

Name of person Interviewed: Dave Densmore [DD] and Pat Densmore [PD]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known) DD: PD:

Sex DD: Male; PD: Female

Occupation DD: Fisherman; PD: Fisherman/farmer

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

Home port Kodiak, Alaska

and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same) Kodiak,
Alaska

Residence (Town where lives)

Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel [JGF]

Sound tech: Chelsea Jenney [CJ]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: Saturday, Sept. 27, 2008

INDEX (minutes:seconds) / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: Farming; Oregon; Washington; Alaska; Women in fishing; Pennsylvania; Missionary work; Kodiak; Aleutians; Dungeness Crab; King Crab; Gill netting; Seining; Trawling; Shrimping; Wooden boats; Boat types; Skiffs; Crabbing techniques; Crabbing gear; Canneries; Eastern rig; Fishing poetry; Fishing poem “Greenhorn”; Regulations; Jobs on board; Skipper; Cook; Engineer; Deckhand; National Marine Fisheries; Sarah Palin; Conservation;

[Start of Interview] **TRANSCRIPT**

[00:00] DD family and personal fishing background; DD family background Pennsylvania, going to Alaska when young for parents to help with church missionary work; DD natural instincts for fishing and learning from his dad, old native guys; Playing boats as a kid; Aleutian villages DD grew up in; DD love of islands; Self-reliant qualities of island life;

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Bear sightings; Kodiak bear population growing; PD family farming background in Oregon; PD bought family farm mid-70s; PD going with Dave to Alaska in '81; Living at a defunct cannery; PD great grandfather came from Finland, was a sailmaker; PD uncles fished; PD dad in Coast Guard, fished a short while; PD brother fished; Fishing/boating skills DD taught PD; PD's current farmwork and livestock; Description of PD's family farm growing up, grandfather's farm across road;

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PD's farm animals—Arabs, turkeys formerly; Story of DD buying first boat at age 13

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DD's first fishing job with a cannery at age 15; Boat types 1960s; DD story of seeing eighty foot sardine seiner for first time, bought it eleven years later, named Oceanic; DD Bering Sea king crabbing, youngest skipper at the time; Crew view of DD as youngest skipper; DD starting in king crab fishing; supposed to go as cook, ended up as deckhand; Qualities of good cook on a boat; DD's first time as engineer; Engineer teaching DD by telling him to “trace it out” – paid off when he bought boats later;

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DD's first time as engineer (cont'd.), feeling nervous; DD always felt ready to be skipper, never nervous about it; DD loves skippering, making the final call; PD's start in fishing in Washington before fishing with Dave—trawling, shrimping; PD going to Alaska with DD—dragging on a wooden halibut schooner; Sailing schooner from east coast that was converted to scalloper; DD and PD liked old wooden boats, rebuilt them as they fished; PD had lots of adventures fishing with DD; PD's view of DD as a good seaman; Length of fishing trips—usually a few days; Mainly fished for Dungee crabs; Bay fishing but still remote; Weather systems in bays;

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Dungeness Crab fishing techniques and gear; DD's system with everyone doing a certain job, greenhorns fit in fast; Joking/sarcasm while fishing;
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Close calls (cont'd.); Leaking life raft; DD's activism mainly in form of protest poetry, speaking out at festivals, gatherings; DD getting started in fishing poetry; Government restrictions; DD view that fishermen are simply harvesting a resource that belongs to everyone;
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DD explaining terms/phrases in poem Greenhorn; Upside down hatch superstition; DD's view of women on boats as good workers; PDs' writing—stories about fishing, living at the cannery; Pack of dogs they had at the cannery, helped keep bears away; Their "witch" dog who was born on board during a Halloween storm, her bravery against bears and love of riding the skiff bow; DD explaining how market collapse, financial problems from divorce, necessitated fixing boats up as could afford to;
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[End of interview]

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00]

JGF: OK. This is Janice Fleuriel. Today is Saturday, September 27th, 2008. We're at the Working Waterfront Festival in the Harbormaster House, doing an oral history interview with Dave Densmore and Pat Densmore.

So if you could each just say a brief "Hi, I'm Dave, or Pat or whatever" [chuckles].

DD: Good morning Janice. I'm Dave Densmore. And this is my wife Pat.

PD: I'm Pat Densmore.

JGF: Great. [sound check]

CJ: Maybe just a little bit louder.

JGF: A little bit louder. OK. I'm going to either lean in your face or shout at you. Either one [laughs – JGF not miked].

DD: That's alright.

JGF: OK. [laughs]

So what we usually like to do is just have the person start and say a little bit about your personal background and family background and how you got into the fishing industry. So, your name comes first alphabetically Dave, so we'll start with you. [laughs]

DD: Alright. Well I've been a fisherman all my life. My dad was a commercial fisherman. My dad did a lot of things. The old family homestead was in Pennsylvania. So he started out working on farms and oil fields and stuff. But, he cowboied all over the southwest. He and my mom went to Alaska when I was real young. Basically, we just kind of blended into the atmosphere there. And, he fished and so on. And that was—As soon as I was able, why I was on the boat fishing, and... By the time I was eight, nine years old I had my first skiff. I bought my first commercial fishing boat when I was thirteen, so.

JGF: Wow.

DD: But... I think no matter where we ended up I'd have ended up on the ocean. Because it's always been a major calling. I just...

JGF: Uh huh.

DD: I have to be on water.

JGF: Interesting. OK.

Now what got them to move from Pennsylvania to Alaska?

DD: Well no, they didn't move from Pennsylvania. My dad had been all over. And we were actually—They were out in Washington. Originally they met a lady through their church who was a missionary in Alaska and they went up to help her.

JGF: Oh.

DD: My mom wanted to go. It's kind of ironic—My dad wanted to go to Alaska ever since he was young. And after he married my mom, of course she didn't want any part of that. [laughs]

JGF: [laughs]

DD: Until there was a cause, and then, then away they went.

But... I was there for the boats and the ocean and the fishing.

JGF: Yeah. And you learned fishing from your dad? Or from other...?

DD: Yeah. Well... You know, I'll tell you. It's weird. I think someone who's a natural fishing really doesn't learn it. He already knows it. I think we're born that way.

I can remember in Washington sensing fish... When I was out with my dad just sport fishing, when I was seven, eight years, old, I knew—No I was younger than that, I was six or seven. I knew where—I could tell where there was going to be fish.

JGF: Wow.

DD: And... I can't *always* do it, you know. But I can feel the draw. And I think a lot of fishermen are that way. I know a lot of my friends are. They just...

But yeah, I learned it from my dad. I learned it from the old native guys. You know. And as kids, we were always playing boats. That was the total focus when I was a kid. If you weren't playing boats, you were carving a boat or something. But it was *always* about fishing and *always* about boats. We played a little bit of cowboys and Indians, but most of the time we were down playing boats.

JGF: Yeah. Right.

And you lived in some of the villages, right?

DD: Right. I grew up in the Aleutian Villages. They're all gone now. There was a place called Ikatan. There was a [?] village, Akutan but it's a different village. But Ikatan is gone. It was outside of False Pass, which is the first break in the Alaska Peninsula on Umnak Island. And... [? Inanunga] was another village I grew up in. And then out on [?Snak] which is a little island about thirty miles offshore. So, I've always been on islands. I'm an island man, so. Kodiak and all the Aleutian islands, so. Yeah, I love islands.

JGF: Hmm.

DD: Yeah. I think island people are just a little bit different. [laughs] Than mainlanders.

JGF: [laughs] Yeah?

DD: [laughs]

JGF: Any specific ways? [laughs]

DD: Oh, all better of course.

[laughs]

JGF: I would say you're probably a little more self-reliant.

DD: Oh I think...definitely so. Because, when I was growing up there was... There was no, communication with the outside world, basically, in the wintertime once the cannery closed down. And... There was... We had a mail boat that came once a month.

JGF: Wow.

DD: Weather permitting. And a lot of times they couldn't stop. They'd keep right on going. And I can remember having Christmas in March. When it would be two or three months before they could make their stops. They'd go right on by, because they were on somewhat of a schedule, but... My mom would order all our groceries in the fall after we got done fishing. We'd get a shipment in, everything came in bulk. Potatoes and flour and sugar and everything, was in hundred pound lots and so on.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: And we ordered lots of shotgun shells. We basically lived off the land. All the meat we ate, we killed, except for bacon. They'd get bacon in. Slab bacon. But we lived on ducks and geese and seal and sea lion and so on. There wasn't any big game animals. So it was all seal and sea lion and birds. Eating a lot of seal.

[05:12]

JGF: OK. Well, there's one more question before I switch to Pat.

DD: Sure.

JGF: Would you see the bears in your villages?

