

Name of person interviewed: Francisco Ferreira [FF]

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September, 2012

Interviewer: Mark Star [MS]

Abstract

Immigrating to New Bedford from Portugal when he was young, Francisco Ferreira, a crewman on the Apollo, gives an honest, detailed description of the life of a fisherman.

Demographic information

Sex: Male

Occupation: Fisherman F/V Apollo

Born: Portugal

Homeport: New Bedford

Key words

Role

Commercial fisherman (captain/crew)

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Social networks (family, friends, neighbors, coworkers)

Social and Cultural Characteristics of Fishing

Life aboard a fishing vessel

Safety practices and beliefs

Other social and cultural characteristics of fishing

Gear and Fishing Technology

Other gear and technology

Boats, ships, vessels

Business and Economics of Fishing and Other Maritime

Business and economic effects of regulation

[00:00]

MS: ...all set. Okay. So what is your name?

FF: My name is Francisco Ferreira.

MS: And where are you from?

FF: I am from Dartmouth, Mass.

MS: Were you born here or?

FF: No I was actually born in Portugal. And then I migrated here with my family back in '81. I was still a baby when we came here and I remember just growing up here. My father came over, he was a fisherman there so we can here obviously his first initial thing to come here was New Bedford 'cause it's fishin'. And that's how we ended up here.

MS: So was he fishing in Portugal?

FF: Yes he was, my grandfather he was. They both fished out in the Grand Banks. My grandfather actually fished in dories, out of the old dories and the eastern sail riggers and stuff. Where they used to bring it in line and hook and stuff like that. And then my dad actually worked on the factory trawlers out in Portugal once they started building 'em back in the 60s and 70s. And they started fishing in the Grand Banks. And then after we migrated there, we came here and started fishing here. My grandfather fished here, all my uncles fished. I have a cousin who's still a fisherman, an older cousin of mine. And I just followed in the footsteps and never looked back. And that's how I'm here today, still fishin'.

MS: Did you ever talk to your grandfather about dory fishing?

FF: I did. I used to...but I was still young when he had passed away. But I remember, being summers, I actually got to spend a lot of time with him. When I was a kid, my parents used to ship us off to Portugal 'cause in the summer a lot of boats would stop in the summer. They'd take 2, 3, months, go on vacation. Lot of guys would go to Portugal. My grandfather was back and forth from here to there. So I used to go over there with him, by that time he was already retired and he was fishin' in this, in the Rio Doro that we have there. And he was fishin' in the river. And I used to go with him all the time. I used to ask, Grandpa I want to go Grandpa, I want to go, I want to go. And he used to take me. And we used to get to talk a lot. You know but I was still young so it was hard for me to remember a lot of things. But I got to remember certain things which is nice 'cause he told me a lot of stories and it was great, like, back then that's when boats...know what I mean...boats were made out of wood and men were made out of steel! You know. And he got to tell me all the stories about how rough it was, and how nasty and how hard it was. They didn't have gloves back then, they used to make their

own gloves. And stuff. It was crazy the things he used to tell me and, certain things I pick up slowly you know. And I start rememberin' 'em and it's nice to look back at 'em.

MS: Yeah so your father obviously followed his footsteps.

FF: Yes.

MS: And do you know much about his early fishing career?

FF: Yes I do actually, I was fortunate...well I don't know if it's fortunate well I look back now as I was fortunate to go with him when I was young. I was 13 when I first went out fishin' with him. I actually had, I'd gotten some bad grades in school when I was 13 actually and he was like, no, no, no, no you're not spending the summer at home, no way.

[03:00]

So he ended up taking me out fishing. And I think in his thought of train it was gonna back...make me like stay away from fishing, stay in school. And I think it backfired on him. It actually made me like it. It was weird because I ended up enjoying it. As a young kid, I enjoyed it. I remember doing the summers with him and it was great being out there with my father because I really never knew him until I got to spend the time with him out there. You know and see what he did. And I just fell in love with the industry, it was weird, and I loved it and I followed him and watched him what he did. It was great. I got to do it all the summers after that, you know, and it was awesome.

MS: Did he have his own boat?

FF: No. He, he came here, he worked for Mario who owned the Villa de Lavo [ph], he ran that for a lot of years, for him. And then when Mario had passed away he started running the Green Acres for Carlos. And then he ran that for 10 years. And he had that for, yeah, about 10 years, 10 years he ran that. And the I remember doing some trips with him there; that was awesome. And then after that I branched off on my own when I was like 18, took off and just started fishing on my own, you know, started going on other, other boats and stuff like that to see other things, you know.

MS: What was your first boat when you went off on your own?

