

Name of person interviewed: Tom King [TK]

Facts about this person:

Age unknown

Sex Male

Occupation Former Fisherman

If a fisherman,

Home port, New Bedford, MA

and Hail Port New Bedford, MA

Residence (Town where lives) unknown

Ethnic background (if known) unknown

Interviewer: Lynne Williamson [LW]

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INDEX/KEYWORDS**KEYWORDS**

New Bedford; Massachusetts; Regulation; Scalloping; Dragging; Lumpers; Ship building; Cod; Licenses; Weather; Quotas; Expenses; Woods Hole; Alabama;

INDEX

- [00:00] Worked as a commercial fisherman; Started as a lumper; Fishing is in the family; Newfoundland ancestry; Second trip out memorable because of rough weather; Would go out for regular fishermen taking a trip off;
- [03:26] Getting out of fishing and into food service for 18 years; Made a lot less money working in the food service; Now retired and on disability;
- [06:03] Change from wooden to steel boats and boat accommodations;
- [08:04] Story of Russian factory ships crisis early '70s; Story watching the Russian factory boat haul in their gear; Russian gear was much larger than his gear; Russian factory boat never sent waste overboard; Foreign boats depleting fish supplies; Federal regulations (catch and crew size);
- [13:25] Regulations today are not like they were; He was able to buy all the material things he wanted; First marriage ended because of fishing; Missed a lot of family events; Families would worry; Father fished his whole life; At age, 41 had to leave fishing; Recently filed paperwork for fishermen's pension; Pension is not much;
- [17:17] Good aspects of fishing; Camaraderie; Money hooked him into fishing; Working your way up to boat owner; Being smart with money;
- [19:25] Helpful aspects of regulations, they help keep the price up; Days at sea then and now; What fishermen do when they aren't fishing; Supply and demand issues and weather; Financially better to leave boat tied up because of expenses;
- [24:27] Variety of costs (insurance, boat license, fuel); Cost of licenses and types of licenses, transferring licenses;
- [27:17] Discussion of boatyards, wooden boats were historically locally, then steel boats now down south; Steel boats helped revitalized New Bedford; Only 3 wooden boats now in fleet; Eastern-rigged vs. western-rigged; Boat accommodations today;
- [30:46] Fuel use with newer boats; Fiberglass not strong enough for fishing boats/North Atlantic weather; Revival of scallop industry; Supply and demand; Believes fishermen are their own worst enemy if limits and quotas were removed;
- [36:49] Removing regulations would cause depletions; Ensuring fish for future generations; Catches need to cover costs of fuel, ice, food, insurance;
- [39:42] Knowing where scallops are; Relationship between fishermen and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute; Fishermen know what's out there;
- [42:46] Enjoys talking with older fishermen, fishing gets in your blood; Nicknames; Doesn't want children to fish; Bering Sea fishermen;
- [46:00] Contact with other fishermen at festival; Visits to docks, talk about old times; Two-masted schooners and the character of wooden boats;

[48:37] The need to pass on traditional knowledge, such as net mending; Work as a
 lumper;

[51:39] Women and fishing; Bad luck beliefs; Closing remarks;

[53:49]

[End of Audio]

TRANSCRIPT

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[00:00]

LW: Saturday, September 25th. We're at the New Bedford Working Waterfront Festival. And would you tell me your name sir?

TK: My name is Tom King.

LW: And what position do you hold or did you hold with regard to the pier and the working waterfront?

TK: I was a commercial fisherman from 1968 to 1984. And I held the position of engineer and deckhand and, once or twice, I went mate. An interesting occupation.

LW: How did you get into it?