DD: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Well [?Inanunga], Ikatan, there was. [?Inanunga] or [?Snak]. [?Snak] was a little island, but... In and around Kodiak. And out where I live in [?Uniak] Bay and [?Larsen] Bay there's bears.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: You know? And I was... The first time out this summer with the boat, we were anchored behind a little cove waiting for an opener, for fishing season to open. And I was watching a sow and a cub on the beach right in sight of us. And so on. So.

JGF: Oh, wow.

DD: Yeah, there's still a lot of bear around. *Lot* of bear around. In fact, the bear population in Kodiak is healthier than ever. *Partly* due to the big game hunting. Because the big game—the guides and so on, they're after the biggest bear, which are the *oldest* bear. The oldest bear no longer breed. But they do kill cubs and sows.

JGF: Oh.

DD: And because of that, it's actually enhanced the population. The younger breeding bears have a better chance, and so on.

JGF: Yeah, the day *after* we left Kodiak a bear walked through my friend's backyard. We didn't get to see it [laughs].

DD: Oh yeah. They've been having quite a bit of trouble this summer with bears in town. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah. Interesting.

[06:22]

JGF: So Pat. You actually grew up on a farm? For starters? Can you tell me a little bit about your background.

PD: Yeah. We moved to the farm that I own now in '50, when I was four months old. And we had a... It was kind of a small working farm then.

JGF: It was in Oregon?

PD: Yeah. Just about ten miles upriver from...up the Columbia from Astoria. And... Then my dad died when I was seven. And, my mom didn't really do too much with it. And, I bought it from her in the mid-'70s. And so, it's always been home. I went with David in '81 to Alaska for fourteen years. And, helped him on the boat. And we stayed at a defunct cannery but...

I came from—I guess you could say I came from a fishing family. My great grandfather immigrated from Finland and came across the plains in a covered wagon and all that.

JGF: Wow.

PD: And he had a net loft. He was a sail maker.

JGF: Oh! Huh.

PD: And made a lot of the sails for Astoria ships, and the gill net boats, and things like that. Then, some of his sons—my uncles—they were all in the gill net fishery. Some of them—I think three of them spent sixty years each either on the Columbia or up in Alaska, gill netting.

JGF: Wow!

PD: And my dad fished a short while before he died. He was in the Coast Guard, so that he was on the water all the time anyway.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

PD: But he fished. And my brother fished. But nobody ever thought about taking me fishing. Until he saw me running around on my tractor one day, and said, “Well, if she can run a tractor, she can surely run a boat,” so [laughs].

JGF: Right. And probably fix the engine too, right? [laughs]

PD: Well I helped him a few times rebuild a couple.

But, he taught me how to run the boat. And navigate. And I ran the boat for a couple of seasons when he was hurt.

But we fished together for quite a few years. Until I started wearing out. [laughs]

JGF: Yeah. I can relate to that. I mean I never fished. I just wore out without even doing that.

DD: [laughs]

PD: Yes. I came down and, now I bale hay and pitch bales all summer. I don’t know if that’s easier work or not. [laughs]

JGF: [laughs]

PD: It’s just wearing out a different part of me [laughs].

JGF: Your footing is probably a little steadier for the most part? Right?

PD: Yeah. And if I break down I can walk home. [laughs]

JGF: That’s right. [laughs]

PD: There’s that plus there.

JGF: So. Was your farm... Was it like a typical family farm with lots of different kinds of animals and things? Or was it a specific kind of crop or livestock?

PD: Well, my grandfather lived across the road from us. And he had a small chicken farm, and a dairy. And my mom would go over there and help him milk. But we just had a few cows and a pony. And cats and dogs and that sort of thing. Didn’t... Didn’t really have that—It was just ten acres. And half of it was in timber. So, we didn’t really have what you’d call a working farm.

JGF: Right. OK.

PD: So. But we helped out across—you know, at my grandfather’s.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

[09:50]

JGF: And now, yours is certainly what you would call a working farm from what you were telling me earlier. You have a lot of animals. Right?

PD: Yeah... I raise mainly Arabs. And... I’ve dabbled in a few of the smaller birds, peacocks and turkey, and stuff, but. My insurance company says they wouldn’t insure a turkey farm. And I didn’t really want a turkey farm anyway. So I dropped—I only have one pet now. So.

JGF: What was the issue with turkeys?

PD: They never mentioned it. They just said if you’ve got a turkey farm we’re dropping your insurance [laughs]. So, I don’t know what the liability on turkeys were. [laughs].

JGF: Really.

PD: And it wasn’t really... I just, had three hens, and they laid a lot of eggs. So just for fun I figured I’d hatch them out in my little incubator. And I ended up with about eighty of them.

JGF: Wow.

PD: But I sold them off. As they got older I’d sell off a few, and keep my feed bill even. But, it was just something to do.

JGF: Yeah.

Well I think what I'd like to do next—I'm hoping to talk a little bit about your writing at some point and some of your—I think there was some sort of activism for the fishing industry in there, but. Can I—I'd just like to get a little sense of your own history, each of you, in the fishing industry. Like I know, Dave you said you bought a boat when you were thirteen.

DD: Mm hm.

JGF: How did—I can't even fathom that today.

DD: Well, I was fishing—By the time I was twelve I was getting a full man's share on a boat.

JGF: Wow.

DD: And, when I was thirteen, we were fishing on a boat, my dad and I. And... He'd spent a lot of time rebuilding the boat that spring—helping rebuild it, helping the skipper rebuild it. And I really liked the boat. And so—I had [chuckles]—I knew where I was going. I wasn't going to stay on deck. I was a skipper.

JGF: [chuckles]

DD: [chuckles] Even then I didn't like taking orders [laughs].

JGF: [laughs]

DD: So I was running skiff. When I was twelve, I was running skiff. Which, holds one end of the net. So, it's the skipper and the skiff man that actually catch the fish. And the other guy's just handling the net, basically.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: So I had one end of the net. So I was already, a major contributor to whatever effort we were doing.

And... I started bugging the skipper about the boat. And... Dad pretty much gave me free rein on stuff. He was—On the one hand, I always knew where the perimeters of good behavior were.

JGF: Right.

DD: And I got a taste of the leather belt once in a while, if I stepped across him. But, he gave me so much latitude, and let me grow up pretty wild, actually. But he always treated me like a man, ever since I was a little kid. I guess about seven when I quit being a kid and started being a...Dad's helper, Dad's second hand.

And so... I'd been working beside men for quite a few years already.

And in the Aleutians when you graduated from eighth grade, you were at the same place mentally, I'd say, and, if not physically at least psychologically that kids are when they graduate from high school down here. You'd been treated like a man for several years. You were expected to pull a heavy weight for several years, already. And it wasn't just me. It was most all the kids. Because we were part of a crew. And all the kids, couldn't wait to get on a boat. And as soon as—And most of us were on there *most* of our lives. And by the time we were eleven, twelve years old, why we were expected to fill in *as a man*. And no longer a kid.

So, it wasn't really that big of a step.

JGF: OK.

DD: And I was the youngest one probably to ever *do* that, that I know of. But still it was—other kids were wanting boats. And I just had more push [laughs]. And I wore him down and we shook hands. And as soon as we shook hands—agreed on a price, and I had

the money made, it was at the cannery. We'd only get paid at the end of the fishing season, on salmon.

And, we shook hands. And then I wanted him off the boat. Off my boat.

JGF: [laughs]

DD: My boat, now. I want you off. I didn't *tell* him that. But I told Dad that. My dad was, so smart. He had so much wisdom. He set me down and had a little talk. He says, "Now, listen. You still have to think about this. You're just a kid. You don't have *anybody* to worry about but yourself. That man's got a *wife*. And he's got *kids*. Where's he going to get another boat in the middle of the season?"

JGF: Oh, yeah.

DD: "Back up. Just leave things as they are. You shook hands. The boat's yours. *But*. Back off. Leave him alone. And let's finish the season and you can have your boat." And, I thought about it. He didn't tell me I *had* to do that. But, he says, "This is the way it should be done."

JGF: Right.

DD: And I thought about it. I was mad. But [laughs]. I pouted for about half a day. But I thought it out and I realized he was right. And so we went on as was.

But... Then, that fall, we were just doing... We were kind of the last boat fishing. And we hit a rock and sunk—I didn't. But [laughs]

[laughter]

Hit a rock and lost the boat. So I didn't end up—not getting the boat. And I didn't have to pay for it then. The deal went away, you know. But I had—we had shook hands and in those days that was as solid a contract as you needed with anybody.

JGF: Yeah.

[15:00]

DD: And then, two years later, why, we'd moved down to the states and the cannery sent my folks a letter and said, "If David would come back and fish for us we'll finance him a new boat," so. I was fifteen then.

JGF: Yeah. And what kind of boats? Were these like wooden?

DD: Yeah. They were wood—most all wood boats. Fiberglass was just barely starting to come on the scene. And there was a few fiberglass boats. Most of them—Even the fancy ones were still pretty much wood boats.

