

Interview with Laurie Botelho (LB)
Occupation: Makes scallop bags
Port Community: New Bedford
Interviewer: Lisa Colburn (LC)
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The Working Waterfront Festival
Logger/Transcriber: Azure Dee Westwood
INDEX: (minutes:seconds)

Interview Contents

- 00:00 Tape intro; inaudible due to buzzing sound; several women's voices are very faint.
- 3:57 Buzzing background noise stops; conversation with one of Laurie Botelho's workers from Puerto Rico.
- 5:51 Laurie Botelho describes her business; size of the bags, how the captains use them, where their customers are from primarily.
- 8:56 Laurie Botelho describes the history of the business; initial help from Portuguese women community members; concern over cross-contamination.
- 12:05 Laurie Botelho family history from the Azores; more details about the Portuguese women expertise who assisted in the business ideas.
- 14:59 Laurie's grandparents and second cousins were fishermen; story of her family here when she was a kid fishing for scup together; strength of her mother.
- 18:26 No fishermen in Laurie's immediate family; customers like family; Laurie didn't know people in fishing industry before the business; she feels she's part of something and love the industry.
- 20:54 Laurie's close friendships (90%) are involved in fishing; comments from other women with Laurie; one has no friends involved in fishing and another woman does and likes fishing.
- 24:00 Conversation with Anne-Marie and what she like to fish for recreationally; another woman speaks about her boyfriend's recreational fishing activity; Lisa asks how they balance home and work life; Laurie says it's easy, but must be hard on her boyfriend.
- 26:52 Other women talk about their school, families, work schedules with Laurie; Laurie describes their work situations and the fact that the women speak multiple languages.
- 30:08 Women speak about languages, where they are from; Laurie talks about being involved in the industry by going to meetings; no laws to protect fishermen and keep them safe.
- 34:11 Laurie talks about the ebb and flow of even scallop industry; fishermen often try to protect the stocks; Laurie talks about 40lb bag changed to 50lb bag by rules; need to be diverse and sharp in her business.
- 37:48 Laurie speaks about how she is affected by all aspects of regulations; no standard bag size at the moment; different bag color effects on scallops.
- 42:58 Business planning, inventory. Lisa asks about stress in the women's lives due to fishing industry; Laurie is affected directly.
- 46:52 Next years' bag projection is at 1 million. Laurie speaks about her products competitiveness in the market.

- 50:01 Advantages of Muslin material of the bags; keeping up on new innovations and environmentally friendly options for the non-reusable bags. Lisa asks about any health issues in fishermen the women might have seen; Laurie talks about strained relationships and communication ability of fishermen.
- 53:55 Fisherwomen; also women in charge of finances, the glue of the family when men are fishing; with respect to drugs, Laurie saw more at night clubs than the docks.
- 57:17 Community perceptions of fishing industry.
- 1:00:24 Fishermen and education, certifications. Conclusions, Laurie states how fond she is of the women.
- 1:03:01 End of interview

Major Themes

- Adaptable
- Boyfriend
- Education – current part-time college for some of the women; varies
- Ethnicity – Azorean (Portuguese), Cape Verdean, Senegalese
- Gender – Female
- Change – recognized a need in the fishing community to make scallop bag
- Community sense of
- Demographic changes
- Environmentalism
- Family - strategies
- Fictive kin
- Friendships with fishermen/ clients
- Job satisfaction – happiness
- Job satisfaction – sense of purpose; fulfilling a need in the community
- Job satisfaction – helping give women jobs
- Innovation – of new product
- Location of interview – New Bedford
- Meetings – participation
- Management impacts – fishermen suffering; adjust business to reflect management changes
- Perceptions of fishermen – some bad, some good within the non-fishing community
- Perceptions of the future
- Physical health – negative affects on her clients, the fishermen
- Quality control of scallop product – freshness, bag color, contamination concerns
- Relationship strain – observed in clients/ fishermen
- Sanitation
- Social life – around business
- Stress – hand in hand with events in the fishery; can adapt quickly
- Women’s work – bills, business end; emotional strain on women