FF: My first boat was the Villa de Lavo. Yes, I remember that daily. I remember leaving the dike, turning Quick's and running to the rail and puking you know and it was like, I've always had the notion that I was born a fisherman, I'm not gonna puke you know, this is great. I just remember I got on the boat, I was all excited, we steamed out headed through the dike, hit the lighthouse, steamed out towards Quick's Hole, turned the corner, it was a southwest wind. Oh boy I ran to that rail and hurled my brains out. I was a kid, I still remember that day. Oh I was seasick for days [laughs].

MS: That's a miserable feeling.

FF: Oh yeah it was. But you end up getting over it, you get used to it and then, it's all second nature after that.

MS: Yeah. Do you ever get seasick anymore? Or has it happened again?

FF: Oh yeah I do, yeah to the ones that say I never get seasick, usually they're lying. Yeah I still do once in a while. If we stay home long enough, for periodic times you know sometimes we take breaks you know maybe a month or two off you know, sometimes 3, 4 weeks. That period of time you get used to being on land. No, I'll get queasy for the first day you know, sometimes you dry heave but really not much after that. You know I do get seasick every once in a while if we stay home long enough yeah.

MS: And what type of fishing have you been involved in?

FF: Pretty much a lot of it actually. I've done a lot of draggin', I've done scallopin', and did some whiting fisheries which is nice.

[06:00]

I've worked with guys that like to experiment you know, over the years guys that actually work the hardest of the hard out here you know. These guys that weren't afraid to fish you know. Like my dad wasn't, we used to just pound the channel on top of the rocks months after months. And then working with my cousin Tom out there, he was just all about gear. Changing gear, changing gear, you know, buying new nets new designs, always experimentin'. I was one of the fortunate ones that got to learn all that. You know. And it's all instilled in my brain and it's like you know, most guys don't even know what a rope trawl is or fly nets or otter trawls. I was one of the fortunate ones that got to use that and still know how to use 'em today. You know, but yeah I've experimented with a lot of fisheries and it's nice.

MS: It seems like today there is a lot less knowledge amongst the crews that guys don't know how to mend nets and everything. Have you seen that?

FF: Um yeah. Yes. I'm going to say it's a dyin' breed almost. Like I, yes it is, it is a dyin' breed. It's getting to the point where all the old-timers are retirin' and they're all leavin' and the young kids just don't wanna learn. They want the money, they want to do it, they want the adventure but they don't want the knowledge and know how how to do it. I think it's a lacking breed, and it's dyin'. It's gonna die eventually if these guys don't pick up it up. More young kids get into it you know. But over the years it's gotten less and less. And the rules and regulations have tightened down too so there's a lot less fishermen too you know because there's a lot less time you can spend out at sea now you know. But it's, it is a dying breed.

MS: It seems like with less positions available on boats that it should be culling out the, you know, the less knowledgeable, less skillful, less devoted fishermen and that the real diehards would stay in because there's so few positions. Is that not the case you think or?

FF: Actually that, that isn't the case 'cause a lot of the old-timers are just sick of the rules and regulations they...even a lot of the old skippers, they, they grew up one way. Their mentality was come home, fish, go back out, fish where I want, do what I want, come back in, land that catch, have that pride of knowing they caught all that pound. You know what I mean. It was more of a pride thing than of I'm gonna catch all these fish, you know what I mean. It was more of a pride thing of comin' home, you felt good when you came home with big catches, you're gonna make that nice paycheck you know. And now all the rules and regulations have tightened up the belt so much where a lot of guys are just like, pfffft, I can't go there, I can't do this, I can't do that. Why the hell am I still doin' this? And it's time to get out.

[09:00]

And a lot of them did. And that's why it's a dying breed. A lot of boat owners sold their boats and it's turned into big corporations. In one way it's good and in another way it's bad. You know 'cause the family boat owner is gone you know. That loyalty to your boat owner is basically gone you know. Where we used to have that back in the day, crew members and captains and owners of boats had crews for 20 years. You don't see that now. You know the turnaround ratio on crews is every 2 to 3 weeks you take in a new guy. And it's like, they don't know nothing and they're a green off the boat, right off the dock and you put them on and some of them don't make it and some of 'em do you know.

MS: And is that more on the trawlers, or the scallopers...?

FF: It's both actually, you know what I mean. What's keepin' the scallop industry alive now is 'cause of the money that's there. You know what I mean. The management was managed a little bit better, not great, but better. But the money's there. So a lot of guys tend to lean more to scallopin' than versus draggin'. You know. But you can make money draggin' you just gotta be with the good guys that are out there left. You know what I mean. The hard nosed guys that ain't afraid to ride out some weather that are, that are there ready for to change, you know not stuck in the old guard of using old gear and stuff 'cause you can still make money draggin' you just gotta get it and get it and get 'er done. Get out there and do it.

MS: One thing we're kinda interested is people who see the boats have no idea of what is actually like on, on board. Can you describe sort of a typical day, as much detail as you can from when you start, breakfast, you know what is a typical day for you?