JGF: OK. Yeah.

DD: The '60s. Yeah.

I'll tell you an ironic story. There was a big sardine—when I was twelve. [?] Kodiak. I was sitting in the end skiff. We was making a set one day. And our boats were, thirty-six, thirty-eight, forty foot. Small. And pretty primitive. And this big eighty foot sardine seiner come by us. It was the beautiful thing I'd ever—I'd never seen one before.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: It had a top house on it. And it—God, it was just—I still see it, just *sliding* by. It was white, trimmed in light green. And I thought, it must—Whoever's skippering that must look like some kind of god. [laughter] I figured he had a big head of white hair. [laughter] There's something—got to be magical about that man, to be able to get his hands on that boat. And I watched it go out of sight. Name of it was Oceanic. And I was twelve. Eleven years later I had that boat. I was running in the Bering Sea, king crabbing.

JGF: Oh, wow.

DD: And then I was the youngest king crab skipper in the Bering Sea at that time, so. But it was—I remember, that was the first *big* boat like that, that I had seen. I had been on the mail boat, which was a lot bigger. But, big fishing boat, that particular style. To this day, they just stop my heart every time I see one. You don't see them as much as you used to, but.

JGF: Yeah. Wow.

And I have to suspect that, being the youngest king crab skipper, didn't cause you to lack for respect among your crew, right?

DD: No, it actually didn't. It was fun. My crews were always a lot older. But it was always fun to have somebody come on board that didn't *know* me. And they'd come on board looking for the old man. "The old man around?" [laughter] And my crew'd always start laughing and say, "Right there." And they'd *always* look at one of the old guys, you know, saying, figuring one of the old guys was...he's the old man.

Yeah, but, because I'd grown up fishing, I always had respect from my crew.

And I'd come across the deck. I didn't buy into a boat. I came across the deck. You know, I started out—When I was king crabbing, I started out—Actually the first king crab boat I went on I went on as cook. And we flew up from down in the states. And, fortunately there was a guy already on there as cook. And we didn't know what was there, we were flying in. The skipper just got the boat. And he called me. We were friends. He said, "I want you to come back to Alaska with me." And I said, "Of course." And he said, "I need a cook, I think." And he didn't know. They'd just bounced part of the crew off of the boat. And the boat was tied up. And the fleet was on strike. So we were flying in to take this boat over.

Cook is usually the hardest position to fill. Anybody can be a deckhand. But it's hard to be a, you know, *good cook*, that doesn't burn out after a while. A lot of guys will start out being good cooks. And then, along towards the end of the season, it's down to peanut butter sandwiches.

JGF: [laughs]

DD: And you can't have that. You know, in the wintertime, when it's tough weather. You got to have a guy that cranks out good food. Well, [?Johnny Biossy] was his name, and he says, "No, I'm the cook here." And I went, "Good. Good. Good." So I went on as deck hand. I didn't have to cook.

But... And then, a couple months later, when the engineer quit—he had some family problems, he had to go, and so. The skipper offered me the job as engineer. And at first I declined. I says, "No, I don't want the responsibility." It was a *big* responsibility.

Because, big king crab boat, all kinds of valving and plumbing and stuff. And I didn't know anything about it. And, the old engineer [laughs]. He taught me a lot [laughs].

JGF: [laughs]

DD: I went down—The first time I went down when I finally said, "I'll take it, for one trip. But if I screw up, I'm going back as deck hand and you're going to have to get somebody else to engineer." So, me and the skipper, being friends, we agreed on that.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: So I went down in the engine room to ask him to show me around. And he wouldn't show me anything. Wouldn't show me *anything*. I said, "What are these valves for?" And he said, "Trace it out."

JGF: Oh, geez.

DD: That was his catchword. I'd ask him, "Well what...", "How's that..." "Trace it out."

JGF: Hmm.

DD: But he taught me, by doing that, that was the *last* time I was ever apprehensive about any kind of machinery at all.

JGF: Oh wow.

DD: We bought boats—We bought a boat in... quite a few years ago, now, but. It was kind of a—I bought the boat. We went and looked at the boat, and just briefly. We went back to doing something else. And bought the boat. Sent the guy the money. And then he left. We went and took the boat over. And it was a big boat. But, by then, I'd been doing it for so many years it wasn't. But, a lot of it goes back to old John making me trace everything out that first time I went in a complicated engine room. So, it was easy for me to do it. I just went down, traced everything out, and pretty soon I knew the boat pretty well. In just a matter of a couple of days, why I had it down. And it's easy to do. You know, you go aboard a boat... *Now*, I go aboard and it's just second nature. I dive for the engine room, start tracing things out, so I understand my engine room. Even if I'm running it. Still, I go down so that when the engineer *has* a problem, I can help him, or, you know, at least I know what I'm talking about. So.

But, a lot of lessons were learned basically the hard way like. I'll tell you what. My heart was in my throat the first time we untied from the dock and I went as engineer.

[20:18]

JGF: Was it? Wow.

DD: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

JGF: That's interesting.

DD: You can kill people, you know, if you do something wrong in the Bering Sea. So.

JGF: Yeah.

Well I would—Now as skipper, was your heart ever in your throat? Or were you so ready for it at that point?

DD: Oh, no. I was always ready for that.

JGF: I would love to get *that* picture. [talking about look on his face]

[laughter]

DD: I think—I think I was born a skipper. I love skippering.

I like engineering, too. I really like engineering a lot, because I love machinery. But I like making the final call.

JGF: You do? That's so cool.

DD: Yeah.

JGF: We got to take a tour on one of the boats, it was great. This year in Kodiak.

DD: Oh yeah.

JGF: And I'm looking at it going, "I would rather flip hamburgers than have to be responsible for that."

DD: [laughs]

JGF: [laughs] So I think that's amazing.

DD: Yeah.

JGF: And so the final call you mean things about...

DD: Everything.

JGF: ...where the fish are going to be.

DD: Everything. You know, win, lose, or draw. It's my fault, or, bragging rights, or whatever. Yeah. Yeah.

So, but I have to have—I like that.

JGF: That's so cool. Look at him—I'll have to tell you to say "skipper" when I take your picture.

[laughter]

JGF: So, Pat. You started—Take me back to when you started fishing with Dave, and your time through that. What kind of boats, and...

PD: Well, I actually started fishing about three years sooner on a couple other boats.

JGF: Oh, OK.

PD: I trolled on the Dana out of [?Ilwoco?] for a while. And then I went shrimping on the June Rose with my brother-in-law.

JGF: Huh. And where was that?

PD: That was mostly off the Washington Coast.

And... Then I decided I was going to retire from fishing, because it wasn't a well-paying job, but. Then Dave and I got back together. And he convinced me that we just had to go to Alaska. We drug for a year, or part of a year, on an old wood sailing schooner that used to be a halibut schooner under sail, years ago.

JGF: Wow.

PD: It was built in 1881 I think. And... So, I should have known that it was going to be an adventurous lifestyle.

JGF: [laughs]

PD: [laughs] More than most, I think. But. And then we went up—He had another old sailing schooner that was converted from the east coast. And, had been converted to scalloper and brought around.

JGF: Wow.

PD: So we went to Alaska on that one. And, have had lots of adventures. Lots of various and sundry types of boats.

JGF: Uh huh.

PD: And he always had this thing for old wood boats. But, we never really took a lot of time rebuilding them. We'd just rebuild them as we fish.

JGF: [laughs]

PD: So it was always more adventurous.

JGF: Yeah.

PD: Because a lot of times we would be in a sinking condition [laughs].

JGF: Oh, my goodness.

PD: And there would be a few little things, go wrong, here or there. But. But he was always such a good, good seaman that we never actually had too many disasters.

JGF: Wow.

PD: But it was... For a farm girl, you know going from, a land-based job to a fishing job, and I'd always had kind of a fear of the water. So.

JGF: Oh, boy!

PD: It took a little bit of adjusting for me.

JGF: Yeah. And how many—These were trips like, days out at sea? These weren't like, just offshore, inshore for a day? Right? In shore?

PD: No, we'd usually go out for a few days at a time. We were... It wasn't so much offshore. We went offshore a little bit, for halibut. But, mainly we were fishing Dungees. And... It was like, up in the bays. Or, sometimes on the mainland.

DD: But we'd be, like a hundred, a hundred and fifty miles from *town*.

JGF: OK. Yeah.

DD: Even though we were fishing in bays, and along the coast of beach. We were a long ways from anywhere or *anybody*, so.

JGF: Right. Or any roads? Right?

DD: Yeah. Oh yeah, there was nobody around, usually.

PD: No roads. [laughs]

DD: The closest—If you needed help, why you called the Coast Guard. And they'd get there in a couple hours or so.

JGF: Uh huh.

PD: If you were lucky [laughs].

