

Name of person interviewed: Herman Bruce [HB]

Facts about this person:

Age: 71

Sex: Male

Occupation: Retired fisherman, boat owner

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

Home port: New Bedford

Residence (Town where lives): Dartmouth, MA

Ethnic Background: Newfoundland

Interviewer: Markham Starr

Transcriber: Laura Orleans

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September 25, 2010

ABSTRACT

Retired fisherman, Herman Bruce, of New Bedford, Massachusetts, has been involved in the fishing industry for 55 years. His parents came from Newfoundland. After immigrating to the United States, his dad fished in New London, CT and eventually moved to New Bedford. Herman started out helping to paint the pin boards on his dad's boat and eventually fishing summers before going full time beginning in the early 1960s. He was a ground fisherman for approximately 20 years before going into scalloping. He owned a number of Eastern rig draggers and then several scallop boats. He currently owns a scallop boat which fishes out of New Bedford. He talks about day to day life aboard a wooden Eastern rig trawler: setting out the net, picking the pile, icing the fish, the engines, food, etc. He discusses changes that he has seen over time, tensions between environmentalists and fishermen, and the impact of regulations on the fishing industry.

INDEX (minutes:seconds) / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: Commercial fisherman; Captain; New Bedford; New London; New England; Nantucket Shoals; Relationship between fishing industry and environmentalists; Newfoundland; Earnings; Business and economic effects of regulations; Fisheries Management; Regulations; Conservation measures; groundfish; Changes in fishing industry;

[Start of Interview]

[00:00]

Family heritage and background, Newfoundland; immigration stories from 1930s

[3:00]

Father fishing in 1950s; 1954 hurricane; helping father on boat; wooden Eastern side trawlers; washing pen boards; father galley cook; fishing in summers; early years fishing, scalloping and lumping; Lumpers Union; price of scallops; fishing good for marriage

[10:12]

Type of groundfish; smooth bottom/gear; sea turtles; typical trip in 1960s; price of fish; typical landings; fuel oil stove; lack of heat on boat

[15:01]

Typical day; watches; cleaning, sorting and icing; price of fish; buying things on credit; loading ice for trip

[20:00]

Food on boat; typical meals; how attitudes about money have changed

[24:00]

Early engines; operation of gear without hydraulics; detailed description of setting out nets and operating gear pre hydraulics; men overboard

TAPE 2

[00:00]

Continued discussion of operation of gear; chaffing gear; use of animal hides (cow and buffalo) to protect cod end of net

[04:00]

Creature comforts; impact of regulation; assessment of resource; unfair treatment of draggersmen; owning boats; purchasing old boats to get started; refurbishing old boats; current boat built as a shrimper in AL, rebuilt for scalloping; Eastern rig steel scalloper built from leftover WWII submarine steel

[10:00]

Typical trip on modern day scalloper; creature comforts on modern boats; Vessel Tracking System; Regulations; health of scallop biomass; physical nature of scalloping, "a young man's game"

[15:02]

Aging; retirement (daily routine); sleep habits; vacations; current work on boat (refitting John Deere gensets)

[20:00]

Omission of sea scallops on Monterey Bay Aquarium seafood card; frustrating with environmentalists

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MS Ok I'm Mark Starr and we're here at the New Bedford Waterfront Fishing Festival 2010 to interview Mr. Herman Bruce who is a retired fisherman and currently also a boat owner in New Bedford. And if I could have you just state your name and when and where you were born.

HB My name is Herman Bruce. I was born in New Bedford, Mass. 1939

MS And was your family in fishing at all?

HB My family was all in fishin'. Um my family is from Newfoundland. It was seven children, there was. My mother and father were born in Newfoundland. And my four sisters who were older than I am were born in Newfoundland. And my father came to this country to fish because at that point in Newfoundland there wasn't anything to be... He came, he was here for two or three years, and then he sent for my family. So there was a space of three or four years between my brother, whose... I'm the youngest of seven. My brother is a year older than I am and another brother is two years older. There's four years between my brother and my youngest sister, who's older than I was. And that's... when they came to this country, we were all born here. My father was a fisherman here. Actually he was fishin' until, well, he had a heart attack and died at 65 and he was supposed to go out that day, so...

MS When did he come to this country?

HB He came to this country, I think in 1936. He came in 1932. And I think he brought my family, my mom and she said, you know when they'd raised enough to go, they came in 1936. And uh one caveat, my sister, Patty, the youngest, she came to the country, of course at that time it was on the boat, and they wouldn't let her in the country because she had polio. And they sent her back to Newfoundland by herself on the boat and then she came four or five years later. And there was a big article in Boston Globe at the time. The headline was Patty's Back! So

MS Your parents must have been pretty...