FF: Well a typical day is basically bein' on the boat, you work all day and night. It does not stop. You know what I mean. Let's start off with draggin' first. Obviously you set out your nets, you usually tow for 3 hours you know. Sometimes you'll just sit there run

in and grab a coffee. As you setting out your nets you just wait. As you haul back and then you pull in your bags, see what you gets, hopefully you get a good catch know what I mean. Where you're on deck and have time to work. And you end up getting those big bags of fish. And then you sit on deck, you process it, sometimes you get an hour break in between, sometimes you don't. You know because every 3 hours that nets turning back into the boat. It's a non stop, monotonous grind. And as you're just haulin' back, you work on deck, you do your things. Once you're done putting everything in the hole, fishing...put all the fish in the hole, ice it all up, dressed it all up, and gutted it. You go inside, have a coffee, sometimes you do a tow for the captain and let him sleep a little bit. There's usually a guy who cooks on the boat. The mate, the engineer. So everybody has their own duties.

[12:00]

Obviously the skipper's the skipper and he's in the wheelhouse. And but basically on the boat you just give everybody a hand. Some crews run watches you know where you sleep 3 hours, work 9 doin' dragging. Basically every 24 hour clock you're sleeping 6 hours. If you get a break you can actually take a nap. You give the cook a hand if you can. Everybody gives each other a hand on the boat usually. You know. And leaning off to that, going to scallopin' is just a monotonous grind of brutal pain you know. Now 'cause of all the rules and regulations buckled down. Our last trip we were doing 12s and 4s. 12 hours on, 12 hours off, 4 hours on. You know you just work, and just nonstop, pick the pile, dredges come in, scallops are on deck. Pick, put 'em in baskets, hit the box, put 'em in a box and you shuck them all. And you just keep shuckin', just keep shuckin' it. It's a monotonous grind of brooding pain. Your back hurt, your feet hurt, your hands start swellin' up. It, it's just a nonstop whirl of like 7, 8 days or nonstop 12 and 4s. And it's the same thing over with the being in the galley you know what I mean. With the cooks, give them a hand as much as you can, you want to, you want to as take as much sleep as you can 'cause you never know if you're gonna fall asleep or not. 'Cause I remember doing trips where we were going out fishin', haddock fishin' actually and actually I was with my cousin Tom and we brought home 67,000 pounds of haddock in 1 trip. We started fishin' on a Wednesday, got home on a Sunday. I didn't sleep for 4 days. It's just, we were up for 4 days. Me and the rest of the crew mates we're just like, we're not even, they don't even bother going to bed. There was no time to go to bed. There was barely time to eat, we were eating out on deck, you know. There was just a monotonous grind of the haddock was there, screw it, let's bring this check home. Let's bring this big catch home and let's make a nice paycheck. You know, because you never know when you're going make a nice paycheck nowadays.

MS: Do you...so there is a schedule on board time wise, what would be the typical schedule say for you, you get up at...I mean it runs...

FF: Yeah, I'll say...draggin' wise say the skipper goes down from 12 to 3. I'll be up in the wheelhouse from 12 to 3 while he's sleepin'. And then from 3 to 6 I'll go down, and then the cook will go down from 6 to 9, and then the engineer will go down from 9 to midnight. You know what I mean. So that's how they run watches.

[15:00]

You know, usually those 3 hours is where you get your sleep. So after that you're up on a whole clock usually.

MS: Okay, so you're on the Apollo now?

FF: Yes.

MS: And what type of fishing are you doing on that?

FF: We're doin' both. Scalloping and draggin'. We do both fisheries, we're one of the fortunate boats to have a boat that has a dual license. And it has both licenses on it so we'll, we'll well fish scallops all summer. Once that's done we'll sit at home for like about 3 weeks riggin' the whole boat over for draggin' to fish all winter draggin'.

MS: And do you prefer one to the other?

FF: No I don't. To me, bein' out in the ocean is just...I don't know, I call the ocean my mistress 'cause it's an attraction I have to be out on the ocean. It's an allure. And it actually, to me it doesn't matter as long as I'm out there. 'Cause I enjoy what I do. You know it's...it's actually, it's a way of life for me. It's a lifestyle. It's my life. I wouldn't change it for anything. And I love just bein' out there and workin', coming home with that. It's more of like, to me it's more of a pride thing. You know, knowing that my father, my grandfather did it. And now I'm doin' it. It's more of a pride thing than anything. You know to me it doesn't really matter.

MS: I imagine the variety is kind of nice though. Especially when you're done scalloping.

FF: Oh yeah [laughs] yes 'cause that...being done scallopin' is, is, it's a nice feelin' 'cause that's just a 3 month hiatus of monotonous cruelty on your body. And then you draggin' it's more a little bit relaxed, you know what I mean. It's, you have more fun fishin' when you're draggin'. It's more fun, you get, you get to talk more, interact more with the other crew mates and stuff like that. And it's a lot less cleaning which is nice.

