it ends up being is, ends up being more expensive. So that's the reason why we get them overseas.

MR: And is there a lot of competition in this business?

RB: Right here in New Bedford, there's quite a bit of competition, yeah. But you don't have to move too far away before competition kind of drops off to almost nothing.

[21:58]

MR: I was noticing today, you can almost see your shop across...

KB: Probably, yeah.

MR: I'm not exactly sure where it is. But I know it's right along the...

RB: Yeah.

KB: Yeah. It's... Yeah, we've got a beautiful waterfront.

RB: Oh yeah. We do.

KB: And just now, after Laura and I went up on the stage. The sun came up so bright. And the boats were shimmering. And the Irish music started and it was just like...

RB: They've done a lot of work to beautify the waterfront.

KB: Yeah.

MR: Yeah. I know. I was wandering around this morning trying to imagine what it was like in the old days.

KB: Oh!

MR: You see all the photographs and, everything just jammed.

KB: And you know, more and more people are coming to us saying, they have photos and they want to get them in. So this is going to... You know?

RB: Where we are now was a big mill building, like, brick building.

KB: Right here.

RB: Sure.

MR: How has the technology changed over time? That's something that we've talked about with everybody.

RB: Tremendous change. *TREmendous* change. And I'm talking about jus the time that I've been here. Which, is just over forty years. If I go back even further, from what I hear... Say you go back *fifty* years, or fifty-five years. You're looking at something like—for instance, sounding machines. Fifty-five years ago, what they had for sounding machines was leads with [?] on [?]. That they dropped down to the sea floor.

KB: Yeah, I remember you telling me that.

RB: To pick up samples of the sea floor. They didn't have a recorder. That they could see the sea bottom. They had to have a sounding lead. Right? Your father told me about that, because he used to do the [?]. You know? And that is not that many years ago.

When I came here, at least then they had, gotten, [?] they call them. The fish finders—not fish finders, but just, to find the bottom. You know? And...[laughs]. In the form of what they call a flasher. And the flasher really was a sounding machine that had a scale on it from zero to say, 100 fathoms. And they went on, almost like clockwise, in a circle. And when you turned it on, there would be a light that came on. And there was a light that came on zero. And then this turned around, the light would come on where the fathoms were. Say, now, thirty fathoms was down here, the light would come on, and blink thirty, come on, and blink thirty. This is what they call the flasher. See? Yeah. That's the kind of sounding machine you had on the [?]. Remember?

KB: Yeah.

RB: The one Doucette was talking about?

KB: One of the gentlemen here's Louis Doucette?

[25:00]

KB: Did you interview Louis Doucette?

MR: Oh yeah.

KB: He saved my dad. In a storm. They were out in...

RB: They had no electric power anymore in the wheel house. Because they had busted the windows out of the wheel house.

So he says—they had one flasher that was working. And they had to take it out and put it down in the engine room to keep it dry. Otherwise, it would ruin it. You know? And they wouldn't have no way to find the bottom. And they needed that for navigation.

So he says, every once in a while when they got a chance they would take it up out of the engine room. Connect, get the bottom [laughs]. And then take it off and bring it down again. You know, stuff like that.

KB: That storm was *so* bad.

RB: Yeah. And they still had them kind of machines when I came here. Yeah. And then they went on, to, know, paper machines, recorders. And then finally the fish finders. You could really see the fish down there. You didn't have that at time. Today they have video sounders.

KB: Oh yeah. Well when he fished, we didn't even have a telephone connection. It was ship to shore.

MR: Yeah.

RB: Radars. The sonars and all that stuff. They had them. You know, you can *see* the bottom. And then you have—At that time when I started fishing you had something they called Loran. Which means, long line navigation systems. That was made for the bombers during the war. So they could go over and bomb Germany. They put up Loran towers. You know, on the English coast. So the bombers could follow the Loran lines in to find the bases they wanted to bomb. [laughs] You know? So they were developed for that purpose. And after the war they came into the commercial market. So actually what they used on the fishing boats at the time when I came was surplus Lorans. From the war. Used to be in the bombers. And then, the unit that I was using there was mostly what they called a double unit. It was two boxes, big boxes, that you'd switch on. And you had to read the lines. And fumble around, read them manually. You know? And count all the lines and stuff like that to find out exactly where you were. Because when you read the chart and you got the cross bearing on it, you knew where you were. *Today*, they turn on a switch. And here comes a number. Anything you want. Longitude, latitude. [laughs] And you can leave it there all the time. Yeah.