TK: I had been working as a fish lumper on the waterfront for eight years, right out of high school. My father was a commercial fisherman. And it's in my family. I'm related to Newfoundlanders. It's basically in the blood, with the fishing industry. After working on the waterfront for eight years I got to know a lot of the fisherman. I had bought a house in a partnership with a fellow named Frankie Shields from the fishing vessel *Angela W*. He had asked a couple times if I wanted to go fishing. I said I'd like to try it someday. I can still remember it. It was in February 1969, Frank asked if I wanted to go out and make a trip fishing. February one of roughest months on waterfront here. The weather is just awful, horrible all the time. It's blowing 25, 35 most of time. So I told him yes, I'd go. It was quite an experience for me. It was the second trip I'd ever made. This was dragging at the time. Talk about being seasick! I was sick for three days. I just couldn't eat. Anything I tried to get down just came up, you know? It was an experience. And they took me out as full share, particularly in the wintertime, that's not a common thing to do. Anyone who breaks in fishing usually you'll start off at half a share, because you're not, you don't have the knowledge, or being able to work the gear, fix nets, and all that stuff. But being a friend of Frank, Frank gave me a whole share, and the best part of it was, and maybe I was a good luck charm, but it was the best trip that the boat had ever had. I was hooked. I was hooked, and I had made seven hundred dollars. And I said, 'My god, I couldn't believe to make that kind of money.' Frank took me out again later on because this is what they called a transit site. Someone had taken a trip off and they just need somebody to go out for one trip, and that's why they called it a transit site. So I had worked for Frank later on. I went out with him in the summer of 1969, and knowing other commercial fishermen that were skippers, Frankie introduced me to the guys. He said if you ever need a guy to go fishing, he says, Tom's available. And everybody had my phone number, and that's how I got into the fishing business. It's quite an experience.

[03:26]

TK: I got out of the business in 1984 because the fishing business was starting to dwindle. I said what do I do, I'm just turning 40 years old, and I said do I continue with this because I really thought the fishing industry was gonna die. Fish was pretty well depleted, and there was not much money around. I remember the last couple of trips I made fishing; I was on the fishing vessel, *Valkyrie*, which was one of the high liners that's here in New Bedford, for a number of years. And the last two trips I made fishing, I made three

hundred dollars one trip and a hundred and ten dollars on the second trip, and this was for nine days. And I said, what do I do, and my thoughts were to try working the shore. I had a friend of mine that worked at a food service industry here in New Bedford called Louzo Food Service, and he asked me if I'd be interested in taking a job there. Well I said I'm willing to try anything at this time because I want get home and be with my family. And I took a job ashore at six dollars and thirty cents an hour. Compared to the money I was making, it was quite a shock! But I didn't know what choices I had. I could've stayed and continued fishing, and if it got another 10 years, I'm thinking what's gonna happen if it doesn't last. I'm fifty years old and where do I find a job then. Who's gonna hire someone who's 50 years old. So I decided that yes I'm gonna try staying ashore, and I did. I worked at this job for 18 years, at Louzo Food Service in New Bedford. And unfortunately, in September of 2003, the company was bought out by another food service called Hallsmith Sysco from Norton. And that kind of was the end of my career. I've had some bad knees, osteo-arthritis in two knees. I've had to have those replaced so I went on the Social Security disability right now. And life, I'm just trying to get life to go on as it is. I'm grateful for what I have today.

[06:03]

TK: I think of all the years in this fishing business and the people I've seen come and go, and such changes with the waterfront. The ships, when I started fishing, most of the boats here were all wooden boats, and they had a saying, 'Wooden boats and Iron men'. You had to be a real tough, tough customer to put up with what was going on here. And the average size of a wooden boat here at that particular time, I would say, was probably 75 feet. And the steel boats that they have now that are here now are probably up around a 100 feet. So that 25 feet doesn't seem like much but it's a big difference. The changes in the boats are so dramatic because the steel ships they have today are what they called western rig, and they fish off the stern. And all your, as a matter of fact, what they have is, what's the word I'm looking for, they have cabins, two people to a cabin, up forward, and everything is there. Your bathrooms, your cooking facilities, your showers which was when I started fishing not that many of those around. Compared to the wooden boats that were back in the older days, your bathroom was in the stern of the boat, and up forward was where you slept, and 8 guys slept in bunks and your cooking facilities were there. So if you had to go to the bathroom you had to go from the bow of the boat down to the stern. There was very few boats that had showers back then in the sixties. That was a quite an adjustment that you just had to take a sprinkle bath is what we would call it then. Just douse yourself with water, and wash up. That's how you got by until you got home to take a shower.