DD: So when we weren't offshore we were still fishing remote. And, the remote place we fished with the old Sunapee that she went to Alaska with me on, there was some pretty rough country. It was real remote. It was real rough, windy. Some of the areas make their own weather systems. Where you'll be, offshore, it might be flat calm. But in the bays it would be blowing fifty and sixty.

JGF: Oh, you're *kidding*.

DD: Oh yeah, it's just really strange.

JGF: That's just the opposite of what you'd think.

DD: Yeah. Yeah. I've—Lots of times we've left a place called Puale Bay, and it'd be, just blowing so hard you could hardly work the gear. And steam offshore ten, twelve miles, and it'd be just glassy slick calm. Yeah. So.

JGF: Wow.

[25:06]

DD: Yeah, there's some strange country and strange weather systems.

Capes where I fish now... Cape Uyak is one that always makes its own weather system. It can be windy and rainy there, and you steam ten miles up the line and it'd be sunshine.

JGF: Oh, my goodness.

DD: Yeah.

JGF: Wow. Yeah I did get to have what I call the true island experience when we were there, because we got fogged in for an extra night.

DD: Oh, yeah.

JGF: We had to fly out the next day. [laughs]

PD: That's almost a given. If you're in Kodiak you always have to arrange for an extra day, or two, or three. If you're planning on—have to be somewhere at a specific time, you should fly out, maybe two or three days early [laughs].

JGF: Well, that was exactly what my friend said. "Come to Kodiak for the first part of your trip. Because if you get stuck here you have some time to play with [laughs] on the other end."

DD: Yeah.

PD: Yeah. Yeah, that's almost a given. Especially if you're on the far side of the island.

JGF: Now, did you...? When you were on the boat with Dave, Pat, was that just the two of you versus you and a crew, Dave?

DD: Oh, we'd have a crew, too, at times.

JGF: You would. Yeah?

DD: Different boats work in different ways.

PD: Yeah.

JGF: And what was your particular jobs?

PD: Well, I ran the boat. And cooked. And did some gear work.

JGF: Yeah.

PD: Whatever he didn't do.

JGF: OK.

DD: For years, she'd run the boat. And I'd work on deck.

JGF: Oh.

DD: And... And then I'd do my engineering. [?] engine room, I was always the engineer. And I'd just work on deck. Me and the guys would work on deck. And Pat would handle the boat for us.

JGF: Wow.

DD: Like... Pot fishing, crab, we'd... She and I would get in a pretty good rhythm. We'd work pretty good where, she... We'd be going from pot to pot and we tried to do it as fast as we could. I like to work real fast. And, if she started slowing down, thinking I was getting tired or something, or slowing down, I'd start bugging her. Well then she'd start pushing me real hard to work. I could *almost* not quite keep up. But then the day went fast and it was fun.

JGF: [laughs]

DD: But it was never—You know, it was never to the point where it fouled us up or anything. We just would get into a real tight rhythm. I've had guys say, "What, are we in a race here?" But, it wasn't—we weren't racing with each other. We just were turning gear fast.

JGF: Right. Right.

DD: And, the more pots you [?burn?] in a day, why, the more money you're going to make.

JGF: That's right.

DD: Comes down to that. So.

PD: Yeah. I figured out about how long it took him to unload and rebait a pot. And how long it would take me to haul up a pot. In a certain depth, so. I had it timed—I had my pots spaced just so by the time I was up to the next buoy he'd be pitching off the pot, so.

JGF: Wow.

PD: It would just be, zip up and—especially if we were in like, five fathoms, or less. And I could see pots on the bottom. Sometimes we were in really shallow water. And so, it would take like five seconds to zip it up. So, we'd have them spaced. Sometimes I'd have to slow down, but.

JGF: Right.

PD: If we were in, more like ten fathoms, I'd have the pots spaced far enough apart. So that when they were done on deck with one pot, they were catching the next buoy, so.

JGF: Wow.

PD: We'd just go zipping up, and...

JGF: So the pot would come up, get unloaded, and go back down?

DD: Yeah.

PD: Yeah.

DD: And we'd trail the lines... The buoy... Unlike...

PD: King crab.

DD: Or I think... Looks to me like lobstering, they—the guy coils the buoy line on deck. But, we'd flip the line around the block. And throw the buoy back in the water. So it'd be trailing out behind the boat. And the line would be out behind the boat. And the pot would come up and we'd swing it aboard. And if there was two of us working, why one of us would unhook the buoy, the other one would flip it over, and we'd turn the pot upside down. Bang it twice. Drop it back. One of them would take the empty bait can out. The other guy would pull the full one in. One guy would slam the door shut. The other guy would latch it.

JGF: Wow.

DD: And... The guy that was working behind me, or in front of me, towards the stern... The stern man, he'd push the pot over. And I'd be snagging the next one. So as... As that pot was hitting the water, the next one was going on the block. And it was so—We'd get down to where it was just like a dance. You'd get a good...

JGF: So you all were part of a, sort of a big machine. I mean, you all had your piece that kept it all together.

DD: Oh yeah. Yeah I like doing it that way. Even on my boats now. I had a guy this fall come on, tell me it was—he really liked fishing with me. It was the easiest boat he fished on because everybody has an assigned job. You work—nobody ever says, “I thought you were going to do that,” on my boat.

JGF: Oh.

DD: Everybody knows what they have to do. So, then if we lose a man out, the next guy comes in, he drops right in that slot. And everybody expects him to do a certain thing. And so he's... Greenhorns aren't greenhorns very long. They fall right in.

JGF: Yeah?

DD: Yeah and it works good. It works smooth and it keeps the machine going smooth even in changing parts. [laughs]

JGF: Right. [laughs]

PD: Yeah. And sarcasm on deck always made for faster work. [laughs]

JGF: Oh yeah? What's an example?

PD: [laughs]

JGF: [laughs]

PD: Oh I was pointing out a bear to him. And he said, “We've seen lots of bears. We've got to get this done.” So. We were off.

DD: Made her mad. Made her mad.

[laughter]

[29:57]

JGF: Now these pots... How—like size and weight—how would these compare...?

DD: They're thirty-eight inches across. They're circular. And they're about a foot high. And they weigh about eighty pounds.

JGF: Oh. OK.

DD: So they're pretty light. Those are pretty light. When I was king crabbing my pots were seven by seven by three feet. And they weighed 750 pounds.

JGF: Yeah. Like those Deadliest Catch pots?

DD: Yeah. Same thing. Yeah.

JGF: Wow. Huh. So the ones—the circular ones, you were just hauling them up by the line? By hand?

PD: No. We have a crab lock.

DD: No. No, we have a regular crab lock. Yeah, it's too slow that way. And we burn through, three or four hundred pots a day. So. Going fast. You know, under ideal conditions. So.

JGF: Yeah. Huh. And then where would you bring your catch.

DD: Into Kodiak. We'd run them into Kodiak.

JGF: OK.

DD: Yeah. The boat was always flooded. The fish hold was always flooded. We called "tank down." It was, watertight fish hold. And we was pumping water through them all the time to keep them alive. You can hold them two or three weeks like that. Then we'd run them in town.

JGF: Wow.

DD: Speaking of the Deadliest Catch, there. When you watch that, I went through one of those little storms in a four by six life raft one time. So.

JGF: [Gasps] Oh! Can you tell us about that?

DD: Sure. Oh, I hate talking about it.

[laughter]

PD: Right! [laughs]

DD: No... I was king crabbing—I had the boat named the [?Astron]. And we left town it was just before Thanksgiving. In 1971. And there had been a big, long [?] storm. And it was getting cold. We were breaking ice when we pulled out of Dutch Harbor. [?] It was starting to freeze over in there. But the wind had laid down, so we took off. And we were about six hours out of town and the boat caught fire. And we couldn't get out. So we went in the life raft. I never got off the May Day. And there was no one else—There was one other boat out. There was one other boat out. But he was, about a hundred, hundred and fifty miles away. Where we were *going*, he was already there.

JGF: Yeah. Wow.

DD: And... We started... We started rowing for the beach. Rowing our life raft toward the beach. We were six miles off the beach. We started rowing for the beach. And... We got almost to the beach. We got, less than a quarter mile off the beach. The wind started blowing. Blew us off shore.

JGF: Oh, God.

DD: So, three nights later when we got picked up early in the morning—Thanksgiving morning, actually. We got picked up—We got ran over by a Japanese trawler. They didn't see us. They hit the raft. Flipped upside down. But the... We were a hundred and fifty miles off shore. So we went a hundred and fifty miles in three days.

But it was... For the first... For almost all the time—the last night, the wind laid down—but it was blowing probably anywhere from fifty to seventy and snowing sideways. And big, huge combers running... The raft would drop down in the trough and it would get really quiet. And then you'd hear the wave coming. And it would be just hissing and

roaring like a freight train. And when the wave hit the raft it would go flying up the swell. And then you'd hear the wind screaming across the top of the swell. And it... Sometimes it would throw the raft and it would fly out through the air. And it would hit so hard— There was times in the dark, we were groping around to see where the seams had split. Because there was four of us in this little raft.