HB Well in those days there wasn't much you could do about it. I mean my mother had the four, three other girls with her so it wasn't like she could go back. So it was uh. But I mean in those days, that's the way it was.

MS And did, when she went back did she stay with family?

2:41

HB When she went back she stayed with family. And uh, I don't know enough about it to be honest with you because I was the last one born and I think at the time, my mother was like uh, she was born in 1900 so she was 39 when I was born. You know in those days they didn't think much about records and stuff like that. And up until the time I was old enough to ask questions I never bothered and unfortunately a lot it's uh, we didn't get

the history that we could have. And my four sisters are deceased so... They're the ones that knew most of it, but...Anyway, that's uh...

MS Did your father come directly to New Bedford?

HB No, he came to--he fished out of New London Connecticut. At the time, they had the forest they called it, 'cause it was no money in fishin' at that point. You'd go out and go fishin' and whoever owned the boat, they didn't know if they were gonna sail to New York or New London, there was no union no anything at that time. And they'd give you ten dollar bill or whatever they...And my father actually lived in the forest for four, five months till he could get a steady job. Of course durin' the war, there was no supplies. I mean some of the men fished in their shoes because there was no boots. They didn't have gloves except what, sometimes they had uh woolen gloves that the women made and...My father used to tell me I remember it was two cents to get the ferry to New London where their boat was. It was a three mile walk around. And they walked it quite often lookin' for jobs. They didn't have it very easy.

MS And so the whole family went to New London first?

HB Nope. My family was in New Bedford from day one. Yup. My uh, my godparents helped my mother to get an apartment. And you didn't have money to go anywhere anyways, so they stayed here. And my father just worked where he could get a job. And then he did fish out of Boston for awhile which was closer. And the New Bedford fleet was buildin' up. So that, I can't tell you the time to be truthful with you, but I know after a period of time they fished out of New Bedford and that's where we stayed.

MS Do you remember much early childhood here in New Bedford, were you involved at all, were you near the waterfront, was that an attraction to you?

HB I started fishin' when I was uh 16 years old, 1956 I think I made a few trips. And, um, yeah I was always kind of a, I used to go down with my father when he was in off the boat cause he went cook on a lot of boats. They had to wash the pen boards and I used to help him wash the pen boards when I was like 12, 13. I didn't have an interest in school, unfortunately. If I had the thirst for knowledge then that I have now, I would have gone, but, I just wanted to go fishing, which I did. And uh, yeah I remember a lot about that time you know. I remember my dad was out in the '54 hurricane and the boat he was on was de-masted and everything and they were adrift for a day till...I drove around the dock with my brother-in-law, you know, lookin'. So, yeah I've had my share.

6:33

MS You remember what that boat was your father was on?

HB You know I tried to remember it, but I really can't. I thought, there was two or three names that, I won't because honestly don't, I can picture the boat comin' in. As a matter of fact, last night, I was sittin' with my wife and I was tryin' to remember the boats that I was on starting in 1956 to '57 and I said, holy god we're talkin' fifty years ago now. And

I remembered quite a few of 'em but there was some that you know, and I could picture the skipper, I knew the skipper's name and everything, but the boat would not register. Now, and I do a lot of crossword puzzles because, off shore, the last, I've been retired in uh 2000 and in about in 1990 when I would write out lists of things I had to do and I'd look at the words and say, that's not how it's spelled now. I'd have to write it on a separate thing. I could recognize how it should be spelled. So I started doing crosswords to . . . and I'll tell you as much as you do, and as much as you think, after forty or fifty there are things that they are not gonna pop into your head. So...

MS Now the boat that you started on, were they all groundfishing?

HB All wooden eastern side trawlers, most of 'em. I did make three or four trips, well I was on three or four boats, I made more than one, two three trips depending, scallopin' and that was in uh, like uh '57 or 58 when we were gettin' 35 cents a pound give or take and there was a limit of uh 11,000 pounds per boat. Usually there was 11 men on the boat. And um, it was a pretty good system, it was union. You worked six hours on, six hours off so it wasn't, it wasn't a bad ...you made a living, you didn't make any money. And then I went draggin'. And my father bought a boat in 1961. It was the Major J Casey was the name of it. And I went there, that's when I really started fishing in earnest. Because what I would do previous to that, I would make four or five trips on a boat, then I'd, for whatever reason bein' 18 or 19 I didn't have any future payments as far as houses or anything so I could come and go. And lots of times I just decided I was gonna stay ashore for awhile and I'd unload boats and I was a member of the lumper's union. And I used to unload boats and ... Then when my dad bought the boat I started fishin' pretty steady. I got married in '61. I was on the boat then. I'm 49 years married in another couple of weeks so...Fishin's good for your marriage cause you go for 10, 11 days and it keeps the peace [chuckles]. And I honestly believe that! Cause plenty of times I left the house not in the best of spirits but when I come home things had [laughs] and that's not her fault most of the time. I will say that [laughs].