Interview

- 00:00 JC: (unclear, loud buzzing sound in background muffling voices) Tape intro; JC introduction.
- 3:57 (buzzing background noise stops; voices are clear but faint)
My name is (first name?) Lopez (L) and I'm from Puerto Rico. It's my first time in fishing and my first time at the festival.
JC: And how did you come to ...in PR were you involved in fishing... no not at all
L: No first time.
JC: And how long have you been here.
L: I've been here like 5 years.
LC: And you're all based in Fairhaven?... oh, New Bedford.. great. Do you have family here?
L: I have a baby and my boyfriend.
LC: And what brought you here? To work with Laurie?
L: I meet Laurie in the interview for job and she took me for the marine supply. So I'm the first ...she took me for the job...ya... first one she hired when she started the business.
LB: Actually, excellent quality control, she doesn't need any kind or measurement. She can automatically see when the bags are not good enough for fish. She really understands integrity and the products.
LC: Could you tell me just a little bit about all the products that you sell. You have different kinds of bags? Can you tell me about them?
- 5:51 LB: Sure. We have scallop bags and all the girls understand that they have to hold a certain measurement, because if the fishermen go over a certain amount of pounds as far as scallops, they can seize their catch. So the girls are very in tune with the bags having to be a specific specification and they really have adapted to the way of living... to the community, the fishermen community.
LC: So you actually sew them... and how big are they?
LB: They range from 10 pounds to 65 pounds and we do them in a natural color material, it's in the raw actually. We also have them in white. It's a non-toxic bleach... we bleach these bags and we cut them out with a computerized pattern and then these girls actually take them and fold each and every single one and put them together and have a specific size seam and they sew them exactly down the side and around, and that corner has to be absolutely perfect because if that corner is not in the exact same spot all the time, it changes the amount the bag holds as far as the scallops. So they care very much, they understand that what they are putting out there is the livelihood of the fishermen, the scalloper, because if he goes over a certain amount in the closed area, they seize their catch and they don't get paid for it.
LC: So the size of the bag indicates how many pounds you can fit in it, and once its sealed, they are confident that weighs 65 or whatever pounds.
LB: That's right. So the captain, if he's comfortable with a 40lb bag then he can do his math with a 40lb bag. If he has a 50lb bag, and he's comfortable doing it with a 50lb bag. But it takes awhile, esp. when you're a new, young company, it takes awhile to build that trust. Once the consistency is there it also feels good for us because when we drop off the bag, we don't have to be worried about, oh my god, is it going to go over, is

it going to go under. We can feel comfortable and say here you go, god speed, we'll be here when you come back!

LC: And do you work 5 days a week?... oh, 6 days a week... so how many do you produce?

LB: Last year we produced over half a million bags.

LC: And just for NB or all over the country?

LB: From Maine all the way to North Carolina. We sell most of our bags in NB and then probably the New Jersey area.

8:56 LC: And I guess you ramped up your capacity but how long have you had these people working for you. I'm curious at your present capacity, have you seen things grow or shrink or what's been the ups and downs... how many years have you been in business?... oh, 3 years.

LB: I've been in business 3 years. We started off, someone asked me if I could produce them and I went to the Portuguese women that I knew that came from fishing industry and also came from being seamstresses and understanding the material. And with the combo of those women, we found the correct material for water to flow through, to protect the scallops, not bruise the scallops, and keep it free from debris, because I'm very concerned with cross contamination of the product. And we figured it down to how many stitches per inch, to how many cubic or volumetric inches and with also the captains working with us, saying ok, we took these bags that held x-amount. And from there it worked out, it became a cottage industry and then I realized I felt good by providing something back to the industry that would help these fishermen and I decided to hire this crew and open a place in NB because its closer and that's what's happening. So our goals are to double what we did last year and take it from there. We're also looking easier ways for the fishermen because it's a little archaic on how they fasten the bags with twist ties. I feel we can produce something that's cost effective and easier for them so it's not so hard for them when they are out there. And so we've been really working on that end. We've also been working on anti-bacterial, anti-microbial and keeping everything cost effective, so that no matter how they handle the bags, that can't grow on the scallops.

LC: And from the point at which the bag is filled to the point at which it's empty, how much time is that? Your range?

LB: As far as once they harvest it on the boat...

LC: Once there's a full bag of scallops to once the bags empty because...

LB: Well, you have the day boats that come in every day, in and out, and then you have some scallopers that go out for 14 days and come in, and that's when they cut open the bag and wash everything out, and re-bag them and then distribute them.

12:05 LC: So they're reused?

LB: The bags? No, once they use them they throw them away.

LC: And how did you get into this? Where did this idea come from?

LB: Well actually I guess my area of expertise is food-born illness. And I always paid attention to the packaging that clams came in, and scallops. And I'm very familiar with the fishing industry, because I'm Portuguese decent, 1st generation here, so we're very familiar with all kinds of fishing. I had worked for the 99 Restaurants for about 13 years and I think I needed a little break so I came down here and watched them and I realized

I could do this; spoke to someone, they said, hey, you think you could make these for them us? And I said OK and that's pretty much where I started.

LC: So how did you start out? Was it you and a sewing machine in your house?