JGF: Oh, my God...

DD: One time this *huge*, huge sea threw the raft. And it threw it so hard the raft skipped. Four times. Just like a big flat rock. With us in there. We were bouncing around in there. But it held together. It was an Elliot life raft. It help together. But I don't know why. I don't know how—well I know why. But it was just a miracle that it even held together. But.

But... We were a hundred and fifty miles off shore. We got ran over by a Japanese trawler. It flipped the raft upside down. Threw me out. My engineer jumped for the anchor, sticking out of the bow. And when I come up under the raft, I come up under the canopy. And I'd had both sea anchors out. And we'd lost both sea anchors, so there were lines hanging down. And I got tangled up in the lines. And I can remember, under there, fighting like anything trying to get loose. Because they were holding me. I was pinned up under the raft by these lines. And I was thinking, "Boy, this is a hell of a time to drown now" [laughs].

[laughter]

That was my one lucid thought. And I got my head above water. My engineer *jumped* for the anchor. Missed it. Went in the water. Crawled up on the raft. And he was screaming at the ship as they went by.

JGF: And someone heard him?

DD: There was *one* guy, puttering around on deck. And I'd seen him. I don't know what he was doing, he was just monkeying around. It was, still snowing. And it was still cold. And everybody else was inside. But this one guy was just *monkeying* around or something. He wasn't even—didn't even look like he was working. Just kind of fiddling around on deck. And he heard us hollering and he took off running for the wheel house. He looked—he looked out once. He looked—we were right at the edge of their lights. It was dark. He looked out. And then looked away and went back to what he was doing. And then his head snapped around, kind of a Charlie Chaplin double take. And then it dawned on him what he was seeing. And away he went. And they—immediately—they were mid-water, trawling. So the net was suspended. But they just immediately jerked her back. So they wouldn't overshoot us. And they jerked her right back. And stopped. And we were—They didn't have any big lights shining out, like, crab boats and stuff. We were just right in the circle of their deck lights. And if they'd have missed us—if they'd have missed us by a hundred feet, they'd have missed us by a million miles. They'd have never heard us. They'd have never heard us and they would never have seen us.

JGF: Wow...

[34:55]

DD: So.

But we were—A funny story about that, when they stopped. There was this big herd of sea lion, that was following them. And they come up and they were between us. Guys come running out on deck and threw a heaving line to me and I tied it to the riding strap. And I started looking for my two other crewmembers because they were missing, but.

They were standing on the canopy under the raft, but. My engineer was sitting on the upside raft down with me. And... We could see this ladder welded on the side of the ship. And he said, "David, I've had all I could take. I'm out of here." And he bailed off the raft before I could say anything, went swimming for the ladder. Well, he swam into that herd of sea lion and disappeared. And I figured, that's it for [?Jan], I've lost him. And... I couldn't see him anymore. All I could see was this mass of sea lions just teeming around there. Until I see him grab the ladder and start up the ladder.

JGF: Wow.

DD: Well I... I got my feet frostbitten real bad. I almost lost both my feet. And I was in the hospital for a month. My boys come in—They flew me into Anchorage and the boys come in to say goodbye, because they were going to go to their respective places. Well, when they found out that I was going to lose both my feet—it was still a question mark, but it was a pretty sure thing—they went and got motel rooms. And they said, "We're not leaving you. We're not leaving until we know what's going on with you." So I've always been grateful for that.

JGF: Wow...

DD: So they come in every day, well—I didn't lose them so finally when the doctor gave them—he said, "Well, it looks like we're going to keep them," why then they went their separate ways.

But, I asked Jan one time, I said, "Hey, I have to ask you. Didn't that kind of feel kind of spooky swimming in that big herd of sea lion?" I said, "Did they push you under or what?" He said, "What sea lion?"

PD: [laughs]

JGF: He never saw them.

DD: He was so intent on that ladder he didn't see—they didn't register.

JGF: Wow!

DD: All he could think about was getting on that latter. [laughs] Human nature.

[36:37]

JGF: Wow. So all four of you made it?

DD: Oh yeah. All four of us made it just fine. Yeah.

JGF: That's amazing. And you only ever had the one [losing?] thought the whole time.

Hm. That's amazing. Wow.

PD: And they didn't have..., jackets even.

JGF: I was going to...

DD: This was before...

JGF: ...you didn't have survival suits.

DD: No.

PD: No.

DD: This was before the days of survival suits. So, we were all in our shirtsleeves. We had *one* jacket. And it got so waterlogged I finally grabbed it and threw it overboard. We were trying to all, get in it. But I'd have two guys lay down on the bottom or the raft. And the other two would lay on top of them and try to warm them up.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: And when the guys on top got too miserable, why, then we'd trade places. And that's kind of how—But we still were just shivering the whole time. And there wasn't any food or water in the raft. So it was just kind of, hang on and ride.

But I—right the first night I laid down the ground rules. We're not going to talk about *family*. We're not going to talk about *wives*. We're not going to talk about *kids*. There's nothing you can do for them. The only thing in your *whole* world is the other guys and this life raft.

JGF: Wow.

DD: That's *all*—this is your whole world. I don't want to *ever* hear about what you're leaving behind. It doesn't count. It doesn't matter. It's out of your hands.

JGF: Wow.

DD: Don't want to hear about *food*. We don't *have* any. One guy started talking about raspberry—I still don't eat raspberry ripple ice cream.

PD: [laughs]

DD: He started talking about raspberry ripple ice cream one night. And I made him stop.

JGF: Yeah...

DD: But... That was the rules. I decided that way we'd just concentrate on keeping each other alive. And... I'd grown up out there. So, you know—To tell the truth I didn't know *how* we were going to get out of there. But I saved one of our flares. I figured if it blew up on the Pribilofs we'd get a fire going and then we'd be, you know...

JGF: If it blew up on the what?

DD: The Pribilof Islands. Which are—they're three—we were halfway to them. They're three hundred miles—but I don't know if we'd have ever made it. In fact, when we were getting taken into Dutch Harbor, all they had was large-scale charts. They didn't have any small-scale charts for the area. So... They asked me to come up and pilot them into Dutch Harbor, the Japanese Trawler. And the skipper showed me where he'd picked us up. And it looked like we'd have missed the Pribis by fifteen or twenty miles. We'd have seen them. But, we were just kind of way down by...

JGF: So navigationally, you still had some sense of...

DD: Oh I had—Yeah. Yeah, I knew which way the wind was blowing. And I knew where we were going. Yeah, I had a pretty good idea where we were.

JGF: Right. Wow.

DD: I didn't realize we'd gone as far as we had. But I knew where we were pretty much on—on what line we were on.

JGF: Wow. And did you know him then? Were you back on the shore wondering...?

PD: Well I had known him because we went to school together for a while.

JGF: Oh. OK.

PD: So, yeah. I knew him. We went together for a while when we were in school, so. Yeah. But, it didn't have much of an article. You know, it just had, a small article about it. So I didn't really know the extent of it until a long time later.

JGF: Wow. Wow. And did you have close calls when you were fishing with Dave?

DD: Never.

JGF: No. Never.

[silent pause then laughter]

PD: Maybe one or two. [laughter] Seemed to me the first couple of years everything was a close call. But... Then I kind of got used to it.

JGF: Was that your greenhorn perspective a little bit?

PD: Well mostly. My farmer...

DD: Well not, not, not just. We were fishing Dungeness in the Sunapee, which was an old schooner we took up. And she drew a lot of water. She drew ten and a half feet of water. And we were fishing—Actually I was setting the gear that day. We were setting real close to the beach because the crab were right in tight. And it started [?shallowing] up real fast so I swung the boat off shore. Well it wasn't marked on a chart but there was an offshore gravel bar. And we got hung up on that. And the boat went—it started going dry and it rolled over on its side and flooded, so we sunk her. So I guess you could call that a little adventure.

[40:12]

DD: But we got her back. A guy stopped and... A guy named Sonny [?Petersen], he stopped... And... Most guys—he said, “What do you want me to do?” Most guys want—There was somebody else that stopped and they wanted to take our gear for us, and take us off and take us to Kodiak and... But Sonny stopped and said, “What can I do to help?” And... Anyway, he helped us get her back up. And he towed us into town. It was a hundred and fifty mile tow. And, wouldn't take a penny for it.

JGF: Wow.

DD: Towed us into town, and it took us two weeks to rebuild the engine. Because the engine was running on water and destroyed itself. But two weeks to the day we were back on the gear. So.

JGF: Wow. Now was that a lifeboat experience?