MR: Wow. And cell phones. You were talking about cell phones.

[27:54]

KB: Yes! Cell phones and computers.

RB: Yeah.

MR: Yeah.

KB: Well you know when Tor was born... [chuckles] I tell this story all the time. But, he had just gone out and I thought I was going to go another week. And he was born two days after he went out. So we were already home and settled in by the time *he* came home. And I couldn't call him on a telephone. When I did it was ship to shore. And then you call and you wait for them to call you back when they can connect. And I was in the hospital I couldn't do it there. So we had a gentleman in New Bedford named Bill Brennan. Used to do the fish news every day. And, he'd give announcements and give the weather and say what boats were in and how much they brought in. And what the price was. And what the weather was going to be. And any birthdays and things. Well I called him up and I said, "Bill, you're going to have to put a message over the radio." And this is over the

radio. So *everybody* hears it, not only the boats! But *everybody* listening to this AM radio station locally. I says, "You have to put over the radio station that Reidar has a son."

RB: [chuckles]

KB: And... So he put it on. I'm laying in the hospital bed.

MR: [laughs]

KB: And I'm listening to this. "And we have news for Captain Reidar. He has a son. His firstborn son." And of course I'm cryin'. And I'm wondering if he's even out of the bunk listening. I don't even know.

RB: Yeah.

KB: Were you?

RB: Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. I was skipper on the [Valkerie?].

KB: Yeah well I know that. But I, don't remember if you were in the pilot house when the fish news came on or if somebody told you about it afterward.

RB: No, by eight o'clock I'm in the wheel house. So.

KB: Yeah.
So there he is out to sea. And he gets the news. And he's *way* out to sea. And I'm home here.

RB: So that's how I found out. Actually, everybody congratulated me and all that.
[laughs]

KB: So the radios were busy? Huh?

[29:30]

RB: And you talk about *change*. When you come into computers, there's a lot of change after. Computers have made a *big* difference in the last few years. When it comes to the fishing business.

MR: How is the gear industry affected by regulations?

RB: Hard to say, because in some cases, we've been able to pick up extra work, *because* of the regulations. But I think after a while that's bound to come to an end.
And... There are less boats. So I think that's going to be the ultimate.... When there's less boats, you're not going to sell as much gear. And you've just got to look at in that direction.
But since they're doing so much...so much of the testing now, you know? They've got to test the trawls for the different kind of fisheries, and bycatches, and things like that. That, right now, there is kind of a flurry of activity. Just [to find?] what you're supposed to be fishing with for the future.
And... You know, like I say, when that is over, I don't really know where it's going to go. And it might be worse. It might be better. You know?
You kind of have to have a crystal ball to look at this to see what's going to happen in the future. I know one thing that the regulations have created—You create such an atmosphere that you can't make a good business plan. You know I've thought a lot of times about adding on to the shop and stuff. But I don't know what's going to happen in the future.

[31:34]

RB: So it's tough to say. [?]

KB: Mmm. Mmm.

RB: You know? And then, two, three years ago. The draggers had really good years. They were making a lot of money. I could see it—I could see the boats were starting to look better.

KB: Yeah.

RB: They were spending money in the shop.

KB: They were paying their bills.

RB: They were paying their bills and everything else.

And then, next thing you know there comes this [Judge Kessler?] decision and Amendment Thirteen. I lost, probably, fifteen, twenty, good boats. From places like the Carolinas, Virginia, and places that was buying gear from me. They lost all their effort. So, *that* business went out the window.

Plus all the boats, that are around here. They lost, *much* of their base. So that effort went, kind of way down.

So... If it hadn't been for the smaller boats, you know around the Cape and places like that, that spent a lot of money with us. You know, our shop has kind of [?] among people at Cape Cod. I don't think—maybe I wouldn't have stayed in business.