LB: Pretty much! (laughs) and a dream (laughs). I started off, went and bought a machine, my mom always taught us how to hem our slacks or put in a button, but I really was not a seamstress. I knew what the needs were for the fishermen and I tried to produce something that was similar but better than what they were using at this time... or more consistent. And that's pretty much how we started. With the women who kind of started it, those Portuguese women, they really taught me how to... the textures of material and how it expands and with listening to the fishermen's needs and their concerns... "we need this" to develop a product.

LC: Now, the Portuguese women that taught you, was that because they had been doing it or because they understood it to be a need...?

LB: Well, they understood textiles, understood different materials, understood the importance of it being consistent due to the fact that our families were fishermen in the Azores, so they understood that if you make a net, it really has to function properly. So with their passion, and my passion of no cross contamination, I guess that's how we came about. (laughs).

LC: And you had not had any family experience in fishing, specifically any family members, spouse, cousins, father...

LB: No. My direct parents were bakers for like 26 years.

LC: Was that in the Azores...

14:59 LB: No, here. Then my family before, my parents' parents (grandparents), my second cousins... we're all part of St. Michael, which has all those little fishing communities, in the Azores. So I guess my parents weren't, but my family before them. We went to Portugal every 2 years so we really understood those fishermen with the nets and those little boats. We saw how the weather, and how the hard work... you could see it on their face, in the way they carried themselves.

LC: Do you see the same thing here?

LB: I see the same thing here. And I think that with our passion we can tweak certain things to make it easier so they don't have to worry as far as "does this hold 50 lbs" or "do I have to be bent over all day long to be able to fasten this bag". I have to say that this fishing community is a very tight knit community, and I really feel like we're the thread of the blanket.

LC: Were you raised in NB of Fairhaven?

LB: I was born in Arlington, MA. Then when I was about 5, we came to Fall River. My parents weren't well-off, so we used to go catch scup offshore and that's how we pretty much survived, eating scup, fish, and my mother is great at hooking up the fishing pole... she would take the bait, the worms, put it into a plastic bag, wrap it around her toe and walk into the water about knee deep and cast her fishing pole, and she would look at my father like, you only have 2 hooks on the fishing pole, and she would have 6. We would spend all day trying... she would make a big pot of soup, and we would go there with soup and Portuguese rolls, "popsecshe" (sp?) and we would try to catch as much fish as we could to hold us over for the winter. I have to say, I'm proud of them, neither know how to swim (laughs), it was great, she would take that like nothing, not afraid, grab the fish off the hook... It almost felt like when you see the cavemen and the

hunters and they go out, and come home with their catch, their prey, you could see the proudness in them, like “yes, my family is going to survive for another winter”. I love scup (laughs)... it’s probably my favorite fish... once you know how to take the top fin, and cut it off, all the bones come off at once, you can get it down a lot quicker (laughs). My favorite part are the tails because once you fry them they are nice and dry and crispy.

18:26 LC: Do you have any family members that are currently part of fishing at all...children, spouse, any part of your immediate household that’s currently involved in fishing?

LB: No, my immediate household there isn’t any. I guess I’m the generation that is going to bring us back into it I suppose. I have to say our clients have become our family, we watch the weather to make sure, we know they’re out there, what are the winds going to be like... Now it’s great, we have BoatTracs, where you can email them, and the quality of the relationship once they come landside, because they’re here for a short period of time....it’s just....

LC: Now, did you know any of these people before you got involved in the industry. You grew up here but you didn’t have any social interactions with people in the fishing community until you actually got into your business?

LB: No, I did not. Once I got into my business, I started coming down here. I think they saw that I was genuine, I guess, and they really opened up their hearts and told me what they needed as far as different products.

LC: Who was doing this before?

LB: I guess there was a little lady that did it before, she passed away. I know there are big companies who order these bags, like from South Pakistan, and China which we could also do the same but, I feel great being able to employ these great women and just see them grow in each of their ways and their families. It makes me feel good. And it makes me feel good to be able to quickly address what the fishermen’s needs are. We don’t have to wait 3 months, we can just easily fix it in a day, here try this, and off they go. I have to say, I love this industry, because I feel like I am part of something. I feel like we can make a difference.

20:54 LC: Now what would you say in terms of your friendships, your close relationships... if you were to say 10%, 80%... how many of them are involved in some aspect of the fishing industry? Your close relationships.

LB: Oh, my close relationships, I would have to say at this point in time, probably about 90% of the people that I associate with are somehow involved with the fishing industry, in one way or another.

LC: Would you all say... how would you say for yourselves, in terms of your social relations, friends, family... I know some of you said you don’t have a family here... but of the people that you spend time with when you’re not working, what percentage of them would be from the fishing industry, any aspect of it?