[08:04]

TK: It's quite an amazing thing with this industry. I see people come and go when I was there. The money just changes so differently. Back in the '70s, the early '70s, there was quite a crisis going on around here because of the Russians. I saw those factory ships out there and it was just unbelievable to see the size of these vessels out there. They were anywhere's from 2 to 250 feet long. They were processing ships. I was fishing on a boat called *Rush*. It was a boat that was about 70 feet long and it was just, it looked like a matchstick in the water compared to the size of these vessels. When we would, what we say, haul back the net, we would start the winches up, start hauling our gear back, get the net on deck, dump the fish, put the net back overboard, and get the net back on the

bottom. It would take us 20 to 25 minutes to do that. One day, this Russian boat was probably only a couple hundred yards away from us, and I was watching this fellow haul his gear back, and his doors were up in the rigging, and I was watching him pull the net in. And this was a stern trawler. And I watched him haul just net in for 30 minutes until we were out of their sight and I couldn't see them anymore. And it is amazing the size of the mesh they have on their net. What I saw was probably an 8 or 9 inch mesh that it looked to be from the distance, of where you start in what they call the wings. And then you get down into the bellies, and they you get into the caught end where the fish is. I had a friend that worked for the National Marine Fisheries, who had pictures of the caught ends of these Russian vessels because he used to have to board them and check them. There would be 200,000 pounds of fish just in one tow, which was unbelievable. Unbelievable! And the sad part of that was that nothing was ever sent back over the side as waste because it was all processed. And that took away from the feed for the fish, the codfish and the flounders, and the haddock and the yellow tails, and everything else that needed to survive out there. So that was the hard part of the business here. It was starting to get depleted with all the foreign ships that were out there. And this made dramatic changes here. I was fishing on a vessel called the *General George S. Patton* named after the general from the Second World War, and we used to go fishing mainly for codfish. The way it was set up at that particular time, the federal government just stepped in and started putting regulations on the amount of fish you could bring in. And at that time, codfish we're allowed to bring 9,000 pounds of fish per week. Yellow tails, you were allotted to 6,000 pounds per man. So if you had 6 men on a boat you could bring in 30,000 [incorrect math] pounds. So it was quite an adjustment but the good part of that was that it kept the price of fish up. What it meant to a supply and demand. The way that 9,000 pounds of fish worked for codfish was per week. If you left on a Saturday and didn't return till a week from the following Monday, you could actually bring in 3 weeks worth of codfish, because you're on the Saturday on one week, 7 days for the next week, and the Monday of the following week gives you three weeks of codfish. So you could bring in 27,000 pounds of codfish. As I said the good part of that it kept the price of fish up. Codfish then would probably be up around to 40 or 50, maybe 55, cents a pound. Now before the federal regulations were put on codfish, the price of codfish was probably anywhere from 5, 6, 7 cents, sometimes even less than a nickel because the market was glutted with it. Boats would go out, pick up 100,000 pounds of codfish in four or five days, and everybody would come in and the market would get flooded. It was a perfect excuse for the buyers because it was there's too much fish, we can't handle, we don't know what we're gonna do with it so we keep the prices down.

[13:25]

TK: It was an unbelievable feat. What I see here now with the fishing industry is it's really tough. The regulations have gotten so bad, I don't know how these fellas, particularly the druggers, make a living. And for the boat owners to have to pay a mortgage on a boat when you can only fish, I think they're at 73 days a year now, which is kinda tough when you have 365 days in a year. But it was – It was a good business for me. It got me a lot of the material things that I wanted in life. I was able to buy a house, and cars, and campers, and motorcycles, all the toys that come with life, but it's a hard life for a family. It cost me one marriage because my wife was not used to it – My first marriage. My second marriage was kind of rocky with it too. That's why I got out of it. But the hard

part of fishing is you can't plan on anything like Confirmations for your children, graduations for your children, birthdays, or anything like that because when the skipper says you were going fishing, you were going fishing. And it didn't make any difference what was going on. And the only way you could possibly make sure you were in for a birthday or a Confirmation, you had to take a trip off without pay. And the only day I knew for sure that I was – the only holiday I was ever gonna be home for was Christmas. That was the one taboo in life was to be out fishing for Christmas. Do you want me to stop in-between here? Do you have questions? So it was good but it was rough too. The wintertime was really especially hard, from December through March, the weather was just really hard. As I said previously that the wind just blows and the only thing you wait for is possibly one day to get out fishing was to probably get 15 miles of wind just so you could get down to the fishing grounds, then you put up with what you could for the next ten days and try and get home again. The sad part is the families are worried about you all the time. My father did this his whole life. He started back in Newfoundland, codfishing from a dory on his grandfather's boat. He didn't know anything else in his life. I went to the waterfront here in New Bedford right from high school. I started on the waterfront at 17 years old, and I was 41 years old when I got away from the waterfront. I need another life; I need something more than this. The money was good, but the – There was a pension that was started here that there was a certain percentage taken out of the gross stock of the boat for a pension and welfare plan here. And I just filed my paperwork for my pension last month, and I will be getting my first check the first of October. The unfortunate part of the pension for this is they only pay you 21 dollars a month for every year you have in here. So if you've got 35 years of fishing, you're only gonna get 700 dollars a month which is not a great deal of pension for the time you put in.