MS: On the scalloping trip, what would be a sort of typical poundage that you do per trip?

FF: On a closed...on a scallop trip on a closed area...well I don't know why they call them closed areas, I think they should be called access areas, but whatever. They, they allow you 18,000 pounds and then you have open day areas where you can catch unlimited and then those are just the worst. Because you can bring home 40, 50,000 pounds and just, think about it. We did a trip, we brought home 41,000 in 7 days this summer. By the time, if you calculate it all, one man shucked 60,000 scallops alone.

You know, just to get that 41,000 pounds. 'Cause you're cuttin' a meat that's the size of a frickin' marshmallow. And then dropping it in a bucket, then from that bucket you gotta fill it up, and it's just monotonous grind of cruelty on your hands and feet and body.

[18:00]

But it, it's, it's, it's that bad, yeah.

MS: How is...on Apollo say, how are the interactions between Captain and crew? Are they, sort of standoff-ish? Is it pretty congenial? Or what?

FF: Being on Apollo with Shawn is nice. It's, he's...he's relentless. I have to say. He's...I've worked with some of the hardest Captains out there and he's relentless, which is good. That's what you want to be, is with a guy who's relentless. But the crew interaction with him is great, you know what I mean. At times it's hard, 'cause everybody has their own personalities and you gotta remember that you're on a boat with 4 guys to 7 guys at a time and everybody has a different personality and it's the way you take it. You know? And sometimes you have your good days and sometimes you have your bad days. And if someone's grumpy that day, hey, just...you gotta, you gotta let it roll your shoulder. You can't hold grudges, you know. But bein' on the Apollo with Shawn is great. I enjoy it. He's actually a nice guy. But when it's time to work, when he's, time to put the hammer to the nail, gotta get 'er done. You know, he's not gonna let up. And but the crew interaction's great. You know, it all depends who you work for too. Some guys are just straight mean. I don't want to swear much but yeah some guys are just straight mean. They're just horrible to work for. If you end up doing a transit trip on there, you already know phsst I ain't goin' with that guy anymore. Naw-uh, no way. You know but, and then other guys are just awesome to work for you know. And you want, you start, when you're around long enough in this industry you, you can know who to go work for and who not to. Nit pick and choose which is good.

MS: Do you, have you changed crews, changed vessels many times or are you?

FF: Yes I have, I've changed 'cause we used to...when we were draggin' back in the day it was, they only allowed you, they cut the days off when you were doin' days. And there was no lease days at the time so each boat had 40 days so you were just jumpin' from boat to boat to boat, just to make a livin' you know. And then that's when a lot of crews started changin' over and over again. And I've work with a few of 'em and a lot of the Captains that I worked with, some of 'em were just like, I already knew I'm not coming back on this boat, he's not a go-getter, he doesn't, he's lackluster, he's just a pain in the ass. I don't wanna deal with him. And you find out who the other guys are who are really nice and who actually are go-getters and wanna work you know. And, well I've been fortunate 'cause I was taught by my Dad very well.

[21:00]

He didn't hide nothin' from me. He taught me the hard way of workin'. And that's why I was always able to get on a good boat you know. And I didn't have to be on those crappy boats and just deal with certain skippers and deal with their bullcrap which was nice.

MS: Yeah I imagine the fleet, word must pass pretty quickly, I mean it must be...

FF: Oh yeah it does. It passes very quickly. You already know on the waterfront who's, who's a good Captain and who's not. And what boat you wanna get on, if the boat's gonna be stopped up on the rail and you wanna do a transit trip you know what I mean. You already know who you wanna get on with you and who you don't. And but usually it's the luck of the draw, sometimes they got a crew member sometimes they need it, sometimes they don't. You know 'cause guys come and go, guys go on vacation, guys come back. It happens.

MS: Has the new catch-share system affected you as a deckhand in terms of finances? Does it have an impact on you or is it?

FF: Catch Shares...that's, that's, I don't know, that's a touchy subject. Either it's a very good way of doing it, or it's gonna be a very bad way. It, it all depends on who you work for. And if you're a single boat owner, that's the hard part. If you're a corporation it's gonna be easier 'cause you got, obviously you got way more catch-shares to catch and you can fish all year round and not worry about it, you know. 'Cause you got so much quota that you can go out there and just fish fish fish fish. Versus where you're dealing with 1 small boat owner, 1 man operation that's where it hard. He's only got his limit and if he can get some more he can get it, and if he can't you're in trouble. You know, that's why it's a dyin' breed 'cause a lot of these guys are just getting' out of it 'cause they're done dealin' with it.

MS: So you don't see it except for having to change boats maybe more often, in terms of pay, is it, it stays fairly steady or?