(Woman): We don’t have this... these people that we are close... are not close to fishing...no.

LC: So when you go home at night, who do you spend time with, who are your friends, are they involved in fishing?

(Woman): No. They are not.

LC: Are you involved in the Cape Verdean community, or just...

(Woman): Yes, I'm involved with the community, Cape Verdean here, but they are not involved in fishing.

LC: So you don't have any other friends that are involved in fishing?

(Woman): No, not here.

LC: But in Cape Verde?

(Woman): Yes, in Cape Verde.

LB: I'm gonna interrupt for one second. They really are my friends, which started off being my customers, they really are starting to become their friends. Actually, we had a friend the other day, he was a fisherman, and he made us some hotdogs and pasta salad (laughs) and he said "you're working these girls too hard, they need to eat!" (laughs) And now they are just becoming part of the family too.

(Woman): Laurie is a nice person, she is very friendly with us.

LB: Why thank you! (laughs)

(Woman): You're welcome! (laughs)

LC: Ann-Marie, what about you, when you go home at night, you have your husband, your children? Do you have friendships with people who are in the fishing industry here?

AM: Yes, my husband have grandfather, brothers, nephews, they all (in?) fishing. Sometimes on Sundays, Saturdays, they come and go fishing together. Have some friends that have a boat; my husband go fishing too. Cause I like fishing.

24:00 LC: What do you like to fish for?

AM: Any kind. I like to eat the fish. Not all the fish, some fish.

LC: What's your favorite fish?

AM: I have carp.

LC: And where do you catch carp.

AM: Sometimes here on the beach at the south end. Sometimes you catch carp... other fish that come from my country. Its good fish too.

LC: And what about you. Do you spend time with people that fish or in the fishing industry when you are not working?

(Woman2): My boyfriend like to go to Fairhaven, Wareham, and fish with a fishing pole. Bring them home clean already... little necks... I like them in the oven with pimento peppers, really good (laughs).

LC: That's great

LB: Yeah, she only cooks Mac and Cheese (laughs). I tried to get her involved in the cooking demonstration, but she's not doing it, but those two (women) are.

LC: If my son had it his way, we'd have Mac and Cheese every night (laughs).

LC: Your are all women in the fishing industry, how do you balance your family and working in this industry, it sounds very demanding, what you do. How do you balance your home life and your work life? Is there a difference?

LB: For me it's easy because I have a boyfriend and if my family comes around, it's free labor. You're coming over to spend time with me, fold some bags, do something. And I don't have any children at this time, so they know... this is part of my... even my boyfriend, he's very, ... you know, it must be difficult for him...its like 99.9% all men that I'm around with every day, and sometimes I'm busy and I look at him and I'm like "I'm sorry, I haven't given you eye contact for 2 days, but I know you're still there, but these girls, they go to school and they raise families so...

26:52 (Woman): I'm a student at the BCC...

LC: So you have children...?

(Woman): No I don't have children...

LC: And what are you studying?

(Woman): Right now I am improving my English, but I will do Math teaching at the BCC.

LB: We also work with their schedules so they are not... they are allowed to study...

(Woman): I am doing a part time job, because I need time for study, full time, that's why I'm working with her, just for a part time job.

LC: So are you a full time student?

(Woman): Full time student, part time job.

LC: And what about the two of you, are you working full time or...

LB: Oh yes! (laughs)

(Woman): Full time. I go to school for second language 2 days a week at UMass, and I have time for taking care of my house and my kids, my husband...

LB: Tell her how many children you have.

(Woman): 3 boys (laughs)

LC: And what are their ages?

(Woman): The oldest is 18, 5 years, and 2 years old.

LC: Oh my word (laughs)

LB: And she works 6 days a week.

LC: Is 6 days a week, 8 hours a day, or...

(Woman): yeah, because sometimes my husband comes home earlier than me, he cooks, takes care of the kids, he cleans the house, do something...

LC: You can come live at my house (laughs)

LB: Yolonda is coming too (laughs).

(Different woman): For me it's easy because with Laurie I can go get my baby from the day-care, bring to my home, and go back to my job. When I finish, I go get my kids and I do Macaroni and Cheese (laughs).

LC: I'm going to bring my 7 year old to come live with you! (laughs)

LC: And how many hours do you work in a week? Is it also...

(Different Woman): Full time and Saturday full time.

LC: And what does that work out in a week, full time for you is...