KB: Yeah, it's been the small bay boats. Yeah.

MR: And your business... You draw from all over, the world? All over the country?

RB: No. It's more local. It's more local, the New England fleet. I do sell some gear to places like Nova Scotia, places like that. And [?]. But it's mostly local.

MR: So... What do you think is the future of the fishery, here? Or anywhere?

KB: It could be fine. I feel it could be fine. Yes you need regulations. But I think they've come too hard and they're making it too confusing for the guys. There's fish out there. And... I don't think there's a reason—Yes you need regulations. You can't just go all haywire and go, you know, as often as you want and back-to-back trips and haul in all you can. No. We can't go back to that. But I think—don't you? This is killing them.

RB: I hope I'm wrong in this here, but... What I see is that they're making people really worry about this thing. You know? And, especially the younger people.

KB: Mmm.

RB: There's hardly any young people goes into fishing anymore. Because they're discouraged from doing it. You know?

And with the regulations and the way that you can own boats today. You know, there's a moratorium on licenses and stuff now. That's been for about ten years already. That means that you have to pay big dollars in order to buy somebody else's privileges to go fishing. And that's—After a while it's going to take and end... And the young people won't be able to get into it anymore. Because they can't find money enough to buy a *house* never mind a boat.

[34:56]

RB: You know? A scallop license from what the scallopers tell me you're looking at a half million dollars. Just to buy the privileges to go scalloping. And then you've got to buy the boat after that. Like the Pacer you were looking at down there? [?] looking at there on the pier?

MR: Oh yeah.

KB: Big orange one. Yeah.

RB: Million and a half bucks. You know? They're gorgeous boats. But they're big money. And a lot of that is because of the privilege to go scalloping.

MR: When you go to Norway? Do they have the same issues over there that we have? Do you talk about—comparing the fisheries?

RB: Norway's kind of hard to compare. Norway is more into fishing than the United States has ever been, from coast to coast. That's *all* coastline, all the way from the Swedish border all the way up to the Russian border. You know, there's a lot of harbors and inlets.

And the fisheries have been seasonal. And diversified. You know, they fish with all kinds of different gear. Stationery gear. They fish with trawls. They do everything. Seines. So, it's not like the fisheries around here. This is kind of, just kind of—one kind fishery here. In Norway there are *so* many different ones. And everything is on seasons. And it seems like the market for fish stays much better in Norway.

In my time I've seen—the herring fishery was big in Norway. The fifties. Then the herring dropped off to nothing. In the *late* fifties and sixties. Then they—it was so far down that they just stopped fishing for it.

And then, twenty-five years later, all of a sudden the herring was back again.

MR: Huh!

RB: And then tried to fish it again and created a market for it. But the market was *gone*. Because the infrastructure had just gone away.

KB: Mmm.

RB: Because they thought the herring would never come back again. And it did. So now they got loads of herring again and no place to [laughs].

MR: [laughs] Got to revive the pickled herring customers.

RB: Yeah.

KB: Yeah.

[37:45]

RB: I mean they do it in a small style. You know? Not like they used to do it before. I mean, they sold herring all over the world. You know?

MR: Right.

RB: But... And they still have it locally in Norway. But the big markets were gone.

MR: And fish is much more a part of the diet there.

RB: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, mackerel, herring. Mackerel is my favorite.

KB: Mmmm!

RB: [laughs]

KB: Oh, he fries mackerel. He smokes mackerel. Oh, we have it on the bench at the shop. All the time the guys just cut pieces nibble on it all day long. All day long.

RB: Mmm.

KB: It's like a snack. It's like candy.

RB: Yeah.

KB: Like chips. God, it's good.

MR: So. Obviously we haven't talked about a lot of stuff. But, it seems that, your family's been lucky that you've got a business where you can stay on land and work together.

KB: Yeah.