FF: Oh, the pay...I don't know. I think now that the pay, with the quota system, you gotta buy fish. Who in America has to go to work other than a fisherman? We have to pay to go to work. Before we leave the dock we're already in, we're already in the hole. Between ice, fuel and then the catch that we bought. Because obviously someone's gotta pay for it. So it's sometimes, you're already 20,000 in the hole before you even leave the dock. And you gotta catch 20,000 pounds of fish before you even make a dollar. And then after that is when you start seeing your money in your pocket. And it, it all depends like who...it's weird, either some guys are gonna make some are not. But the, I don't know, the catch-shares to me, I don't think it will work in the long run. I don't think it will in the long run.

[24:00]

It's working now, because they haven't figured out a way how to get it to work. The government has obviously not done their job correctly because if they think they have, they haven't. Catch-shares is just...I brought in more yellowtail home in the past couple of years than what they say is out there. They'll tell you there's no yellowtail out there, this past winter we did a trip out near, out in southeast parts where we were turnin' 10,000 pound sets of yellows. We brought home 25,000 in 2 days we picked it up. The fish is out there. Their science hasn't caught up to the ability of the fisherman. And I think they underestimate the fisherman, of, of us able to catch it and what they're able to give us. And I think that's where all the conflict comes. Where everybody's bumpin' heads and then, oh you're doin' this right, or, you you're doing the catch-shares wrong, you're doing lease-days wrong. It all varies. And the fish is out there, it's just whether they are gonna allow us to catch it or not. And in my opinion with the catch-shares, it might work, but I doubt it. I really doubt it in the long run. Every other country that's tried it and it's always failed. And why they tried it here, Lord knows. And as I, they gave us the lowest, a minimal amount we can catch without getting' in the biomass, biomasses fish of overfishing it. Say there's 50 metric tons of yellowtail each year to catch. They gave us a 25,000 quota. So there's always 25,000 extra that they think would have been perfect, that's the lowest minimal biomass we can catch. Even now, they're still cuttin' that to a lower amount. And I think their science hasn't caught up because they set out their boats and bring their own science frickle nets out there and try catchin' fish that's not there. If you're goin' there at the wrong time, and you're there at the wrong time of the biomass and you're not, you're not gonna catch it. If you're using a wrong, wrong gear you're not gonna catch the fish that you're, you're targeting to catch. It's not gonna happen and I think that's, they have, either they have the wrong people on the boat or they have the wrong science that they think they have. Whatever the scenario is, but if anything if they want the real science and data they just need to get on fishermen boats, pretty much 'cause this, there's tons of fish out there. Tons of it.

[27:00]

MS: Is there a system that you would, if like you were in charge, what system would you use to divvy up the fish between fishermen and assure that it's not all fished out? You know, is there a system that you think might work?

FF: I don't know, I've read a lot upon it. I've, I've had an obsession with it over the years, and I kinda, kind of gave up on that. 'Cause it's just, nobody knows which is the best way. Whether they tell you this is the best way or this is gonna work better or that's gonna work better...who knows if catch-shares will work better or if lease-days were better. In my opinion lease-days were actually better you know. I've gotten to the point where I kinda gave up almost on that too which I shouldn't have, but I did. I thin...I think total allowable catch limits should be brought in to tell you the truth so that once they give you that TAC, then split up the quota between what's out there and then go out there and fish and do what you hafta do but once it's targeted as close to being closed, everybody needs to watch their limits and just, stop the fishery at that point you know. Instead of fishin'...which is nice because you can fish all year but you'll end up being limited to a certain timeframe of fishin' you know. But who knows, there's

millions...there's so much science out there people are tryin', who knows which is gonna be the best or which is gonna be the wrong or right. Who knows, some people say the left wing's right, some people say the right wing's wrong. Who knows. You know.

MS: Yeah. Getting' back to sort of the day for a typical fisherman. What are meals, when you're actually able to have one, like?

FF: Meals? You get excited for meals, 'cause you know what I mean. All you wanna do, 'cause you're so hungry sometimes you just wanna get in there and get eat. It all depends on who the cook is on the boat, and some cooks are great. I'm fortunate to have Shawn's uncle with us now and he cooks Thanksgiving dinner every, every night. You have this big old meal, 4 course meal, you eat good out there. That's, that's one thing we do not skimp on or pass on is having a good meal on the boat 'cause you have to have a good meal. 'Cause lack of nutrition is not gonna help you out there. And I, I enjoy having those nice meals and sittin' down and be able to eat. You know, that's when you get to interact with the other guys a lot more and you tell stories, even though you've heard the stories 50 times you still listen to it again but. It, it's great bein' on a boat havin' the good food.

MS: Is only the evening meal cooked? What about lunch, breakfast, do you get those on your own?

[30:00]

FF: No, they're both, they're both cooked. Breakfast...like when we're scallopin' we do breakfast and dinner. But during scallopin' we don't have the time so we order the food from a restaurant and it comes in trays and we just preheat it and eat it there. When we're draggin' we have a little more time, the cook goes in, he cooks, it's more old school style and we have four course meals, it's nice.