LB: They're costing me a fortune because it's probably about 44 hours so they work a full 40 hour week plus half a day on a Saturday is what they do. And they are always in good spirits, always in good moods, you know, whatever their outside life is, I don't know how you can do you know work, a 44 hr week, work for me who's demanding, raise a household... it's very difficult. And these women, they all speak more than 2 languages (laughs). I mean, I speak English and Portuguese and I took 7 years of French, but we're actually practicing French. But she speaks....

30:08 (Woman): Creole, little bit of French, Portuguese, and English.

(Different Woman): I speak French, I speak Creole. I speak little bit of English, a little Spanish, and my language traditional...

LC: What's your language?

(Woman): Wolof, yeah, I'm from Senegal, West Africa. They speak Wolof, and in school it's French. And I speak Creole because my grandmother from Cape Verde. I born in Senegal.

LC: Are you Cape Verdean?

(Woman): No, just my grandma. I have 25% Cape Verdean.

LC: And the rest Senegalese?

(Woman): No, the rest, my father from Mali. My mother, her father from Mali too (the another sized city, descoabow, different {voice not clear}).

LB: I have to go to a map (laughs).

(Another Woman) I speak Spanish full time, very part time is English.

LC: All of your English is very good, I understand you very well.

LB: And her boyfriend is Portuguese, and she speaks Portuguese to him.

(Another Woman): I have to. And for my baby I love to speak Spanish, Portuguese, and English because I want, she can speak the 3 of them.

LC: And how old is she now

(Another Woman): 20 months.

LC: 20 months! So she's at that perfect age for picking up language... That's wonderful.

LB: I agree! (laughs)

LC: Are you involved in any fishing support organizations, informal organizations or other ones that support fishing families in any way?

LB: I try to go to as many meetings as I possibly can with NOAA. I also very often get asked to come to meetings when they are trying to change a law or trying to improve upon some product, which I am very honored to be part of. I really try to put myself in there even though I own a young company and sometimes it's very trying to be able to handle all the aspects and be able to be able to make sure everyone gets paid, make sure we have enough material in. But I really like to understand the industry and every aspect, and I have had friends where... like last year, the boat sank.... I really see first hand where it touches families.

LC: That was one of your customers?

LB: Yeah, and how it all breaks down. Everything around.... And it's kind of sad... sad and good in that there are people that make funds to be able to take care of these families, because really there are not any laws that the government needs to help them. Pay a mortgage, put their kid through college. It's pretty sad, especially when some of the laws push these poor fishermen into extremes. Where they have to get their days in, or they lose their days, or they cut their days in half, so they really have to work all night and all day, instead of getting a watch where they can sleep. It's pretty interesting.

34:11 LC: Have you seen in the 3 years you've been in business, because scalloping has done very well, it's actually one of the healthier fisheries, have you seen things get better or worse in scalloping?

LB: I think that it ebb and flows. It depends on once they open up an area or close down an area. I don't understand how sometimes the fishermen are actually stating "we need to close this area down... why haven't we closed this area down, to conserve the scallops or the fish"? Why it takes so long for it to get to whoever makes those decisions. I listen to both sides, I agree with both sides. I logically can sit there and say yes I agree with both. But sometimes the fishermen get a bad wrap, but they are not all out there cheating or trying to rape the bottom of the sea. They understand that that's their livelihood so they have to preserve it. They stand up and say "yes, we have to close this area" or "yes, we have to do this". And sometimes the people that make the laws really... I don't know if they are getting the info later, or if they just don't understand

it... because they weren't in the fishing industry. I'm not exactly sure yet. But sometimes I go to these meetings too and it's fishermen against fishermen and I don't think that is right. It's pretty sad how fast a regulation or a law gets changed without the proper information.

LC: Has there been any particular regulations that you can think of that you saw a very clear impact on what you do? Any changes for management where you said wow, that hurts, that caused a dip in my business.

LB: In the beginning that's why... at one point it was a standard that it was a 40lb bag, then all of a sudden it was a change to a 50lb bag, so if you do have x-amount or stock of that size, or they change the rules or regulations in that way, it does effect me, the economy around me, and within my business. And I think, once a couple of times that happens and it was here say at the end, where I got that info almost too late and I started to realize all the laws that they make effects me which also effects them. So I really have to be diverse and really understand what the changes are and be there when it's happening to be able to rectify or adjust it to be able to keep it steady. I understand that there are ebbs and flows, no pun intended, but ups and downs, that's great, it keeps us attentive and sharp.

37:48 LC: Would you say the changed that affected you were because of gear specification, like the bag size vs. a closure or a particular area? Would you say you've been more affected by that than days at sea or ...?

LB: Actually everything. Because if they change a specification it affects us. If they change an area, they close an area, they say they are going to open or close an area, all our boats might go to the Mid-Atlantic. So I have to make sure that I'm ready to supply them down in the New Jersey area. If they open an area up here, I have to make sure we can support the southern boats up here.