10:12

MS Now what type of fish were you after?

HB We were groundfish, uh haddock, cod, yellowtails, flounders. And we did a lot of time, smooth bottom, we called it. But then we got into rollers, certain times of the year, the yellow tails and stuff were scarce in the smooth bottom so you'd put on the roller net, go in the harder bottom. You'd just change with whatever at the time was uh...you know then in the winter, we'd go out in the deep water flukin' and at that time you could catch lobsters and bring 'em in and so we did that. Whatever we had to do to make a livin' that's what you did. And even at that point we were environmentalists believe it or not, because most fishermen know what's goin' on out there they don't, contrary to what the public believes we're not eco-terrorists by any stretch. And uh, you know, but it's sad because today, it's a whole different world out there you know. I mean I have nothin' against environmentalists, believe me, but it's just their information is so skewed as compared to...they lean it their way. We're in a situation now where even us as scallopers, we can't get away from the fish. So I mean they got to be there. A classic

example is uh, turtles. I fished 44 years, actively fishing going out, I never saw a turtle. And now um, skippers of my boats tell me everywhere they go, they see turtles, so...

MS When you started fishing could you describe sort of a typical trip for that time, say on your father's first boat, what uh, when you'd leave, sort of a typical day and

12:18

HB Well, the thing about it is uh, you had, you didn't have generators then, you had 110 DC or 32 Volt DC. So a typical day was you went down the boat around 9 in the morning, and you started to get things ready. Well the first thing you did was light the stove which was a fuel oil stove which stunk up the foc'sle. But like I say, you had no power, only except, I mean when you were runnin' the uh lister for the generator DC all the time. So the first thing you did was light the stove and get that ready and then the grub and the ice and all that would come and maybe like 12, 1, 2 o'clock depending cause they always got the weather at 11:20, there was only one weather forecast at that time... And you would go out. And the thing of it is, it's funny because I can remember when you went in the foc'sle, of course the boat bein' tied up for a week or five days whatever, it was cold as hell. And you would lay in the bunk with your hat, your coat, your everything, and you would never turn over, because everything was so cold, after a period of time you got that little spot warm, you never rolled over because now it would be like layin' on ice again so... Yeah you remember those things. Certainly we didn't have bathrooms, we had pails, so it was a whole different [laughs] it was. I mean the cook, he would cook a meal on the way out, but in most times you'd get up and pick at it cause you weren't that hungry. As a rule we started fishin' around midnight where the grounds where we used to go on Nantucket Shoals and everything so you went right out and started at it. But to be a week then was a long trip. Usually you were home in five or six days. And it was the amount of fish you brought in that made the difference, I mean you'd come in quite often with loads of fish, because at that time you'd get a thousand pounds a tow pretty much no matter where you went. And uh you know, fifty, sixty thousand pounds of fish was a typical trip. Certainly close to typical I would say, because there was tons of fish and then we'd come in and you'd get 3 or 4 cents a pound for 'em. It was a hard life.

MS So what would a typical day be if you were in the middle of fishing?

15:01

HB Typical day is you went and ate, on them boats at the time you were six handed, you ran eight hour watches, four hours off. So like you would go on at say midnight, you would get off at 8 o'clock. Breakfast was at 7:30. You'd go down and eat and then you were off until noontime. And it was a 24 hour thing. There was always four men on deck. And you would just go up, haul back. You know, take care of the fish, wash 'em off. In the case of haddock or cod or pollock or stuff you'd rip 'em, gut 'em and clean 'em, wash 'em, pull 'em down the hold, ice 'em. There was enough of fish so you did that pretty constant, except when you, if you didn't get a good tow, sometimes you'd be done, sometimes you'd have 20 minutes to sit around. There was no radios off shore or anything like that, so you did a lot of thinkin' and plannin' and dreaming. That's what it