MR: And yet, you know, you've got the background because you've worked on...
RB: The water.
MR: ...boats. Right. You were on the water. You've used the technology.
KB: Right.
RB: Mm hm.
KB: And I guess, that's a good thing. That's a good thing. Right?
RB: Yeah.
KB: [laughs]
RB: Yeah. I was... Like I told earlier, I was starting to, kind of feel it [chuckles]. You know? By going fishing so much.
KB: Yeah.
RB: Not enough sleep and this and that.
MR: Yeah.
KB: Taking its toll on him physically.
RB: Taking its toll.
MR: You've got to be, at your *best*, all the time.
KB: Mmm.
RB: That's right.
KB: In fact, one of the videos—I know you have more interviews too, but, you have Deb and Ron Schrader after us. They're out there. I hope they haven't left. But we can get them.
One of the videos that Tom Lees took that they had—actually they were showing here at the festival. He had the ship—was it...
RB: The Seal.
KB: The Seal out. I could see in that, when he interviewed you in the powerhouse. How tired you were. Your eyes. He looked *so, tired*. You hadn't slept?
RB: No. Because...
KB: You're out there, rolling around, the noises... I could see in his eyes that he hadn't rested at all, in that video.
RB: At that time, the fish was starting to get scarce.
KB: Yeah. It was the eighties.
RB: And bad. You know?
KB: There was a lot of worry.
RB: It was the stress.
MR: Yeah. The stress...
KB: Pay your bills and pay your crew.
MR: ... from the bills, the stress from the family, the stress from the fishermen.
[40:10]
KB: Right. Physically and mentally.
RB: It wasn't... There wasn't fish enough to save your life sometime.
KB: Yeah. But that's changed. Big time.
RB: Yeah.
MR: Well how would you like to continue or summarize? Is there anything you want to say in summary?

RB: A summary. [laughs]
Well I'll say one thing, you know. The fishing has been good to me. I can't complain about it.

KB: No. We've had a good life.

RB: And... A little different from the other fishermen that have stayed in it and stayed in it. Sometimes I *wish* I would have stayed in it. Because I would have made a heck of a lot more money, staying in it. Than, trying to change and going to the gear.
Maybe, some fishermen think I make a lot of money in the gear. But that is *wrong!*

KB: Mm hm.

RB: You know?
But still... At this point I don't give a damn about the money. I'd rather to be home with the family. And see [chuckles], try to see if the shop will go. And then maybe, Tor will have better luck, my son will have better luck with the shop than I had in the future.

KB: Of course he started in eighty-seven. Started the shop. And that's *right* when the fishery went... So to start a new business is tough. And to start a new business right at that point is tough. Face it.
You know, there was no fish out there. It was the worst time. And then all the regulations started.

RB: Yeah.

KB: So the fact that we've made it and we've made it over the hump has a lot to say.

RB: Mmm.

KB: Thanks to you and Tor. The two of you. You're a good pair.

RB: You know, if it was for just *money*, I mean, we sure started out not making any money at this thing.

KB: [chuckles] I know.

RB: You know, going fishing I could have made five times the amount of money.

KB: I know. But. We're here. We're home every night.

RB: You know, I did it for twenty-five years.

KB: That's right.

RB: And I saved my money. That's the reason I have what I have. [laughs]
So I mean... It's not everybody of the fishermen who goes and spends the money in the bar, and then just leaves it there.

KB: No. That's what people have to understand. There's family people out there.

RB: That's what a lot of people... You know, that doesn't know much about the people down on the waterfront. They all think that they're all a bunch of rabble rousers. And, some druggies and stuff like that. There is some of them *too*. But you know, the main part of the fishing fleet and the fishing people is genuine.

KB: Good people!

RB: Good people.

KB: They really are. And I think—I'm hoping the community found that out this weekend. Yeah.

RB: Yeah.

MR: [?] scallops have to be shucked. [chuckles]

KB: Yeah. I heard that too. Did you know that? I haven't talked to him. There were people watching the scallop shucking contest. And they thought there were machines on board that shucked the scallops. They didn't think the guys did it.

RB: No...

KB: But this is the reason for the festival. People have to know what they go through and appreciate us. I mean the fishermen.

RB: Yeah.

MR: [?] Well, I'm going to say thank you....

[End of interview]