LC: Would different areas like New Jersey have different bag size specifications, or is that standard across all the scallop fisheries?

LB: Well, right now there are no standard bag sizes. And last year we were very fortunate to be part of an experiment to try to standardize the bag because right now there is none. If you want to bring in an 80lb bag you can, if you want to bring in a 40 lb bag... as long as you do the math, and you come out with the 18,000 lbs in the closed area and you come home with that, that is fine. There are no specifications on whether it's a 40lb or 80lb bag. And the southern guys they like the whiter bag, probably because the scallops are milkier in those waters, so they really need to have the white bag to make the product look fresher and cleaner, as opposed to the natural bags that our guys use up here.

LC: Is a little bit of color from the bag go into the scallop, is that what you're talking about?

LB: No, it's the residue that the scallop gives out, the juice, actually goes through the bag, so you might see that milkiness...

LC: You mean on the outside of the bag, so it's the appearance of the bag that has some bearing on what price it might give or how fresh it looks?

LB: Yes. And I really try to integrate the white bag up here, because it makes the fishermen have to be cleaner, makes them step up, you can't have the little fish mixed in with the scallops, you can't have those bags laying around because you don't want diesel oil on them because they are white. So I really try to push those. The fishermen

that take them, they love it. Because once they put that out on auction, they can say yes, this is quality, you can see it. It changes the value of it.

LC: Were you the first to do this, or had white bags been introduced elsewhere?

LB: I was definitely the first to do it up here. Everyone though I was out of my mind. I kept saying, pushing. There was a couple captains that really... Shawn Manchie from F/V *Eva Brava* (?) he kept saying, this is the best thing because it keeps everyone up on their toes. He kept saying this is great, keep pushing it. It is one of the oldest industries; it's hard to change something. But once the fishermen saw those scallops got more money in a white bag....

LC: So is that pretty consistent, that if you have a white bag and it's clean, that it might fetch...

LB: Yeah, you might get between \$0.50 and \$1.00 more per pound. And if a bag holds an average of 50lbs, times 18,000 pound, it makes a big difference. The fishermen also have to be disciplined to be able to use those bags. Which I like that, I like the fact that we try to push the standard a little higher, just a little above...

LC: And what percentage of the bags that you produce are the white vs. the natural.

LB: At first I couldn't sell a white bag to save my life (laughs). I would have to say now, it's about 50/50.

LC: That's amazing.

LB: Yeah, yes it is amazing. I think that the following year we'll see more white bags.

LC: In your business, how far in advance do people have to order their bags?

42:58 LB: I've been at a wedding and left the wedding to drop off the bags because the bags forgot the bags. Where were you, at a wedding, yes! They usually give me a couple days. At first they wouldn't, but they usually give me a couple days. I try to keep around the docks to make sure. The people in Maine, outside of this area, I usually give them a call to make sure they are O.K. They're very consistent on how many weeks they'll order for like 4 weeks or 7 weeks so I kinda understand, ok, they are almost ready to order. We'll make sure we're packing all these. Because we do a lot of the process...

LC: You're anticipating, you're having everybody make bags based on what you anticipate what you're going to sell over a period of time?

LB: Yes.

LC: And how far out into the future... like the bags you have now, if you didn't make any more today, how far out are you covered?

LB: Well, we try to keep a minimal inventory on hand. Once I keep adding customers, I up the par level. I try not to keep too much on hand because they change the regulations really quickly, so I don't want to have 100,000 bags sitting on a shelf and they change it and now we're stuck. So I try to keep a few thousand of each size. We primarily make 6 sizes, but we make 18 sizes. 6 sizes are regular sizes. 18 sizes and we really try to figure out O.K. who is going to order what and when to be able to produce them.

LC: A little step ahead.

LB: Yes, pretty much.

LC: That's amazing. We're getting pretty close to the time you have given me. I have some other questions about... it sounds to me that in general, you are all very happy with your particular job and that it is something, you seem like you really enjoy what you do.

LB: You girls better too! (laughs)

LC: So I'm wondering for you, any of you, how you feel about stress, the stress in your life that's related to the fishing industry. You might have personal stress in your life, but the question is, is that related to anything happening in the fishing industry.

LB: With me it's hand in hand. It is my livelihood, so whatever happens in the fishing industry also affects my personal vision in my home, or within myself, and the goals that I have set for myself, where do I see myself in 6 months, where do I see my family and myself in a year, so it does bring stress but I feel confident that I can adapt quick enough and that everybody's on board where they'll go with me.