was. And you did that round the clock and when you had enough, you came home. That was it, that's you know. Then the day you were in you unloaded, which took you most of the day. [Coughs] Excuse me. And the next day, sometimes you'd go down and work on the nets and stuff. Then you would have one day off and then you'd do it all over again. Like I say, you made a living. But it was frustrating lots of times because the price of yellowtails or haddock, cod at that time, might be six cents and then if there was a bunch of boats in that day, it might drop to four cents so you lost a third of...often times. And I'm sure, sometimes it worked the other way, but not enough that I can remember, I tell you that. And then you had the good trips and you thought you were gonna have a villa in Spain. Then you went back to reality for the next three or four trips, prayin' that ...You know in those days, I remember when I first got married, like, the oil man would come to fill the house with like twelve, thirteen dollars, you'd pay him and then the next time he came, we're talkin' about the winter now, you didn't get out on time, sometimes you were home a week or two out of the weather and uh, he'd come and give you more fuel and you'd only have ten dollars to give him. So you'd have a three or four dollar balance and that would progress through the winter so that by March or April, you owed him, like 22 dollars. You'd get that paid off by August and you'd be right back to the same thing again, but that's the way it was then. And course in those days, it was a different type of people and they would leave the fuel knowin' you would pay 'em when you get the money. Uh, I don't think they do those kind of things today. There was no credit cards, no anything so...It was a different world, believe me.

18:16

MS The fish were iced down?

HB Yes, yup

MS How much ice would you bring in?

HB Well we used to take anywhere from 20 to 25 tons of ice and it was chunks of ice like maybe the size of your fist or smaller and it was put on the board by a, like a, a dump truck actually. They'd put a chute down the hold that was a part of your job, you had to go down the hold and set up the chute for a pen. And there was a fellow up in the truck with the lever to up and down the door, so that when you had to move the chute to another pen they'd stop and...And you would take probably a minimum of 20 tons at the time. And what you did is when you washed the fish and put 'em in, you layered 'em. And like with the flat fish, you'd put 'em all belly up. That kept 'em from bleeding. And then you'd layer ice over 'em and then you'd put the next layer of fish when...You know, a layer of fish would be maybe a couple a hundred pounds in the pen, but it was spread out. And that's...you just...and sometimes you'd get haddock, you'd get cod, you'd get flounders, you'd get yellowtail, so you were workin' three or four pens at one time. A pen would hold about five thousand pounds of fish. And you were icing 'em at the same time you were tryin' ...yeah. It kept you on your toes, I can tell you that. So...

MS So what would they, uh, typical meals ...

HB Oh God, we ate well, we really did. We ate well. A typical meal the cook would have, well to begin with, breakfast, you would have a pot of coffee, a pot of tea and a pot of hot chocolate on the table. And at that time you'd have table cloths and dishes, plates, mugs. And he would put on sausage and bacon, certainly hash, corned beef hash and they would ask you what kind of eggs you wanted, if you wanted over light, over...he would be at the stove with three little pots and he'd be doin' that. We didn't have a toaster so you went through two loaves of bread to get 12 slices of toast because they had a grate they put it on and if he was flippin' the eggs, uh burnt gone, throw them away, get two more. It was, it had its moments believe me, but we ate well.

21:16

We had three meals a day. We'd have lunch, well dinner we called it at the time. And that might be a nice roast or something with the potatoes and gravy and everything like that. And the same thing. The meal was a 7:30 breakfast, 11:30 for lunch and 7:30 in the evening for supper and that's uh the same thing you'd have for, oftentimes you know, pork chops, whatever and they'd have all the fixings with it. Salads and stuff they never had. In those days you didn't have, you didn't eat between the meals. Because the cook was always working on deck and he'd run down and do what he had to do. And, most cooks were cranky, they were cranky old men. And if you went down in the icebox, 'cause there was no refrigeration, it was ice, at like quarter past seven to open it for whatever reason, I mean you never had any luncheon meat or anything like that so maybe you wanted a drink of milk or somethin', you went down there, he'd get right aggravated and they'd tell you, "Get the hell out of here!" So you learnt to stay out of the foc'sle. But we did eat very well. Actually we ate better than our families did at home. And that used to run through my mind too. Because at the end of the day if he had a roast, he would put it on the counter so if like you were midnight or one or two in the morning, the cook always slept between 2 and 4, that was standard. You'd go down at one or two in the mornin', you'd cut yourself a piece of meat or somethin' and sometimes if you had hard times for a period of months, you know, and I often did myself. I'd sit there and think, "God, we're throwin' away better food than I have home for my children." So it was uh, it wasn't an easy life. But there was a lot of pluses to it. You know you could come and go as you pleased pretty much, pick your jobs. If you were a good worker you could go on quite a few boats. You know you could stay where you liked or go where you didn't like so it was pretty good, but...at that time, money wasn't what it is today. You know everybody had a car and they had the essentials. You didn't walk around with two hundred dollar jeans with a name on the back to show everybody how successful you are. And that's the truth.

MS Uh how about engines in those days. Were there many problems with mechanics?