MS: The crews have diminished in size over the years?

FF: Yes they have, yes they have. A typical old scallop crew back in the day was 11 days, it's down to 7 you know, sometimes 8 if you pick up a shacker. On a dragger it went from 6, dwindled down to 5. Some guys are running 4s and 3s now just to make a living, to make a paycheck, you know. Some guys are actually...I remember one guy was fishin' 2 handed, for so long, for almost 2 years. He fished, him and another guy, just, just to make a livin'...

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...draggin'.

MS: Well it's obviously gotta affect many things, working on board with few people, more time on deck in terms of safety.

FF: Oh yeah. Everything, everything changes once you get less people. 'Cause you sleep less, you're on deck more. A lot of more accidents happen that way 'cause obviously if it's 3 'o' clock in the morning you haven't got no sleep for 12 hours, you're in a daze and you're just lookin' around and that's when accidents happen but, it's...it has changed. A lot, a lot of less and less crews. It's tough, it's harder work now but you do it despite, just for the paycheck. 'Cause you don't want to come home and not make a paycheck. You wanna come home and make that paycheck so a lot of guys refuse to take the extra guy. They'll go 3 handed, they'll go 4 handed.

MS: Has the reduction in crews in general and the fishing industry shrinking, has the community, the fishing community changed you think in your years...?

FF: Of course, the whole industry's affected by this. If the fishermen don't go catch fish, there's no fish landed. Think about the trickle effect that it happens now. We don't go out and catch fish, we can't, we can only come home and sell it. There's less guys at the processing plants. There's less that go out to the markets. There's less for the middle man. There's less for the stores. So, there's less for the restaurants. The whole industry gets affected by it, it's just not 1 fisherman. We die, everything else with it dies. You might as well just shut down all New Bedford. Take this whole waterfront right here and wipe it all out. Take the city and just wipe it out 'cause it's not gonna be here. It's gonna be a ghost town right through this whole dock. If we're gone, forget about it. There's nothing here 'cause you might as well...once we're gone, there's gonna be no more fish houses. Take them, take all those jobs. Tell 'em, wipe 'em out. All the restaurants, you can basically almost close 'em down 'cause a lot of them ain't gonna stay alive you know 'cause half this industry will be done and then no one gonna's want to eat the seafood. They're gonna pay up the wazoo for it, comin' from somewhere else. And it'll just be completely dead breed. It'll be, it'll be a ghost town here. Might as well just close it up. At that point. If you kill us, you're killin' millions, millions of dollars. It's, last time I heard it's over a \$10 billion industry. If you close us down, forget about it. That affects the whole economy. Through the, through the whole US. Completely through the whole US. We are the biggest port in America and there's no one that touches us volume wise and money wise, and it it's just, you shut us down forget about it. The trickle effect is done. Everybody gets affected by it.

[03:00]

MS: How about on the smaller community scale like when your father or grandfather were fishing, I imagine the fishing community as you know families living in the same area with the same concerns. Was it different, has that changed now? Is that same, you know, smaller community not the business community but home community. Has that changed?

FF: Actually, no it's still tight knit. It's still a tight knit community. We all know each other. We all...everybody when you're home either you meet each other down at the docks we say hello, hi to the other guys on the other boats and stuff like that. They'll go down the Royal Café over here or Knuckleheads [inaudible] and have a coffee with them

you know, you'll end up talking about the stories, like, hey this happened you know, on the boat or that happened this trip. Or I saw you 2 miles away from us. The tight knit of the community is still there. It's, I think that will always be there 'cause that's just the way we are. As it happened a few years ago on the sinkin' of the Lady Grace, the community got together. It's, it's still there. It, it has not changed. That, the lifestyle of the community of us fishermen have not changed. We're still tight knit, we're all know each other or if we didn't knew each other we heard of that guy who's on that boat or that guy's on that boat oh that's his uncle, his cousin. "Oh that's nice, how you doin'?" That has not changed. I don't think that will ever change.

MS: Are there fewer children of fishermen though going on vessels are they...?

FF: Yes, yes. Where back in the day I remember a lot of young kids took pride in following their father's footsteps. Now there's none of that. I understand why they did turn their kids away 'cause the industry's just going for a divefall and it needs to turn around. And it's on a declinin'. Who wants to turn their kid onto this industry you know? For what, to whether you know you're gonna make a paycheck or not. Sometimes you will, sometimes you don't. It's tough.

MS: Do you have a family?

FF: No I don't. No, I do not have a family.

MS: I imagine fishing pretty hard on other life when you're gone so much. You know, being at sea it's probably hard to have much of another life I guess.

FF: Oh it it is hard. It it's, how can I explain it...it takes a special breed of a woman to deal with a fisherman. It's, 'cause you're gone multiple days at a time. I can understand how hard it is. For them, it must be hard to leave your kids behind, but when you're home, you're home.