LC: Now has there been any time since any of you have been working in this business that you had to work less hours because of some cut. You had to say, O.K., financially I have to pull back for a week or a month. Has that ever happened since you've been in business?

LB: So far, no. Let's hope that it doesn't.

LC: So you've... how many bags did you do last year?

LB: Half a million.

LC: Half a million and what are you anticipating in your next year, your projection?

46:52 LB: We'd like to do a million.

LC: and does that mean you're going to be cornering the market on it or do you think the industry, there's going to be enough scallops, that people are going to be able to get more. How are you going to do that, what's your vision?

LB: I think that we will definitely get a greater market share due to the fact that our product is more consistent than most, and that it's a higher quality, on the thread count. All around, from what's out there now. I also think that the regulations and rules might help us, due to the fact that the bags that are smaller, the core temperature of those bags and that product in there is cooler. So as far as food-borne illnesses, it's more apt to happen if you have a 65lb bag. And I also think even with other rules like OSHA. You can't have a small woman picking up an 80lb bag to put it on a processing table, so I think that will change where we'll produce more smaller bags.

LC: Is that something that you uniquely offer, is a wider range of size than a lot of other companies?

LB: Yes. Most companies have 1-3 sizes. We actually keep pushing if that captain feels comfortable with a 35lb bag and his hold is a certain size and he doesn't want his bag to touch the hold, we do it. We make it. We put that on our list of products. We start to find out that there are more boats made like that boat where the holds are longer than shorter, or wider. And they'll say, great, we'll take those. They really give me feed-back, so if they need something, we can make it, we can engineer it and design it. I think that's where we supersede our competitors. But we love our competitors (laughs).

LC: Who are your competitors, you're saying between North Carolina and Maine. How many other people are there that provide the product you do?

LB: Well, right now we have maybe 4-5; it's really a niche, a small niche. It's ugly sometimes, but it's definitely a little small area. Obviously, bigger and bigger companies that might make grain bags for the farmers or produce bags for farmers and produce guys, they start to see, they use a lot of these bags, so they'll try to grab a season. But they are not as close to the end user as we are. We really dedicate ourselves.

50:01 LC: What exactly is the material?

LB: It's like a muslin.

LC: Muslin, and it's just cotton?

LB: Yes, some of our competitors use a blend. Right now we use a cotton bag because I called up VIMS and they had done some experiments, and the cotton bags and the scallops, they maintain and hold the same bacterial, so it's not like 2 bacteria fighting against each other. But I'm also getting well versed with new textiles, and the new textiles that come into now, where there is a topical solution or it's made out of natural soy beans. We are really trying to become a green company too, so we don't really harm the environment. We understand that once they cut those bags, they don't use these anymore. So that's why we don't use polyester, because it takes longer to break down. I'm actually going to a material convention on Tues. just to see what the new upcoming materials are.

LC: And where will that be?

LB: That will be in Manhattan.

LC: Now this question is in relation to ways in which your life has been personally touched by some of the difficulties that the fishermen have. In the people that you're working with, do they have any health issues, mental health issues, particular physical issues that you see a lot with the people that you work with, the fishermen.

LB: Can you just repeat that question.

LC: I'll just give you an example. When I was interviewing people up in Maine. When I asked the question about physical problems. Did the women or their husband, if they fished, have particular kinds of physical problems and a lot of them talked about the lobstermen or people that were sternmen on boats having back problems, or repetitive motion problems because of doing some of the same things over and over again. And I'm wondering what your observations are about... lets start with physical problems in the fishing industry, that you see.

LB: This is actually an interesting question for me, because I do know many of the guys that fish, especially in this area, and I do see a lot of physical ailments. First you look at them and they might be in their 30's but they seem like they have 20 more years on them. And you see the back issues, ... from shucking, in scalloping, you'll see their arm in a sling after 14 days. And these are men, fishermen, that go out there when it's snowing, they are not like, ohhh. But I also see... I don't know how I can put this delicately... I also see the way they have relationships. They are out at sea so long sometimes, they really don't know how to have the simple interactions with people landside. As far as having relationships and having to communicate with each other, as far as my observing the men that go out, the fishermen and ladies actually, that go out there and come back. Its almost like they get off and don't now how to react as well as we would, because we interact with so many different people so much faster than they would out there.

53:55 LC: And how many women do you see, can you count them on one hand, women that are fishermen in New Bedford area.

LB: I know that there's like 3 women fishermen I know in the Fairhaven/ New Bedford area. I know that in New Jersey, there are 2 women, and 1 woman in Ocean City, MD. I know on the land side, usually its women that take care of all the money. It's the women that are the driving force in making sure that the economy keeps going. They go out there and harvest, but if it wasn't for the women, actually doing all the settling, making

sure... they are versed in the rules and regulations. When these fishermen come in, they'd be like melt down... (laughs).