24:00

HB No not really, uh there were some engines that were. I remember one boat that I was on they had what they called a pony engine which was a gasoline engine that started a diesel. And that thing would rev up like a lawnmower engine it would wind right up and then when you through the lever, it would turn. But it was a one time deal. And they had, um well I don't know what they call them now, we used to call 'em punks. You

used to put um, a lit into the cylinder to heat it up. And quite often you could go down to the boat at nine o'clock in the morning and it would be noontime before you got the engine started because there was no heat, no anything. And they had them pony engines, but to be truthful, you once you got 'em runnin' you really didn't have a lot of, a lot of problems with the engines themselves. But like I said there was, there was nothin' but an engine. Then when... a lot of the engines at the time were like the, um, oh some of the names like the wolverines and stuff like that... But they were all, we called 'em tug-a-tugs you know chih chuh, chih, chuh, chih, chuh. And uh, yeah. I remember one time I was on a boat called the Mary Tapper and I always wore glasses, so I'd lay in the bunk and read and it was a tug-a tug-a and it was goin out to-tug-to-tug and I was reading and then when we got out maybe three miles where we could crank it up, and he did, it started goin' ta tick ta tick ta tick and my magazine, I couldn't even read it, I had to get out of the bunk and lay it on the table because it was... those things you remember. It's like oh god! [laughs] But the mechanical stuff was pretty good. Because you had, the winches were all uh chain driven. They were chain driven winches. And they were basic. The chain would break, that would be about it. But you could always fix the chain, we had plenty of links and stuff and that wasn't that often for the amount of work they did. Other than that, sometimes the power take off, you'd have to adjust it because it was slippin' but we're all pretty well versed in that from doin' it. Today it's all hydraulics. All hydraulics. I mean unless you've had some kind of a training in it you're lost because there's so many oh shuttle valves and this valves and that valves, you really can't do much so...

MS So the early Eastern rigs, can you describe how those nets are actually launched as opposed to today's Western?

26:56

HB Well you had two gallises, which a gallis is where where they ballards hang for the wire to tow. And one was forward and one was aft. And when you set out the net first thing you had to do was get the wind wherever you were setting the net. If you were setting it on the starboard side, you had to get the wind blowing to the starboard side so the net would drift away from the boat. You threw the cod end over first of course. And you threw all the net over and... then the skipper would go around on the boat so you could slack that forward wire back so the net would be straight and then when you set the doors, the forward door would keep the net open, and were talkin' now lookin' from aft forward-- that would keep the net out that way. The afterdoor would keep the net goin' the other way so that when you were towin' you had 'em wide apart. And when you, skipper would get around and he'd holler, ring the bell so that you'd drop the doors after you had the net in the water. And the forward door you had to check it to keep it away from the boat. The afterdoor you let it run for four or five fathoms cause if you checked it, it would go into the boat. So once you set it out then we had uh, you used to throw what call it a pelican hook, which would catch the forward wire and bring it into the back of the boat where you would put a pelican hook over so that it was on the stern so the wires didn't get under the boat. And then when you haul back, first thing you'd do is knock out the pelican hook so the wire would pop away and then the skipper would keep the boat straight till it got to like the 20 fathom mark then he'd start turning it so it would

come up alongside the boat. And we used to have, uh, quarter ropes, 'cause we didn't have net drums. And you had a quarter rope which went from the foot rope on the net up through the square in the head rope and you'd put that on the winch and wind it up and that would bring the net up to the rail. The foot rope which is the bottom of the net and the head rope which is the top of the net, that would drop in over the rail. Then you would go over and you would wait for the roll of the boat. When the boat went down you'd pull in the slack and then when it went up you just stayed kneeling on the net so you brought it up like that till you got the cod end and the bottom belly we called it, you'd put a strap around that then they had a Gilson, you put your Gilson in to lift it up so you could get the cod end up and then you'd put the fish strap that went around that and you'd use a tackle to lift it in.

30:10

And you'd bring the bag in, course most of the net was inside because there was no other place to put it. And you dumped the fish in the forward checkers they called it, tie up the bottom, throw it out, do the same thing. 'Cause you would be layin' into the wind so it would be blowin'. And on more than one occasion I've been on boats where the men went overboard because uh when the boat took a roll, heavy, heavy roll there was more weight in the net than we on the thing. So yeah, I've seen my share of that. Thankfully nobody was lost because the good thing is the net was there. They went over, but they were able to hold onto the net. And the boats were small, the rail, the rail to the water was probably only three feet, four feet at most so when the boat would roll you could grab, which I have done to be quite truthful with you.