PD: No. That came a few years later. [laughs]

JGF: [laughs]

PD: We were in a life raft for a while. And the strange thing was, it was an old life raft. And I was in there and I was thinking, Boy it's sure taking a long time for this life raft to fill itself up. And I started touching around to see what was going on. It was dark, you know. And I run my hand over something, then the hissing stopped. And then I started going like this [laughs] you know, and I finally found a pinhole leaking. So I spent an hour and a half with my finger ...

DD: [laughs]

PD:over a pinhole leak.

DD: The Little Dutch Girl. Finger in the dyke.

PD: Yeah. That did cross my mind.

JGF: Wow.

PD: Yeah. Just, fishing with him is always an adventure.

JGF: [laughs]

PD: Because he doesn't worry too much about the small stuff.

JGF: No...

PD: And my perspective of small stuff is a lot different than his perspective. So.

JGF: Yeah. Wow. I bet. Even size of waves I imagine.

PD: Yeah, that too. Yeah.

JGF: So... I could probably ask you about all kinds of stories. But I want to make sure I hit on a little bit of everything.

DD: Sure.

JGF: So. Activism. You were involved in—is it fishermen's association? Am I remembering that correctly?

DD: To a certain extent. Not a lot.

JGF: OK.

DD: My activism mostly is—Well I was in the seventies a little bit. I joined a couple organizations. But, they seemed to move awful slow. And didn't seem to get a whole lot done. So I just, kind of—I was busy fishing all the time.

But I started when I was writing poetry—When I started getting serious about the poetry writing. I just kind of played with it for, oh..., ten, fifteen years. Didn't do—I'd write stuff just for fun and read it over the radio and stuff, but. After my dad and son drowned, why, then I stopped—Well everything pretty much stopped for a while. Just concentrated on fishing. And...

JGF: Wow.

DD: Then about... Let's see, seven or eight years after the accident, why—I... One day, three poems came to me at once. And so I got started writing again.

JGF: Hmm.

DD: And... I'd been thinking about it. Not so much about the writing as just—I'd always been aware of how much ink cowboys gets. And there's so many good fishing stories out there. I mean... Just, everybody. There's not a commercial fisherman around—Everybody has a story, but commercial fishermen have interesting stories.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: But, nobody's ever told them. Beyond, in the coffee shops, or on the boats, or in the bars. They don't get uptown at all. Hardly. Or at least, inland.

So I started trying to do something with that. And I was getting so irritated. So many restrictions with the government. And I just read something about what was going on back here. On the east coast, guys were getting hammered *so hard*... Last summer I was up at Martha's Vineyard. I was down talking to some of the guys on the boats, and stuff. And when I went off the dock, I had a knot in my stomach and a lump in my throat. Because I could see what was happen—the government's killing them.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: It's just about killing them. And it—And it just made me mad. But, even before that, what was happening to us out west—it's just a drop in the bucket compared to what's happening out here—but it was making me angry so I started writing protest poetry. And, that's where my activism comes in.

JGF: Mmm.

DD: And I... And I try to talk about some—It depends on the audience. You know?

JGF: Right.

DD: But, I do a lot of traveling around. For instance, I was down in Salem, Oregon. And I did two shows down there a couple of years ago. And, interspaced my poetry with... with talking about some of our problems. And pointing out that it's a public resource. We're just harvesters of a public resource. The government is—or whoever is portraying us in a bad light, for whatever reason. But it's not really that way. We're just harvesting *everybody's* resource, so everybody who doesn't—would rather go to the supermarket doesn't have to go on the boat to get their fish.

And... Then... And then I'd get q and a's going and get people talking and asking questions and stuff. And I like that. So.

JGF: Yeah.

[45:03]

DD: But I try to—I try to put it in as positive a light as I can on the one hand. And on the other hand I'm trying to point out... This is what I said—It's not our fish. It's not the government's fish. It's the general public's fish.

JGF: Right.

DD: At least that's the way it used to be in this country.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: And so that's where I started—That's where my activism comes in. A lot of protest poetry. And I kind of got away from that, a little bit. Because I started sounding—to myself I started sounding kind of shrill.

JGF: Uh huh.

DD: I still read it. You know, and so on. And still make my points. But I... I've tried to diversify into other writing venues.

JGF: Right. OK. Interesting. Do you remember what your first poem was about? Or was it sort of an impromptu...just over the radio?

DD: [chuckles] My first one was—bunch of little ones. My first poem of any consequence I have here. It's called Greenhorn.

JGF: Uh huh.

DD: And it was kind of a composite of just different, newcomers that come on the boat, and so on.

JGF: Huh.

DD: It has kind of a funny little punch line to it. But, yeah, I wrote it—It just came to me when I was fishing one day. I just started writing and then pretty soon I had a page and a half and I was pretty amazed. [laughs]

JGF: Yeah. [laughs] Wow. Is it something you'd like to put on the tape? Or is it long and you're going to do it later anyway?

DD: Well, it's fairly... I don't care, one way or the other. I don't mind. But it's... Well, it's fairly long.

JGF: Let's see, I don't have another interview until noon. So, if you don't mind sitting here I don't mind. Does anybody want a drink of water?

[CJ getting PD a drink]

DD: Tell a story, Pat, while I find this.

PD: [laughs]

JGF: So this is called Greenhorn?

DD: Greenhorn. Yeah, that's the name of it.

And this was on an old...Out here it would be called an eastern rig. The house was aft. Dragger. But we—we weren't side trawling with it. We were stern trawling. And then we'd swing on the net. So it's a little bit different setup. But, basically the boat's... I love eastern rigs. The house aft, boats. I just love them.

JGF: Do you think they steer better? Or is it now about that?

DD: I just like the looks of them.

PD: They ride good.

DD: It's a better ride. You know, when you're back in the stern there. But I just—They're just beautiful.

JGF: And you like them better to? [To PD]

DD: In fact, we think we found one.

PD: [laughs]

JGF: Oh...! Is he going to try to convince you in front of an audience?

[laughter]

PD: Well you know you've got that, all that bow and deck for the waves to crash over before it gets to you. So.

JGF: Oh.

PD: I don't know if that's better or not. It just gives you a little more time to duck.

JGF: Oh [laughs]

PD: [laughs]

DD: Well you know, running crab gear I really like house aft boats. Because your crew's right in front of you. You're watching—you're approaching crab gear. But your crew's right there so you can keep an eye on them, too. Whereas, with the house forward, the house protects the crew to a certain extent. Well, it does a lot, but. But you can't see them a lot of the times. They're in a blind spot. Or you're looking ahead at your crab pots. If something *happens*, there's a little bit of a lag time. Where a lot of times with the house aft, with the guys right there in front of you, you see something shaping up and you can actually help them by speeding up or slowing down. Or, giving them a heads up or something, before it ever develops.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: So, I like that part. Because, not so much keeping an eye on my crew to keep them under my thumb but just to help them. You know?

JGF: Yeah.

DD: It's just—They're out there—we're supposed to be working together. And that's the way I try to run my boats, so.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: But anyway, this is Greenhorn.

JGF: OK.

[48:28]

DD: He came strutting down the dock,
just swinging right along,
assured us all real loud,
the sea's where he belonged.
He had new, shiny sea boots
and a bright yellor slicker.
On his shoulder was a sea bag
and his bed roll was thicker.
So we cast off the lines.
I thought I'd give the kid a chance.
I figured when he saw the breakin' bar
he'd really crap his pants. [laughter]
Well we'd hardly cleared the base
and we were headed down the river
when the kid came up to me
with his chin all a quiver.
He said, "Does it get any rougher?"
I said, "Hell, we ain't even on the ocean."

He looked at me real wide eyed,
said, "I can't believe this motion."
Well the crew got things all squared away.
'Twas blowing round about thirty.
It was the bottom of the ebb,
and it looked real mean and dirty.
Well she went up, she came down.
The waves rolled by with a freight train sound.
The kid was really hanging on.
Yeah, he was scared silly.
Lord, the way he was shakin',
he must have been real chilly.
Well we finally got the gear down,
and the doctor's a cookin'.
The guy was out on deck,
and it's eastward he's looking.
Well I was haulin' my coffee,
just lookin' through the glass,
when our fine young sea dog
went down on his ass.
He slipped and he slid,
and wallowed in the gurry.
And when we hit the dock
I figured he'd leave us in a hurry.
But the boys showed him the deck pump.
And they showed him the shovel.
They showed him a [?pew]
and how to stay out of trouble.
He tried to whistle in my wheel house
and he turned over the hatches.
But he made his mistakes
in smaller and smaller batches.
Now he's out here with his own boat.
Where he got it I don't know.
But I'm going to have a talk to him.
That little jerk just corked my tow.

[50:02]

JGF: [laughs]

DD: [laughs] When you cork a guy's tow you swing in front of him so you're actually going over the grounds ahead of him that he's...

JGF: Oh... OK.

DD: ...he's aiming to go over. You know, that's an impolite thing to do.