LC: So it's particularly in marriages that the women be involved in fishing in that way.

LB: Yes. Sometimes I feel bad for women and men because its difficult, because they are out there trying to make a living, but the women they are at home, whose husbands are fishermen, they really have to be a strong woman. They are raising kids on their own, they're making sure everything gets paid. And it must be hard for them to not have that emotional support, when things are rising and those guys are out there. I see a lot of marriages crumble that way. We should start up something that will help counsel fishermen and their wives. Where they can come in and have some kind of mediator.

LC: Something specific to the interrelationships ...

LB: Yes.

LC: So marriage issues, you see a lot of that, that's a problem with the fishing community. And what about any other issues in terms of drinking or drugs or violence, what's your general.

LB: I really think that fishermen get a bad rap. I deal with a lot of fishermen from all the way up and down the east coast, but I also worked for the 99 restaurants and ran a night club for 3 years, so as far drug use on both ends, just go into a night club as opposed to like if you go into a night club verses a dock, you'll find a lot more and many more different more drugs in a night club that you would on a dock. And yes, I do see, there is a lot of cash on hand, and if you really can't cope with relationships, what do you do with that cash. I'm sure that's an avenue. But as far as fishermen being fighting, drinking, drugging, I would see more in a club scene. In a vast array from women and men, not just geared towards men.

57:17 LC: I'm wondering we're right at an hour, is there anything I haven't asked, there is probably one more thing. Oh let me ask one more question, then I have a question for you. How is fishing viewed in New Bedford for your community? Do you think the community of New Bedford sees fishing as a positive thing? Is there tension within the community between the fishing community and the larger community? What's your perception?

(Woman): I believe the fishing in New Bedford is positive. We have the sea here.

LB: You don't see any conflict between people that don't do fishing and those who do?

(Woman): No.

(Woman 2): Sometimes people go fishing, they take a couple weeks, then other people work in here. They have time for a lot of things. The fishermen don't have time for a lot of things.

LB: Does this mean the fishermen feel jealous, or they feel bad, or...?

(Woman 2): Some fishermen yes.

LC: What about the other community that doesn't fish. How do they view the fishing community?

LB: Well I think...god forgive me... I think sometimes they think of the fishing community as lesser than or less. I might have the captain that makes \$300,000 and I have a doctor or lawyer next to me and he is like, "Oh, he's a fisherman." And I say, "yeah, but he makes more money than you!" Just because he's not in a suit and whatever it is we use for status, because I find myself falling into those traps too and I need to step back. But it's pretty interesting to see that, the difference between where it's

the title of a profession really might say, he's just a fisherman, and I say, Jesus, that guy makes \$100,000 more than you do. What are you basing it on? What I see on the fishermen's side is that they don't really come out and say... well I make \$150,000 more than you... they kind of sit back and chuckle, almost like they are the ones that have more awareness, or like they are the ones that are more educated even though maybe perhaps.... A lawyer might go to school for 8 years.

1:00:24 (Woman 3): Because for fishing... somethings on a boat you have to go to school for.

LB: Oh, you mean like being a captain or being certified.

(Woman 3): Or make something, because they have different work inside the boat.

LB: Oh, she's saying not just the fishermen, but the diesel mechanics, I think her husband is certified in CAT, her husband actually works on big cargo boats back in Senegal, right?

(Woman 3): Yeah, they go to other countries.

LB: I guess you're right, within the fishing communities, the sub-communities in that....

(Woman 3): Because every person in the boat have some work to do, they do different work.. some do the fishing, some do the mechanics, some cook...

LC: And some have to have a proper certificate so they can do that. We're definitely at an hour. I'm honoring that, although I think I could talk much longer. Is there anything that you would like to add here, that you think is important. That maybe I haven't asked, or that I should ask the next person, or that you think is important that I haven't asked.

LB: No, you've pretty much touched base on relationships within the community, and the regulations, the only thing I'd like to add, is that I love my women, they are awesome. They are just great women, and I hope they become successful, I want them to stay with them forever, she's into math, I'm trying to get her to do all the accounting and everything else, they're great, absolutely wonderful. They are all in their... I want to start other businesses with them... she's an excellent pattern making, she's like eagle eye, here quality is ... they are great. Plus just being able to try the different foods from the different countries. And I don't know how it happened this way, it just did. I hope we brought you some joy today.

LC: I very much appreciate it.

1:03:01:LB: Likewise, sorry we were a little disheveled.