31:04 End of first recording

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And that's uh you know. Then you set the net out and you started all over again. But when I first started it was all sisal twine, there was no nylon and we used to have maybe five one-hundred watt bulbs goin' down the middle of the boat. And then they come out with this grand scheme where they put tar on the twine. Well that was all well and good on a beautiful sunny day, but at night if you tore the net with five one-hundred watt bulbs, you didn't see anything and if you did see it, to try and mend it was a nightmare, because you couldn't see what the heck you were doin'. And at the time with sisal nets you wouldn't even get four or five days, sometimes you'd tear up the very first tow, you were forever mending twine or putting new nets in. And then I can't remember when, but I'd say maybe in the mid-60s, they started with the nylon nets which was like, God almighty this was beautiful. You used the same net for two or three trips unless you tore it up. But even if you tore it up it was great cause it was white. You could mend it easy. So...And then we had on the cod end, you had a chaffing gear, because the cod end goin' along the bottom the sand would wear that part of the cod end out. So we had these wonderful cow hides that they kept in, well they always called it "bluestone". There was a barrel on the stern with two or three cowhides in it. And this blue stone to keep it wet so. And they used to take that, it weighed about 200 pounds. You'd lug it up and where the net on the sides, on each side, you'd sew it to the cod end so that when the cod end was on the bottom, the cowhide took all the beatin'. And you would try, you'd have one fellow or two on one side and two on the other and you would try and get it so that it was

pretty straight. And luggin' that thing and pullin' that invariably, there was very few times that you got it to where...you always ended up re-doin' it. And then I remember one time they come out with a buffalo hide which was thicker and better. The only problem is, there was no such thing as a fork lift and that's what you needed to get it up to the deck. And then when these things would be ashore for four or five days, 'cause when you come home you stowed the net on the side of the boat and you kept it up off the deck.

2:58

So if you were tied up in the summer for a week or two, you went out, this thing was dry and this thing, I mean, it would kill you if it hit you. And you used to have to try and get it overboard, 'cause that's how you got, there was no gantries to put it out it was, you waited till the roll of the boat and it pulled it and then whoever was running the Gilson would let it go and it would go over the side, you would pray that your coordination was perfect so...and then that thing would float for ten minutes till it got...oh God! [laughs] And that's what they call the good old days [laughs] But it was!

MS So comparing it now to modern uh groundfishing . . .

HB Well they have, uh, everything today that you need. I mean, there's no manual except for the nets itself and working on the fish. But I mean like what we did with the quarter ropes, quarter rope cups and all that, it's all net drums now. You just hook it together and the hydraulics do all the work. It's still plenty of work because you have to deal with the fish. And the nets today, my, I mean the nets today that they make as compared with what we used, are unbelievable! The boats, the creature comforts, I mean they have creature comforts. Like I say on the draggers and the scallopers, excuse me [takes a drink], they have microwaves, toasters, mixers, you know things that we only dreamed of. So it's not an easy job. I think the hardest part today about draggin' is the rules and regulation that they have to go by. Fish is out there, to be honest with you. But they're just...I got into scallopin' in the 80s 'cause I could see the writing on the wall. And um, I'm certainly glad I did to be honest with you, but the draggermen today are... it's, it's just bordering criminal as far as I'm concerned, the way they're treated.

MS Now um, could you talk a little bit more, you eventually bought your own boat?

HB I owned, uh, three boats, three draggers. And I ran 'em myself, with, you know, crew, but uh...Eastern rigs, wooden Eastern rigs, because unless you had backing or whatever, you didn't get very far as far as the size, you know the age, all that. You bought old boats to get started, and that's what I did.

6:03

And I, oh, '81, '80 I think I sold, I owned a boat named the Christina J., I sold that. And then I started scallopin' but I owned uh, my brothers and I owned a boat called the Kingfisher which was an Eastern rig dragger and I owned the Major Casey which was my father's boat I had bought, that was an Eastern rig dragger. And I owned the uh, Christina J. was the last one. They were all what I call, old wooden side trawlers. And I

made a living with them. But I could see...and it's not that I had that much foresight. It was just that it was like, it was going nowhere. I was 20 years at it and...so I started scallopin'. And I fished for, I don't know 6 or 7 years scallopin' and then my son started fishin' and in about '83 scallopin'. He was with me in the summers on the old wooden boats, but then he started scallopin' and he became skipper of a boat and I was skipper of another boat and we decided why don't we buy one, so we did in 1987 I bought an old Eastern rigged steel scalloper and that served me real well. Now I own a uh, a hundred foot, it's only uh, well it was a shrimp trawler that I bought. It was built in two thousand and two and I bought it down in Alabama. I brought it up here and had it rebuilt. We cut it off right at the rails and we rebuilt the whole thing. I'm very happy, I've had, it's been workin' now for three years. And it's a great boat.

MS What's the name of it?