[17:17]

TK: But fishing did have its good parts too. There was a camaraderie here of people you could call friends. They were here for you no matter what. If something happened offshore, somebody was hurt, there was always a boat that would come and see what they could do to help you out. It was unbelievable the friendships, and the camaraderie you have here with these people. And it's a way of life. You work through the fears. When I first started fishing, I had just done another talk over here on the waterfront, as we went out fishing, and I remember that first trip with Mr. Shields. The boat was rolling and I'm up at wheel watch with another fella, the boat would lay right down so that the rail was on the water. For the other people this was just a normal way of life fishing, going out to sea, water came over the boat, and you just put up with it. But for me being my first trip, I was just scared to death. Oh god, get me home! Get me home! And I'll never come out here again! Until I picked up my paycheck and I was hooked! Hooked! The money has a way of doing things with you here. The one salvation, I think, of going fishing where you start in this business, you start at the bottom, and the best way is to work up to the top. Get into the wheelhouse, become captain, and you get an extra percentage of the owner's share for that. The smart thing to do is save your money and buy your own boat, so that you can get somebody else to run it for you and stay home. There are many, many fishermen here who have done that and have become boat owners, and have become millionaires. They've worked at it, and it's become very lucrative for them in

their lifetime. There are many, many fellas here who own more than one boat because it has become a lucrative business.

[19:25]

TK: The regulations, I truly believe, they have a place today. Have helped the industry to a certain extent. Fishermen don't have to work as hard as they used to. When I was fishing, it was a 365 day a year job. There were no time limits on time. We usually went out for 9 or 10 days fishing, and we were home for 4. Today draggers only have seventy-something days a year, but the price of fish has come up dramatically from when I was talking about fish being cheap at 5, or 6, or 7 cents a pound. Fish is usually somewhere up around a dollar fifty to two dollars a pound. So whereas when I fished, you had to work probably 200 days out of the year, these fellas only have to work a third of the time and make a lot more money than I did back in my day of fishing. I have a friend who is on a scalloper. They have to fish 120 days a year. They will probably make, on a decent boat, probably seventy thousand dollars a year as a deckhand. Where when back when scalloping – Scalloping was lucrative back in the '70s and the early '80s, you would probably be lucky to make forty thousand dollars a year, and you had to fish year round for it. Now you're only fishing a third of the year, and make twice as much money and still have the time home.

LW: What do they do, the other 260, 70 days of the year?

TK: Well, a lot of them will try to find transit sites on another boat if they possibly can. Otherwise they stay home for the winter, or they might go somewhere south where it's a lot warmer than being up here in the winter. I have a friend who is a skipper on a scalloper, and we play golf together. I'm just retired. We play golf. We play a lot of golf. He's happy. I go on vacations with him and our wives, and we take golf clubs. This is what we do, or he does in his spare time. But he does make an odd trip here and there if there's something available. For the most part, the scallopers get their days back the first of March, and having 120 days a year, if you go at it right steady, you probably have your time up in September so then your boats are tied up till March again. The boats are just tied up to the dock because they can't go fishing anymore.

LW: Is it better to go out in the summer months than in the winter months?

TK: Yes and no because it's supply and demand with the scallops. When everybody gets the days back in March, everybody shoots out at once. There are no limits on the amount of scallops you can bring unless you go to what they call a closed area. A closed area is a 12-day trip and you can only bring in 18,000 pounds of scallops. If you're outside of a closed area, you can stay out for as long as you want depending on how much fuel you carry and you could bring in as much scallops as you want. Some boats have been in this past late summer have brought in as much as 54,000 pounds of scallops. A fellow on deck made \$17,000 for one trip, which is almost a year's pay for the people that are working on land here. But the difference is if you save some days for the wintertime when the weather starts getting rougher, late November or December, the thing is the weather tougher, you may not get your time in to fish because of the weather, but the price of the scallops are up probably three dollars a pound compared to the price in the summertime. It's a catch-22 situation. It's all in the weather. A lot of people like to just get it over with, because then the owners, if the boats are tied to the dock here, they don't have to carry full insurance for the men. So it's financially more lucrative for the owner

to keep the boats tied to the dock, because the insurance on these boats have gotten awfully expensive. It's how you look at it.