JGF: Right [laughs].

DD: And eastward looking—now we're talking west coast—so he's looking back, he's just longing to be on the beach.

JGF: Yeah [laughs]

DD: And turn over the hatch, that's just an old...

PD: Superstition.

JGF: That's the superstition thing, right?

DD: It's not a superstition. It's a known fact.

PD: [laugh]

JGF: Oh, OK. OK [chuckles] I'm sorry.

DD: [laughs] It brings bad luck.

JGF: Yeah? Yeah. Apparently it wasn't a fact in your mind that women couldn't be on your boat.

DD: Oh, I like women on boats. Yeah.

JGF: [laughs]

DD: They're easy to work with. They usually listen. They try harder. And, usually cleaner.

JGF: Interesting.

DD: Just... You know, I've got a poem about that. [laughter] Yeah I have a couple about that. But I have—Yeah, it's... I had a... I've had several women on the boat. And I enjoyed it. I like it a lot. And it breaks up the monotony just having a different perspective. You know, I get tired talking to guys all the time.

JGF: Uh huh. Now do you know Moe? Bowstern?

DD: Oh yeah. Sure.

JGF: I interviewed her last year.

DD: Yeah.

JGF: Her and Johanna Reichhold.

PD: Sure.

DD: Yeah, she fished Kodiak. Her and Johanna make a good pair.

JGF: Yeah.

So you also write, Pat?

PD: Yeah, I write. All sea stories. Just stories of life with David.

JGF: Oh... Nice.

PD: I've only got a few so far. But... It's been kind of fun. I started writing, keeping a log when we first left for Alaska. And... Writing my mom, I'd send the log down to her. And she'd laugh. And say, "Every time I'd turn a page, something else is going on."

[laughs]

JGF: [laughs]

PD: But, I started doing that. And just recently I started writing short stories, about life around—because we lived at a defunct cannery.

JGF: Right.

PD: On the far side of Kodiak. And, right in the middle of the bear sanctuary. So there's... Beside the sea adventures there are a few adventures on land, too, so. Just living remote. Didn't have a road. It was all boat, and skiffs, or seaplanes, you know. And so I spent quite a bit of time alone when he'd, take—go to town, and deliver.

JGF: Oh. Yeah.

PD: And we had a little—a pack of little dogs. We didn't have a little pack of dogs. We had a pack of little dogs [laughs].

JGF: [laughs]

PD: But... If I went outside or went for a walk or something, they'd kind of range around me. It was kind of a buffer zone for me to go out walking on the beaches or stuff. I didn't have to worry about bears.

JGF: Oh, really. Yeah.

PD: Well, I did, but [laughs].

JGF: Were you worried about the bears getting the dogs at all?

PD: Well I figured they were a lot faster than I was. More like... Just kind of running interference.

DD: Bears don't really like little dogs. They're too quick and too yappy. So they usually just turn aside for a little dog, where they might take a swat at a big dog. But... At least that's been my experience.

PD: Yeah. We have one dog, she was about that big and... She was a little witch dog. She was born on a sinking boat in the middle of a snowstorm on the south side of the island on Halloween.

JGF: [laughs]

PD: And she was real witchy that way. She saved his dad and the kids from a house fire one night, chimney fire. And she—when [?] went on their last skiff ride she sat on the beach and howled.

DD: As they were leaving the beach, she's sitting on the beach howling. Yeah.

PD: Yeah.

JGF: Wow.

PD: And... But she was just... She would stand down any bear. It didn't matter how big it was. She would stand in front of it and just bark at it, you know.

DD: Run back and forth in front of it.

JGF: And they didn't like that?

DD: No, they'd always turn and go in the brush.

PD: They'd go on their way. But... She was, she was real interesting little dog. She liked to ride point on the skiff, on the bow of the skiff. And if the skiff stopped for some reason, or hit a little wave, or...

DD: Turned quick.

PD: ...slowed down to stop, she'd go bloop!, like that. [laughs] They had to fish her out.

JFG: [laughs]

PD: She like to stand up there with her little pointy ears sticking out. She was part schnauzer, but, she looked like she was more schnauzer than anything, so. She was really good, a real good wilderness dog.

DD: I've got to back up and set something right. Pat said everything was going—a lot of things went wrong, but, mostly what the deal was is—when I bought the Sunapee I bought it in Seattle. And I paid cash for it and I fixed it up. I tailored it to a longline fishery. Tub trawling I guess you'd call it out here, but. I had it tailored to one—actually two fisheries. And then the markets collapsed. And, right when we were just getting started, the markets collapsed. The price of black cod went from eighty-five to eighteen cents overnight.

PD: Well that was something that went wrong [laughs].

DD: In a week's time. And so, I... And I was—right then I started into a divorce and so when I come out of that I didn't have any money.

JGF: Yup.

DD: And I had bought a little house. I sold my longline gear, and made a down payment on a house. I traded the house for three hundred Dungeness pots and a block.

JGF: Oh my god [chuckles].

DD: And I put that on the boat and I had enough fuel to get out once and make a little go around, set the gear, make a go around or two. And then we worked that up, and worked it up, but. But we never had—I never had quite enough money to do it, really—to fix all the things it needed to convert it completely. So I was always just a little bit behind all the time. So it was—we were kind of fighting it. There was times that we put trips together just from sheer willpower.

JGF: [laughs]

DD: *But*. We always did. Always did. And kept going. We never had to ask anybody for help. We kept going all the time so.

JGF: Wow. That's great.

[55:57]

JGF: Well, I think probably I could ask you a million more questions. But what I'd like to do is wrap up with two more. And the first one is, is there anything I didn't ask that you would like to have shared in this interview? Whether it's another poem or just any other experiences?

PD: Well, David's always been a—I wouldn't—probably wouldn't go out with anyone else. You always, had everything under control. And he's never panicked or anything. If he did, I'd probably still be [laughs].

JGF: [laughs]

PD: But... We had a..., lot of adventures, lot of fun, working together. And, so that part of my life was a whole..., a whole life in itself. Everything, living remote, and—we lived [?well ?while] on the boats, and lived at this remote cannery, far from everybody, you know. And, then miles to the nearest village. And seven miles across the bay to the nearest neighbors. It was a completely different lifestyle than..., probably anybody would actually believe unless they actually spent time there. So, it was..., it was..., a pretty good experience.

JGF: Yeah. You wouldn't trade it?

PD: No. No.

JGF: And is that some of what your stories are going to be about?

PD: Yeah, mostly it's about fishing, and living at the cannery. And bear stories. And..., a couple of stories when I fished—crewed by myself because he broke his leg one year. Then a couple of years later he injured his back real bad. It was in the wintertime so I went tanner season with the crew. The first season we didn't do very good because the stern post split. And..., so I put her on the beach and make a temporary repair down the village. And then we moved back up to the cannery and we had to repair the boat. Of course, David wasn't there for inspiration. [laughs]

JGF: Right. [laughs]

PD: Or instruction. So we kind of figured it all out ourselves. But the next year, the next time I did it I had the gear where *I* wanted to put it. Not where we had already placed it before he broke his leg. And so, we did real good there. And it was just right near the cannery. And, so I could see the lights of the cannery most of the time. And... But it was—you know, it would be snowing, and dark. And... It wasn't... I never really did a

lot of troubleshooting on the engine rooms. I know a lot about diesels and stuff *now*. Back then I didn't. I hadn't traced everything out like he was talking about.

JGF: Yeah.

PD: But... That was one of the—That was probably the only real concern I had was, if there was trouble in the engine room. But, we did alright. And... Actually we did so well that the next year he had to buy [?color?] sounders so he could beat me. [laughs]

JGF: [laughs] Ah, so there was a little friendly competition. I love it. That's great.

PD: But... It was—it just, made a whole different person out of me, after a few years of, you know, living like that. Made me a more confident person. And, mentally stronger...

JGF: I'd think it would have to.

PD: ...I think [laughs]

JGF: [laughs]

PD: Either mentally stronger or a crazy woman I'm not sure which. [laughs]

JGF: [laughs] Maybe the two aren't that far apart. Who knows?

DD: [chuckles]

[59:36]

JGF: And is there anything I didn't ask Dave that you would like to...?

DD: Not really. Except, I'd like to touch on the activism deal again. There's two points that I'd like to make that I've been hammering away for a long time on. One is—it's everywhere, it's not just here but—I see a lot of conflict between gear types. And I think it's way past time that we tried to figure out to bury that hatchet as fishermen and just start fight our common enemy as commercial fishermen. Because we're all losing. It doesn't matter if you're a longliner or a gill netter or a dragger or what. We're all losing it. And, we need to forget gear types and start working together. It might not ever happen. But that's one of the things that I hammer on all the time when I get a chance when I'm around other fishermen.