[06:00]

That time is yours with them. You're not doing anything else. So that's where it actually makes up for you bein' out there. And to me, I've had a few girlfriends over the years and some of them have gaven me the ultimatum. It was them or fishin' and I'm still fishin'. And it, it does take a special breed of woman to deal with it, it is hard I can imagine, but once you find that one, your life's great 'cause I wanna say 80% are all family members that are out here. Have wives, kids, homes. You know.

MS: Are there many women fishing in the fleet, on scalloping and trawling?

FF: Not many, no there's probably a handful of women out there. There's not many. Back in the day you'd never see a woman on a boat. You know to me, I would, I wouldn't...call me superstitious or whatever, but I would not want a woman on a boat with me. That's just bad luck. That's just straight bad luck, do not want it. Don't, don't

need it. It's like having things upside down on a boat. When I see my flippers or someone else's boots laying down, I pick 'em up, I straighten 'em out. You know to me, call it juju or what, but superstition...no way, I don't want none of that with me. No way. But they are. There are a few women on this industry.

MS: Yeah it's a fairly tough industry I would imagine.

FF: It is, it is.

MS: Is there much, between the Portuguese fishermen and everybody else in New Bedford, is there much friction between them? Do they get along, do they pretty much stay separate? Or how does, how does that work in the...?

FF: We're pretty much all Portuguese. Some obviously it, if you want to call 'em Americans. They all came from Portuguese decent but 'cause obviously the last name could be Souza but they don't know any English [sic], or any Portuguese or anything like that. They are American but between the straight Portuguese that came over and migrated and fish here over the years, I wouldn't call it friction but the language barrier is tough for them sometimes with the other boats and stuff like that, but usually there's not much friction. No, not at all. But sometimes there is and it's not too bad, you get over it quick.

MS: What, so what was your absolute best day at sea?

[09:00]

FF: Everyday is my best day actually. Just even bein' on deck. When I wait, even being on deck and watchin' that sun sight [ph] come up over the horizon, and feeling the warmthness of the sun on my face, everyday is my best day 'cause I know I'm still up and awake you know. I love wakin' up, even when I get out of bed I wake up and just to wake up is a nice feelin' 'cause you never know whether you're gonna wake up or not. If you're in a dead sleep and something happens or if you're on deck all day long and it it's a nice feeling to know that the sun has rosen after bein' all night on deck. And you feel that warmthness of the sun on your face and you're like, I'm here another day. Another day closer to get home too. So everyday is actually a good day for me.

MS: Not a lot of people can say that about work in general. [Laughs]

FF: No, actually I love my job. I wouldn't change it for anything in this world. I'm a fisherman straight through, hard and hard.

MS: How about your worse day at sea?

FF: [Laughs] There's quite a few of those. 'Cause I've been with some, as I said again, I've been with some hard nosed guys and I've gone through some brutal storms with some guys. One quick one, this past winter actually, we were with, I was with Shawn on

the Apollo actually. We were fishin' up off of Middle Bank on Middle Ground over there and we had some time before we came home 'cause our off load time was a day way actually, 12 hours away and we're already close to home and we were steamin' in and he's like "let's just stop in the Middle Bank and do a tow". We're close to home, next to land, it wasn't bad, the weather was gettin' rough. So he was like, let's set out. So we ended up settin' out. It was already by about 15 foot seas out there. Before you know it, it turned into 18, 20. We were fishin' with 20 foot seas. We left the net in the water for almost 12 hours. Because we were afraid to haul it back. That's how bad it was. We were, we were hoping that the bag broke 'cause that's how bad it was. Nasty with the net in the water. And it was, I remember me and him sittin' in the wheelhouse for almost 12 hours just talkin' to each other just watchin' wave after wave after wave. And it was like, Oh my God...what do we do now...now we go throw net in the water, is what it is. Hopefully we part, break it, pick it up when it's flat calm. You know 'cause it was that nasty. The mornin' broke, it started, the wind started dyin' down we pushed closer to land. We towed all the way closer up into Plymouth just so we could haul back and not catch those waves just to head home.

MS: And any other storms that you thought you might not have made it out of or?

[12:00]