[24:27]

LW: So some of the high costs in addition to insurance are the cost of a boat, and the cost of a license? That's pretty high, huh?

TK: From what I understand to get a license for a scalloper today, they're up somewhere anywhere between 750 to 800, 900 thousand dollars for a license.

LW: That's not per year? You buy the license so you can fish?

TK: No. You buy the license and you put it on the boat you own to fish. If you buy another boat, well I would say if you build a new boat, you probably would either have to buy another older boat just for the license and then transfer, or transfer from your boat to new boat, and probably have to scuttle the boat you're taking the license from.

LW: So the license is per boat?

TK: Per boat. Yup. What has happened with way they have revitalized the fleet here with all the new boats, a lot of the older boats that were scalloping back in the days of the wooden boats, and some of the older steel boats that were built after the Second World War, some the owners here would buy those older boats just for the sake of the license. They'd build a new boat, transfer license over to the new boat, then scuttle old boat— Take it out and sink it. As I said though, the prices of licenses have gone up tremendously. Probably 15 years ago, you could buy a boat and a license for 100,000 dollars. But the cost of a new boat today, you're looking at anywhere from a million to two and a half million for a brand new scalloper depending on where you build it and what electronics and everything else you have on it, and whether to dually fish for scallops and dragging, depending on what type of a license you have for it.

LW: So are there separate licenses for the type of fish that are collected?

TK: Yes. Some fellas that were dragging before and changed their boat over to a scalloper, are entitled, were entitled to have both licenses. But you had to satisfy the dragging license by going dragging every year and you had to land a certain amount of fish so that you could keep your license. If you didn't utilize the requirements for that, then your license would be taken away by the federal government.

[27:17]

LW: Building boats? Where do the fishermen on this pier, where do they get their boats?

TK: Well, I'm just gonna go back a few years back when the wooden boats were here, that was in the '60s when I started on the waterfront here. Most of the wooden boats were built up in Maine, up around Thomaston, Maine. The shipyards were there. The boats were built here in Fairhaven, and there was Casey Boatyard that built a number of boats for the fishing fleets in the late '40s, and early '50s. Then the boatyards started to go out of business here in New Bedford as far as building ships. They would stay here to take care of the maintenance of the wooden ships here that were built. But I would say probably in the early '70s, there was a fella named Bob Shard [last name] who built the first, I shouldn't say the first, the first steel dragger from down south. It was built down in the Bayou LaBatrie, Alabama. And they had a great, great deal of success building boats down there. And Bob built the first, actually it was the second, western rig steel boat for New Bedford fleet. It caught on real quickly, a lot of the other fellas here were looking at the boat, sizing it up. They went down there, and they started revitalizing the New Bedford fishing fleet by getting rid of the wooden ships because there was so much

more maintenance on a wooden ship than there is on a steel boat. That's when the New Bedford fleet here started to upbuild to steel boats. It's going from a probably an 80 foot steel dragger, now everything is up around 100 feet, some are even larger. The processes been about doing it down south in the shipyards in Alabama. If you were here now to look out, everything around here now is steel. There are only 3 wooden boats left here in New Bedford fleet. And the three of those are scalloping. One is called *Rianda* [spelling?], the other one is the *Dolphin*, and the other one is the *Columbia*. Those are all from the old eastern rig way that they have for wooden boats. All your gear was towed from the front part of the boat, where when they say western rig, everything is towed from the stern of the boat. It has just made everything easier. And the accommodations on the new steel boats today are wonderful. You have microwaves, you have TVs, VCRs, you even have showers. They carry so much more fuel, and so much more water, that they make living aboard a ship comfortable today.

[30:46]

LW: Don't they use more fuel? My family had a steel-hulled pleasure boat, and we were shocked at the amount of fuel that that boat used compared to the same sized wooden boat. So the steel boats are bigger, but they must cost a [inaudible] in fuel.

TK: Yes, they do. Particularly because the size of the boats now are usually up around 100 feet. The dredges that they're towing for scallops are probably 13 to 15 foot dredges, whereas the wooden boats could only tow a 9 foot dredge. So the engines have to be, have a lot more power. They're talking about 1200 horsepower to 1500 horsepower on the steel boats compared to some of the wooden boats were only anywhere from 600 to 700 horsepower. So you're talking twice the horsepower which I would say is like burning twice the fuel. I know when I was fishing on a dragger, we would probably use 2,700 gallons of fuel for 9 or 10 days. With these new scallopers they have today, you're probably talking 14, 15 thousand gallons of fuel. So you're talking 5 times the fuel. And the prices are so high. Expenses are really tough.