And the second thing is..., our biggest enemy is actually National Marine Fisheries as far as I'm concerned. They make all these... People are making these..., making up laws and stuff that don't affect them. Doesn't affect their livelihood one bit. I think if how much money the commercial fishermen made was tied directly to their salary, they'd figure out and straighten things out a lot better and a lot quicker.

JGF: Yeah. That's interesting.

DD: Because, we take the brunt of every mistake. And it—they just say, "Oh, well. Oops. Let's try this over here then." But meanwhile guys are going broke. And guys are having hard times, and so on. Breaking up families and all kinds of stuff from stress. And I think that's criminal. And we need to stand together and we need to try to get somebody in there, somewhere, that will listen to the fishermen. Because, here's all this scientific knowledge. These guys are out there, day after day, day in day out. They know the ocean. They know the currents. They know whatever they're targeting. They know their fisheries. And there's all this information, that's well developed. And there's not many mistakes made when your dollar is your bottom line. And all that information to be tapped and the government won't tap it. They won't ask us. And when you try to tell them they act like we're either lying or exaggerating or whatever, so.

It's... We need... Guys need to start standing together. I don't—It's great to be an independent fisherman, I'm about as independent as anybody. But when you have a common enemy that's trying to *kill* you, it's time to lay down arms against each other and

take up arms against who's actually trying to do you under. We're not trying to do each other under. We're just trying to compete. And it's time to forget a little bit of that. And that's one of my big messages that I try to get out.

But—And everybody knows it. But it's just a matter of...

JGF: How do you make it happen?

DD: Yeah. You've got to make it happen. We've got to figure out how to make it happen. Or we're not going to have a profession anymore. And it's...

JGF: And from what you said earlier about...you felt like New Bedford was really taking a whack on the regulations.

DD: Not just New Bedford, the whole east coast from what I can see. When I was up to Menemsha, talking to some of the guys up there. It just breaks my heart.

A friend of mine there..., he's—I don't know *how* many generations. I don't know if they've been there since the 1600s, his family. And he's got three sons that want to fish with him. And he's got a eight foot steel dragger. Beautiful boat that should be making *all of them* a good living. And he's trying to push his boys off the boat. Because, it's not there. He fishes that boat by himself sometimes. And that's—That's a shame. That's just a crying shame. He's got the expertise. He's got the history. He's got the equipment. He's got the tools. He's got the sons. And he can't use any of it. And it's just because of government intervention. And I know that a lot of stocks are down. But there's ways to manage that without killing off whole families. And without killing off an industry.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: There's ways to manage them so people can make a *decent* living. A *decent* living. Not just barely subsistence living, but a decent living. And it's... Yeah, it just...

JGF: And it sounds like what you'd like to see between the fishermen would be between ports as well as across...

DD: Oh, it has to be between... It should go across country. I don't know much about it, and I'm not really stumping for it. But what I have seen, and I did join this National Fishermen of America. I've been pushing that idea, that concept, for a long, long time. Forget ports. Forget gear types. Forget coasts. We're just commercial fishermen. And boy we need to stand together because everything that's happened here has started to happen out west. But most people aren't seeing it because there's still quite a bit of money to be made.

JGF: Right.

DD: But, some of the guys are really starting to feel it. And it's going to spread. It's spreading like cancer. And we need to *stop* it. We—The west coast guys as far as I'm concerned still have some resources to pitch in and help the east coast guys. And we need to do that. And I've been trying to carry that message back west: You need to help those guys, you need to pay attention to what's happening back there. Because it's going to come here. It's already coming here. And... And... Wake up. Wake up. Stand together. So.

JGF: Yeah. Wow.

DD: It's kind of a contrast...

JGF: You need to read your poems on NPR and stuff.

DD: Yeah [laughs]. I'm trying—I go anywhere I can. I had one gig booked into Washington, DC but it got cancelled at the last minute. But boy I was looking forward to that.

JGF: Oh...

DD: Because I had a carload I wanted to share with some of the people there. [laughs]

JGF: Huh. You should get onto the next presidential inauguration party.

[1:04:57]

DD: I'm hoping that Sarah will pick me up. Because she's a commercial fisherman. Did you know Sarah Palin is actually a commercial fisherman? And I understand that this is all a democratic area, but. I don't care about names of political parties. As far as I'm concerned mostly it's all crooked. It's a rigged game [chuckles].

But. Here is a person who's a commercial fisherman. And she identifies as a commercial fisherman. And she might be out only hope.

JGF: That's an interesting thought. Yeah.

DD: We might have to take a lot of bad to get a little bit of good. But if it—If her perspective of commercial fishing and her awareness of commercial fishing helps us...

JGF: Right.

DD: ...this might be the only help in town [chuckles].

JGF: Yeah. There's no evil or full good, so you might as well put the good where you can...

DD: That's right. Absolutely right. Yeah.

JGF: Great.

DD: Yeah.

JGF: Well, my only other question—and you may feel like you already answered it—is, what would you like the festival visitors to feel like..., leave understanding about commercial fishing.

DD: Oh I'd like to have them see that we're just people trying to make a living. And trying to harvest *their resource*. *Their* resource. We're just out there representing them on the ocean, basically. When you go up to Safeway and buy that little Styrofoam tray, and you run and get out of your car and run in so you don't get wet, get your seafood and go back home and cook it. There's somebody that took a lot of heck of spray in the face and maybe got hurt. Somebody might have lost a finger. Somebody might have lost a thumb. Somebody might have got killed. Somebody might have died on that trip.

And..., people need to be aware of that. That there's a *whole* lot more goes—Guys don't get paid *nearly* enough for what they produce off the boats. Not *nearly* enough.

Because... It's not going to change, but they don't get paid nearly enough for the amount of effort that goes in and the amount of *expertise* that goes into it.

PD: And the expense.

DD: I mean, you got some really professional people. I don't care if a guy as a sixth grade education. When he gets on the ocean, and he starts producing his product, he's a professional. And he knows what he's doing if he's still alive and doing it.

JGF: Right.

DD: And..., people need to be aware of that. That they're just—they're just their neighbors, but they're highly professional in what they do, and they put out ten times the effort than any eight-to-fiver does to produce what he produces.

And I think people need to be aware of that. They need to get—*hopefully*—I love seeing these festivals and coming to these festivals because hopefully they'll bring an awareness of who commercial fishermen are and the effort that goes into producing a simply product like a filet of fish. Say it fast and it doesn't sound like much. But when you start

thinking about the investment in the boats, and the families, and the life and death struggle sometimes it is. Just coming in—I've come in off blows where we didn't know if we were going to make it. Or if the boat was going to go out from under us or what. But we were right back out and did her again. But that kind of stress and that kind of effort, needs to be recognized. Even if it's not recognized monetarily, it needs to be recognized. And that's what these festivals I hope are doing, or will do.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

PD: Yeah. And it's not like the fishermen make—they make... Somebody that isn't into fishing might hear, "Oh he made a hundred thousand dollars just in three months. Wow!" But they don't stop to think that it might cost seventy-five or eighty thousand in expenses and crew shares. And fuel and groceries and...

DD: Insurance, everything else.

PD: Insurance and repairs. It's an expensive...

JGF: And permits.

DD: Sure.

PD: Yeah. Permits, especially if you're still paying for one. You know, they're not cheap. And a lot of times the price of boats and permits, both crash, you know. And you go through the big times. They might have—the next year might be absolutely dead. And then, you know, you've still got to pay your bills. You've got to pay your mortgage and feed your kids. And everything. And it's not—Even if they make a million dollars, they might have a million dollar boat that costs five hundred dollars a day to run.

JGF: Right.

PD: You know? [?] shudders to think about that, but.

DD: You get the big years like that. You also get the low years. For every high there's a low. And you have to be able to set aside, and to carry through there.

JGF: Yeah.

DD: So it evens out. To just a good living.

PD: If you're lucky.

DD: For most people.

JGF: For a lot of hard work [laughs].

DD: For an *awful* lot of hard work. Yeah.

PD: Yeah, it's hard.

DD: And that's what needs to be recognized. And that's what I'm hoping these festivals will do is education the public about the amount of effort and hard work. And dedication. But also love of the ocean. And that's something else that needs to be recognized. That every one of these commercial fisherman—if they've got a family—I won't even put an "if" on it. Every one of these commercial fishermen is a conservationist in his own right. He doesn't want to catch the last fish. He wants to be able to fish them next year. And next year. And next year. And if he's got a family and he's got kids, he's going to want to pass that boat on to his boys. *Or* at least, have some *young* guy, see a good enough livelihood that he's going to want to come aboard the boat and eventually buy it.

JGF: Right.

DD: Just the financial side of it dictates, that we have to keep a health industry. So, people need to be aware of that.

JGF: Great. Well thank you so much. This was a real pleasure. And I'm glad you guys are here this year.

PD: Yeah. Well it's been fun.
[End of interview]