FF: Few of 'em yeah if I can recall 'em. Oh one time actually we were comin' around Race Point. I was in the wheelhouse, my cousin Tom was sleepin' and there was actually a boat in front of me I think it was the America. And we were sittin' there on our way in and I'm just watchin' 'em bob up and down in these 15 footers. And I'm just, sittin' there watchin' em, ah he's heading into Boston. We were headin' into the canal to come home through the Cape Cod Canal. And we were, comin' around the horn at Race Point. So I grab my binoculars, I didn't see him for like 5 minutes. And I was watching the target on the radar, and I'm like, it was comin' in spotty because of the weather and I'm like let me put on my binoculars. Grab the binoculars, I stuck my head to the window to see if I could see the America. All of a sudden we took this freakin' wave over the side and it slapped us so hard it blew in one window, took all the lights and the antennas off the roof. It scared the livin' daylight out of me. I literally jumped off the seat, landed on the floor, soakin' wet. That, that was one of 'em. Another one, let me think of. Comin' home from out east, years ago. There was a hurricane comin', all, couple boats stood out east, big boats we were a small boat. We were comin' home and "oh let's try beatin' em. Beatin' this hurricane in." It ended up turnin' into a tropical depression and, we were comin' in and it just, turned so nasty. I couldn't even tell you how big the waves are. It was just so nasty that I walked up in the wheelhouse, there was water spouts comin' up off the ocean. From the wind blowin' the crest of the waves, there was just water spouts comin' straight up into the air. And just watchin' that was like, wow, this is nuts. And the other crew member was in the wheelhouse and he went downstairs to wake up my cousin actually, Tom, at the time to get him up 'cause it was so nasty. And just headin' home through it, we were givin' it all she got. Just gunnin' the engine to get over every wave and throttlin' her down. It was, it was insane. We actually had a government observer on board that trip. And I remember Lee tellin', we were all in the wheelhouse

and he, the observer was downstairs in the galley and Lee came up with the brainiac idea to get all the survival suits and put them on top of the kitchen table. And then the observer was like, what's that for?

[15:00]

And he's like, I hope you got yours 'cause you might need to put it on. And the poor kid turned ghost white. And I never seen 'em on the dock ever since again. He went up in the wheelhouse for 5 minutes, took a look around and he's like, went back downstairs, stood in his bunk, did his paperwork, and never went to bed again. It was almost, being in that weather, we should actually stood farther out east where we were 'cause it was less. But we ended up steamin' home through it. It was just, I couldn't even recall just how nasty it was. It was just bad. It was, you're just watchin' mountains of waves and then boats just bobbin' up and down in it. Goin' into it, you're doing 1.5 knots on a normal steamer boats does 7 knots, 10 knots. A normal steam home. I guess the tide's 7, with the tide 10. We was doin' 1.7 knots. Just to get anywhere.

MS: One thing I've always asked, is sometimes amusing...what's the most usual things you've ever pulled up in your net?

FF: [Laughs] A lot of things, you end up pullin' a lot of small stuff, like bottles and stuff like that. On the Apollo we pulled up a tuna last year. That was just weird. 900 pound tuna. Pulled up a couple baskin' whales. Pulled up old Russian doors, that when they were trawlers were here, back in the 70s. Pulled those things up, old Russian trawlin' doors. Pulling up unusual fish that you've never seen before. And you always scratch your head like what's that thing? Pulled up old oil tanks, coal, oh what else have we pulled up. Lots of things. I can recall. Pulled up net drums before. Old net drums off old boats. Pulled up an old life raft actually, real old one. It was still...the casing was all in rubber still. It was probably from, I don't know, the 30s, 40s. It was probably one of the first life rafts that even came up. It was actually intact. We were trying to get the numbers off of it, we couldn't even up findin' it but we ended up givin' it to the Coast Guard and stuff like that. And after that I don't know what they did with it. You know.

MS: As a commercial fisherman what would you most like people to understand about the industry, what do you think people don't understand that is frustrating to you?

FF: I don't know. I think it's the whole notion of, a fisherman, they are all typically bad guys because 90% of us aren't...don't get me wrong, there are a few bad apples in every gender [genre] of work.

[18:00]

You always get your bad apple. And more than none, it's more of a stereotype on a fisherman here and it, it puts a bad name on everybody else that does this you know, it's sad 'cause I went through school, did got good grades, did good in school and I ended up fishin'. Other kids went off, went to college and had their life. Now that I see either

people from school or old teachers and stuff like that, they're like what are you doing this and that, blah blah blah. Oh I'm a fisherman. But...first thing they do is they're lookin' at me like, well what have you been doin' why you doin' that? You know what I mean? I do real well for my life out here, you know what I mean. I do very well in livin'. I'm 30 years old, I own my own house, paid for. You know, and then it's like they think your gonna end up as this big old loser and now you're a fisherman, you're all done. And that's actually wrong, it's a stereotype. And a lot of us are family men, family men you know and that needs to change, because that stereotype is the Old Guard and it's gone. You know. We are family men, and that I like to see where that stereotype change you know. 'Cause they're not all bad apples, we're not it's just a stereotype that people have. That needs to change and I think that's why a lot of people need to come down to this working waterfront to see what really goes on and come on the boats and actually meet real fishermen 'cause if they don't they'll never know. 'Cause most people when they meet me out in the street or whatever, they won't know that I'm a fisherman as I'm all dressed up in regular clothes. They won't even have a clue until I tell them. They all look at me I have 3 heads, like you're a fisherman? Yeah I'm a fisherman. Okay. Yeah.

MS: Great, well thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

FF: You're welcome, anytime.

[END OF INTERVIEW]