LW: How come fishermen don't use fiberglass boats? Is there a reason?

TK: They couldn't take that weather out in the North Atlantic. The worst force in the world is water coming at you. If you could just picture somebody, taking a gallon of water at a window, it's gonna break. So when you have a mountain of water coming at a fiberglass boat, the chances of that surviving are not very well.

LW: So when you said the revitalized fleet, did you mean that was the newer steel-hulled boats [inaudible]?

TK: Yes. As I said before, they used to say 'Wooden ships and Iron men'. I guess they had to get some iron ships for the iron men! And it never ends. There's new boats coming all the time. I wanna say probably in the last ten years that the fleet has just increased dramatically.

LW: Why do you think?

TK: Because the scallop industry has come back. I can remember when I fishing, I had also done some scalloping back in my career, sixteen years of being a commercial fishermen. Back then, scallops were only 35, 40 cents a pound. Now a cheap price for scallop today is three dollars a pound. That's from the supply and demand.

LW: What do you think accounts for the increased demand in scallops?

TK: I hate to say this, but a fisherman is his own worst enemy. Because I truly believe if they take the limits off, they're gonna go out and glut the market again. The price of scallops

are gonna fall, and they're gonna work twice as hard to make the same amount of money. To me, I don't want to do twice the work for the same amount of money that I can do now.

LW: Are fishermen pushing for that?

TK: Yes, I believe they are. If there was just some way they could keep the quotas on, limit size of trips, I think it would be lot better for them financially and body-wise. This takes a toll on your body. Back in '60s and '70s, when scallops were plentiful, you had 11 to 13 men on a boat. Today with the federal regulations they only allow you to have 7 men on a boat if you have 2 dredges. If you're only working with one dredge, you're only allowed to have 5 men on a boat. So if you're thinking of bringing in 50,000 pounds of scallops with 7 men on a boat, and being out there for 18 days, you are one whipped puppy when you're through with that. Your body's just aching. It doesn't make sense to me to make, take whatever quotas or limits are on there and make half the money. I've always had a problem with that. As I said back in the '70s when we had the quotas on codfish, I knew of people that were running into other ports to unload without doing it right. It just takes an effect on the whole industry when people can't abide by it because some fishermen have that thought those quotas and regulations are good for the next guy, but I'm gonna do what I want. It's not fair to the rest of the fleet.

LW: So that's an example where regulations have had a beneficial impact on people.

[36:49]

TK: Yes. I truly believe they work. The people have to work with you to do it. I don't know how much they really say that they know about depleting scallops. From what I understand, scallops are drowning themselves amongst themselves because there's such an overabundance of them in certain areas out there. Fishermen that go out there and tow their dredges, and make a twenty minute tow and they're filled with scallops up to the sweep chain, then you know that there's an overabundance of scallops in that area. Do you want to take the regulations off or just open the area up and let everybody come in and deplete it again? No! You don't want to deplete it because there was too many hard years of the late '80s and the '90s of just tough making a living! You could go out there and couldn't find scallops. Go out there for 10 days and bring in 3,000 pounds of scallops because they couldn't find any. The stocks had been depleted that bad that they just weren't there. So it was good to leave the industry alone for a while, but they back now, and I think the regulations need to stay. I really do. Just to save it for the future. Because there are gonna be future generations of fishermen, and there needs to be something there for them. If you kill the industry again, what are the boats gonna do? They gonna sit by the dock and do nothing because ot won't – With the cost of fuel, ice, food, insurance, and everything else, if there's nothing out there to catch, nobody's gonna send a boat out there because the expenses are not gonna get paid.

LW: And because of the overfishing before – The cause of the depletion was overfishing? And there was no regulations?

TK: Yes. There was no regulations. You could bring in as much as you could possibly catch. The only good thing back in the earlier days with the wooden boats, you're only good for 9 or 10 days because you couldn't carry any more fuel. The bad part of these new boats is, you can carry 20, 25,000 gallons fuel, and you can stay out there for almost 3 weeks. If you take the regulations of the crew size of the boats, and if you put 13 men back on a

boat, now you're probably looking at probably 75 or 100 thousand pounds coming in. It won't be long is everybody's doing that to deplete scallops again.