HB The name of it is Zibet. Z-I-B-E-T. That was the name of the old boat I owned. The old Zibet that I owned was an Eastern rig uh steel scalloper that was built by General Dynamics in New London Connecticut in 1945 with leftover submarine steel. They built five boats for, somebody contracted them. They had leftover sub steel, cortend they called it. And they built five of 'em. And uh I think as we speak, well mine, in 19, two thousand and seven is when I bought this one. She finished the year fishin' and then uh, I had it crunched up, took the equipment off it and they salvaged her.

9:01

But I think there's one or two of them still around and uh the thing was the insurance was giving me a hassle, even though they admitted that I'm old school, so I have load rated shackles, um, everything that's, but it need, um underwriters, they would see a boat that was built in 1945 and they...and so, they insurance was exorbitant. The cost, the hull premium and everything. And then I had, uh, I had the hydraulic winches and everything I had put on it myself, and I started thinkin' that if anything happened to the main engine, it would cost me probably a half a million dollars to...so I started lookin' around. It was one of my better moves. So...

MS Could you describe a typical day on your modern scalloper?

HB Typical day? Well by today's standards, a typical day is you uh, go up on deck, you start pickin' the pile where the scallops are, or shoveling them into baskets because the amount of scallops out there now are so plentiful that you just shovel them into baskets. And they're all a nice count. You go on the box, you cut as fast as you can [chuckles]. It's just, it's a uh, it's a circus is what it is because, you're only allowed so many days at sea. You're only allowed seven P.O.B.'s which is "people on board". So the skipper has to cut, the mate has to cut, but you get enough that you, sometimes you can lay and cut. And it's just a hectic pace. It's cut, wash 'em, bag 'em up, put 'em down and do it all over again. Twenty-four hours a day. It's not a, certainly not a rocket scientist, but you do need a good young body to do it. Because it's constant. And they work, like some guys wanna get more or get in earlier whichever, and they have the gangs workin' like 18 hours a day. And after ten days, that gets old. So you have to be young to do it. But

that's a typical day on a scalloper. And it's go, go, go, go. And scallopers, everything about 'em is heavy duty. There's nothin' light on a scalloper. Everything is heavy duty, from the blocks to the hooks to the wire to the men. Everything is heavy duty. So...

MS Yeah that's.

11:56

HB But like on my boat, you know it's like every other boat in the fleet, now it's got central air, central heat, stoves, microwaves, I mean, it's like it's unbelievable as from where I came from, you know. And they have all the electronics now. My God, the government knows where you are even, we have a VTS, "vessel tracking system" we have to run three hundred and sixty five days a year. Even when were tied up, like. Now my boat has one trip left in the Del Marder. We've been tied up since, I think the last of July. But I have to keep that VTS on, twenty-four hours a day. And we pay every month, so...but that's the rules and regulations. So...um. That's basically it, it's just. The rules and regulations are what's runnin' the industry now. I mean we've done remarkably well scallop wise. Scallops, um, are really a renewable resource in the sense compared to the fish. It takes a lot longer for fish. Ours are a faster growing product, of course it depends on the, especially in the channel there's a divergence of currents right there that the scallops replenish and they grow so quick. And we're only allowed, well I think it's like uh, I'll say 25% of the biomass is what we're allowed. If there's a hundred million pounds, we're allowed to take 25 million. So, we're working on a fully sustainable resource. And um, looks like it'll be for quite awhile, hopefully. And that's what they're tryin' to achieve with the draggersmen. But the only problem with the draggersmen, they have like 20 species that they're tryin' to rebuild at the same time, which is...is kind of hard to do. And uh, we've been very fortunate, scallop fleet is, is very fortunate. So...

MS So do you go out anymore?

HB No. No, I'm 71, uh. Like I said it's a young man's game. If...I could go, but I really don't have any desire to go, and to be very honest with you, I couldn't do any of the work, because you know after 40 odd years of fishin', or 55 years in the industry total, my hands, I mean thank God I'm healthy.

15:02

But whose to say. I know, I wouldn't put 'em through that torture, because I'd find out that I'm not as healthy as I thought I was. So that's, I'd love to go out on my new boat. It's new, three years, but...no I won't. No. I often thought about it, you know, even some people say, geeze Herman, you're in good shape, no I don't think I'm that good. At 71 I want to be close to an emergency room just in case. And the thoughts of bein' a hundred miles away from it at nine miles an hour doesn't uh...so that's the truth [laughs].