[39:42]

LW: Are there areas where scallops live in abundance? And areas where they don't live in abundance? How do people know where to go to get the catch that they're after?

TK: Because of the closed areas, the Woods Hole Oceanographic have done their towing out there. They have their boats down there for going out, towing nets, towing dredges, in the certain areas that they know of are plentiful breeding grounds for scallops and fish. Depending on what they catch, deals with what's there. I think the fishermen are a lot better at it then Woods Hole. That's just my personal opinion. These fishermen have been doing this all their life, and they talk to each other on the radios offshore and they talk to each other when they're home here, they'll probably be up the street having a beer and talking about how much scallops they were catching in certain areas. So I think talking to the horse's mouth is where you're gonna get your best information. I'm not saying that Woods Hole doesn't know what's going on, but I think they, I don't think they really have the full knowledge of what's out there. It's a big ocean! And I think the fishermen are the ones that know where the best places are to fish.

LW: Is the relationship between Woods Hole and fishermen pretty good, or a little shaky?

TK: It's not that great right now because of regulations and what Woods Hole has said about the industry. They said fish are still very depleted and they had a problem here back in the summer when I believe the boat was called the *Albatross* out of Woods Hole. When they were towing in nets, they use these steel cables for towing, and the cables are usually marked every ten fathoms, that's sixty feet. So you have to put out so much wire compared to the depth of the water. And they found there was a discrepancy in the cables from one side to the other, so the net was not towing evenly, it was on an angle, so the net wasn't fishing right. And there was a big dispute here between Woods Hole and the fishermen here so it's still a sorry spot to touch. Woods Hole says there's no difference, it's not gonna make that much difference. And if you're a fisherman and you know that you're off 10 or 15 feet towing from one side of the other, fishermen here know.

[42:46]

LW: I was talking to Paul Sonders [spelling?] before you came in, and he said I should ask you about the 'old man', his father. Did you know his father?

TK: No, no I didn't know Paul's father that was before my time. No, but I knew young Herman, I knew the son, I knew Paul's brother Herman. Herman was around the waterfront here for many, many years. There are some other fellows that I just got through talking with over here: Captain Louis Doucette and Captain Arnold Bowers. Now both these gentlemen are in their mid-80's and have been fishing since they were teenagers. It was a way of life for them. There's something about this fishing that gets in your blood and it just doesn't get out. You do it till you can't do it anymore. And I was talking with Mr. Bowers, and he's just starting to come around a bit but pretty well crippled up with arthritis in his hands and his knees. This was one of the —They call him the Codfather. He's been around so long and fishing for so long, some of the nicknames that get hooked up with people around here.

LW: How about your kids? Do you have kids?

TK: Yes, I have 5 children. As I said, my first marriage went down the drain – Thank god my children never got into this. One of my children from my second marriage wants to go

fishing. My friend who has a scalloper, my son wants to go fishing with him. I really don't want him to get into this business. It's good money-wise but it's a dangerous business. It's a dangerous, dangerous business. Thank god we're not like Alaska, cause Alaska loses boats and men every year up there in the Bering Sea. And we don't get weather not quite as bad here. The bad part of the Bering Sea is they fish in 70, 80, 90, 100 miles of wind, and it's a sad, sad state of affairs. And you're looking at a 200 foot boat up there though. But that's all done with limits too. There's quotas on the amount of crab fishing they do up there. It's basically King Crab – You go out, and you have to stay out there until you fill the boat up. And sometimes the quotas are longer, and sometimes they're not, sometimes your quotas are only three days, sometimes your quotas can run for 30 to 60 days, depending on what particular thing you're fishing for up there. That's really a rough life up there, and unfortunately, as I said, every year there's at least one boat gets lost with all life. It's sad.

[46:00]

LW: Do you have contacts with fishermen around the country and Canada?

TK: Basically just around here. I still come around the dock, and as I said, my friend is a skipper here. This is really like being a kid in a candy shop today because I've seen so many older fishermen that I haven't seen in a number of years. I quit fishing in 1984, and every once in a while I would take a ride down to the docks here and see the new boats that are around. There's not that many left around from when I was fishing. There's a lot of the old faces that I still see here. And it's wonderful to just talk about the old times. It's a still in my blood, as much as I've been away from this for 20 years. I'm still of awe of it. I come down, and look around, and say 'My god, it's' – I've loved the sea, I've always loved the sea, and I particularly like – I liked the older wooden boats because there's so much mystique with them, some of them had sails, they used for extra power for propelling the boat. They'd also use sails for stability-wise. It's just amazing to look at the wooden boats, they had character whereas the steel boats today, they're all built alike, but the wooden boats were different. My wife talks about houses, older houses have character; the older wooden boats have character! And they talk about what they call schooner rigs here was back in the '40s when they built schooner rigs. It was a double-masted boat, and the stern mast was higher than the front mast, and that's why they called in schooner. And you ran sails between the two masts and off your stern mast down to where your dories were. The sails were there. Just to see a boat with a sail is a picture that's worth a thousand words.

LW: Are there any of those that are still working?

TK: With sails? Not here out of New Bedford. As I said, there's only 3 wooden boats left. And the scallopers basically didn't use the sails. Nope, they're gone. Part of history is gone now. But, it will never be forgotten!

[48:37]

LW: Well, thinking about that. You have so much knowledge and experience from your years fishing, how do you think you could, pass that on to say, younger men or even women who are going out on boats now? Can you think of ways that might be effective? That you would like to do?

TK: Ah, god. I'm not quite sure how I could make that effective.

LW: Is it worth doing do you think?

TK: Oh it definitely it is, definitely is. This is a trade. Not everybody can do this. When I was dragging, the nets were made out of nylon or polypropylene. And, a lot of times you would get hung up on the bottom on a wreck or something like that. And your net would get torn up. And, somebody had to put that back together. And you just can't take somebody off the street to, what we would call, mend a net. It had to come out right at the end. Everything is in diamonds. And there's four parts to a diamond, four corners to a diamond. You just can't do it – It's something you have to practice at to learn, you can't just pick up, what we call, the needle. It's a needle with twine on it, and start to mend a net. You have to have knowledge to do this, and it doesn't come overnight. And as I said, it's a trade. If you could mend a net, you could get a job on any dragger here in New Bedford because that was the important part, was being able to put gear back together once it got torn up.

LW: Would a lumper learn how to do that as a matter of course?

TK: No. A lumper's job was particularly just to unload the boats when they came in. I did that for 8 years before I went fishing. And it was another part of being on the waterfront here, the mystique that I loved. That's where I started right out of high school. Seventeen years old unloading fishing boats. Great hours, started at 6:30 in the morning, come down to the waterfront here, see which boats are in. And eight o'clock, or 8:30 after auction, go down, unload, and probably if things were going quick, you could have a day's pay in 3 or 4 hours. Then you start it over again the next day. It's a wonderful experience to come down here today and be a part of this. It truly, truly is. I loved it, I missed it. There was some women had just started fishing back in the '70s when I was fishing. There was a couple of women that were involved, and from what I understand they were excellent as deckhands on a boat. And I have no problem with that today cause I truly believe in equal rights for women. If you could do the job, go for it.

[51:39]

LW: Do you know any women working now?

JK: I don't know. I really, honestly don't know today if there are women fishing.

LW: I know there's at least one person in Stonington and she's the daughter of a father who was a fisherman, and she's working with him. I think she might even own her own boat.

TK: Could be. I believe there's supposed to be a woman who's supposed to be here today, this weekend, signing autographs, Linda [Greenlaw] – She was in part of that movie, *The Perfect Storm*. She's written a book, and she's supposed to be here doing book signing today. There's a classic example of a woman that started fishing. I'm sure she had to start at the bottom and work her way up to being skipper and a boat owner. It's wide open, there's no boundaries there for that. There used to be a lot of people saying women don't belong on boats, and it was bad luck. There's all sides from the old days of bad luck experience. If you took a hatch cover and turned it upside down, the boat was gonna sink the next trip. God, they'd be screaming at you for doing something like that. I don't think it's like that today. I think there's probably more women fishing on the older shrimp boats that are down south. I don't know if there's any one fishing in New Bedford today. None, nowhere near.

LW: Well thank you so much. It's really, really rich with your stories and experiences. I have a feeling that Laura Orleans will want to come back to you, talk to you some more, if you're up for it. This was just getting us started. So thank you very much.

TK: Well thank you for having me, and I appreciate it.

LW: So we'll conclude the interview. It's 1:05 on Saturday the 25th. Thanks again.

TK: Thank you very much for having me and you have a wonderful day.

[53:49]

[End of Audio]