MS And how has your wife handled your being home? [inaudible]

HB Well I from fishing my whole life, it matters not what time I go to bed. If I watch the ball games and go to bed at 11 or 12 or 10, I still get up at half past four in the mornin'. I have no reason to get up at half past four in the mornin' 'cause I'm retired. But whatever it is when I open my eyes, I know that's... I never look at the clock, and I'm sure I wake up at one or two sometimes and fall back. But when I wake up and, I don't know there's an inner sense that says it's time, I get up. I guarantee you it's between quarter past four and quarter of five in the morning. I have a deal with the paper boy, the paper woman, man whatever. We have a paper woman that delivers the paper around 5:30, quarter of six. Well her husband-- I live in Dartmouth, Massachusetts--Her husband picks up the papers at the Standard Times over in Fairhaven. And he goes by my house around four, quarter past four, and he stops and he puts my paper, I guess she got sick of me standin' at the end of the driveway waitin' for her every mornin' so she told me she was gonna have her husband, which is perfect 'cause I get up, pour my coffee, walk out get my paper, come in, sit down and read my paper and have my coffee and then, I'm usually gone at quarter past, half past five in the mornin'. I have no reason to go, but I have no reason to stay home either. So I just go off, go around, sometimes I go aboard the boat to make it look like I really care. And other than that I just do my thing and noontime, noonish or whatever I go home, start my crosswords, that's a day, typical day. I've found myself doin' more vacations now. My wife who, like I say we are married 49 years so we'll go to Florida for a few weeks in uh, November. I try to make Aruba every year in February. And then in April I go to Florida for, just to kind of break it up. But that's it. That's the story.

18:11

MS Do you do anything with the, the, your boat now. Or is that all handled by the Captain?

HB No, I'm kinda hands on. Like when the boat came up from down south it has two John Deere 65KW gensets. But down there they used industrial gensets which are fine except they're a dry manifold and they don't have, on the exhaust system, they don't have a good thing to seal it so oft times you get fumes in the engine room. So uh, I ran them for a year till I got pretty well...and I, last year, this year actually, I took one of them out. And I put in a marinized John Deere. And I work with my son and another guy, you know, chain fallin' it down the engine room and puttin' it all, doin' that and I...I don't do a lot of the heavy work, but I still jump around and do, and I'm gonna do it again next month. I'm changin' the other one. So, yeah and I go aboard the boat every day, survey, go down the engine room and I do little things that I feel like doin'. I don't have anything that I have to do, but when I converted it, there was a lot of little things that you know I'll do this, I'll do that, when I get the time. It's of nobody's importance, except me, I want it a certain way. So that's what I've been doin'. I've been keepin' myself busy. And uh, that's basically. You know, I'm very lucky. I'm very fortunate. I have my health, thank God, and it allows me to do all those things, so...

MS Alright, well maybe one last question. Or is there anything that you would like people to know about the industry?

HB You know like I say, it's just that the way, a classic example is now this Monterey Bay Aquarium has a pocket guide as to what fish to buy and whatnot. And we, I'm involved in the Fisheries Survival Fund. And we had to point out to them last year that scallops were a sustainable resource. The New England Fisheries Management Council and NOAA has said that we are sustainable fisheries.

20:57

So they will go and say on this card, scallops are not, but you would think in their position where they're tryin' to sway the public to eat whatever this, they would keep up with what's what. So things like that bother me. It's like they're, they're fast to condemn and criticize, but they're slow to bring up, you know, cause I mean believe me when I tell you, we the scallopers, like the draggers, we sacrificed, we got rewarded because of the resource. The draggers haven't. But, like I said it was two or three years ago when I saw this about the scallops and like you know people are not gonna eat these because they see this little card and it says sea scallops and they have a star or a check or somethin' that...and I didn't think that we would have to be the ones to call them and say hey, listen get this thing up to date if you're gonna mail these cards, or wallet cards so people can have it, at least you gonna...And to be honest with you, that's the part of the environmental issues I have. I used to attend a lot of meetings, I was on the scallop advisory committee and it...a lot of the science just went totally against everything that I learnt for 44 hands-on years. And it's frustrating to know that...and I'm not sayin' they're right or they're wrong, but I can honestly say, they have a lot to learn. And when I'm sitting there and somebody tells me something that I know is not, and they don't listen. Up until maybe a year or two ago, they would not take, and they say they do, they won't take industry advice. I mean right now, I can tell you straight out that there's more yellowtails out there now...stuff like that drives you crazy, I mean, like I said about turtles, I never saw a turtle for 44 years. Now they're everywhere. Well that would tell me that there's a lot more of 'em around, but...so...that's the truth [laughs]

MS Great well thank you very much. I really appreciate your coming in and taking the time to do this.

HB I'm glad to help you guys. Good thing to be I guess. You didn't have any problem with me talkin'!

MS No

HB [laughs]

End of tape 23:38