



## Richard “Bud” Lather

Transcript of an Oral History  
Conducted by  
Anjuli Grantham  
at  
Shark Cove, Uganik Bay, Kodiak, Alaska  
On June 19, 2015  
(With subsequent corrections and additions)

Kodiak Historical Society

## About West Side Stories

This oral history is part of the West Side Stories project of the Kodiak Historical Society. West Side Stories is a public humanities and art project that intended to document the history of the west side of Kodiak Island through oral history, photography, and art. The oral histories chart the personal stories of individuals with a longtime connection to the west side of Kodiak Island, defined for the scope of this project as the area buffeted by the Shelikof Strait that stretches from Kupreanof Strait south to the village of Karluk. The project endeavored to create historical primary source material for a region that lacks substantive documentation and engage west side individuals in the creation of that material.

The original audio recording of this interview is available by contacting the Kodiak Historical Society. Additional associated content is available at the Kodiak Historical Society/ Baranov Museum, including photographs of interview subjects and west side places taken during the summer of 2015, archival collections related to the west side, and journals and art projects created by west side residents in 2015.

This project is made possible due to the contributions of project partners and sponsors, including the Alaska Historical Society, Alaska Humanities Forum, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Kodiak Maritime Museum, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, Kodiak Public Broadcasting, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, and Salmon Project.

## Note on Transcription

After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The interview subject then had the opportunity to add or retract information. The following transcript is the resulting document. Editing is intended to make the interview easier to understand. Bracketed words indicate they were added after the interview. The use of [...] indicates that something that was spoken does not appear in the transcription. Often, these are false starts. In some cases, it is information that the interview subject retracted later. The original audio file is available for listening.

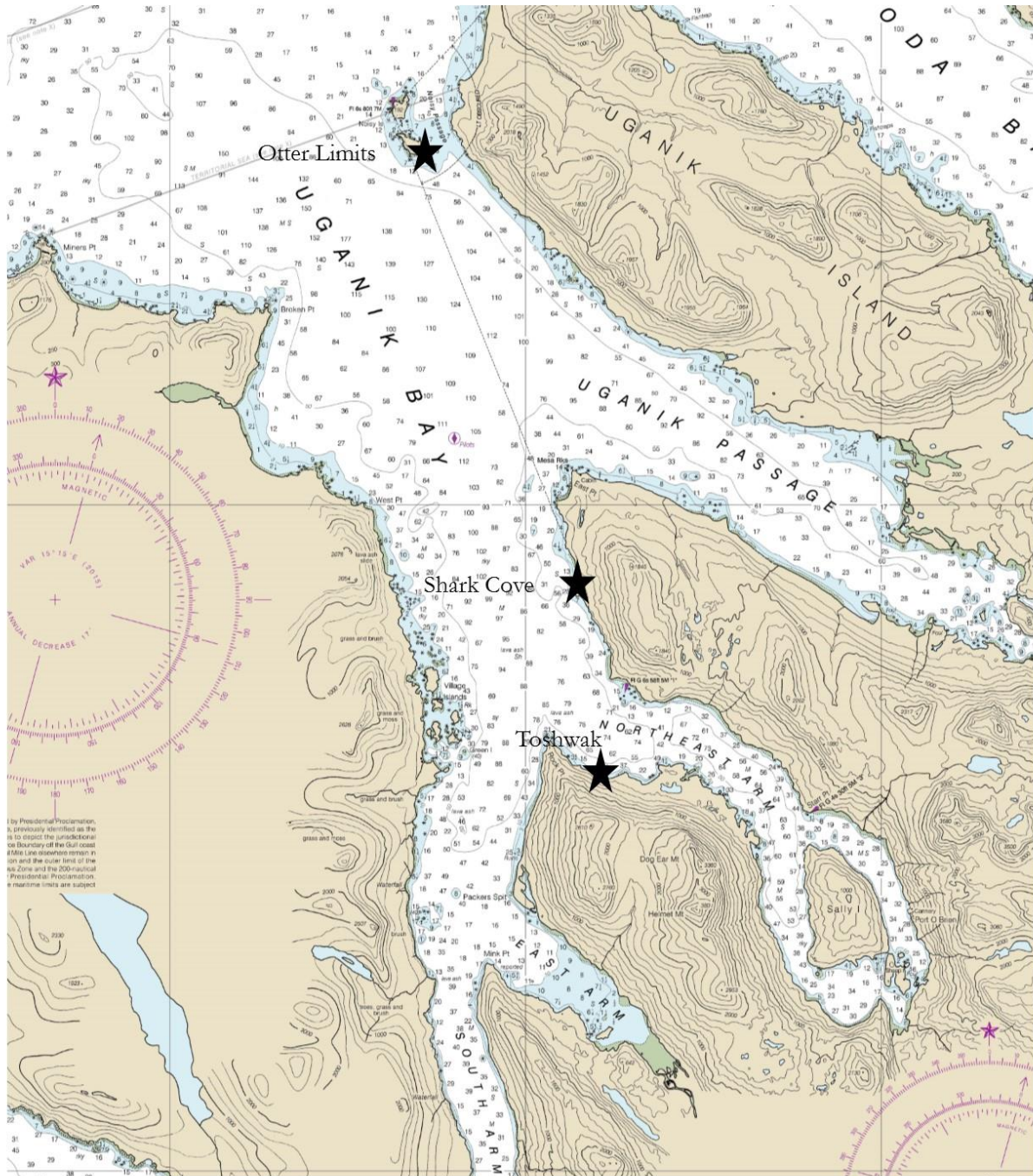
## Citation

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**Key Words:** Uganik Bay, Coast Guard, set netting.

Note: Carol Lather, Wendy Carstens, and an unidentified person speak briefly during the interview.

Cover photo: Richard and Carol Lather, photographed at Shark Cove on July 8, 2015. Photography by Breanna Peterson for West Side Stories. P-1000-5-409.



Select locations within Uganik Bay mentioned in the interview.

## Oral History of Richard Lather

AG: So it is June 19, 2015. I am sitting at Shark Cove with Budd Lather. This interview is part of the West Side Stories project. (*taking time to set up the recording device correctly*) So Budd, when and where were you born?

RL: Chicago.1945.

AG: So how was it that you came to Alaska?

RL: My parents came up in '59. We moved to Ketchikan. We'd been living back in Michigan then, but my dad was a school teacher and he took a job with the Ketchikan High School. Ended up being the principal of White Cliff Elementary School there. That was the first time and I was like eighth grade, but I've been back and forth in the Coast Guard for twenty years. We actually spent the last seven years in Kodiak [...]. The girls ended up—, actually Wendy started school at Peterson [Elementary] in '77.

AG: [...] Did you have early experiences with commercial fishing out of Ketchikan?

RL: Yeah. I had summertime down there. I worked on a troller. And we pretty much [fished] within what, 50 miles of town. They were ten day trips. So that was the first time I did anything like that fishing.

AG: What did you think of it?

RL: It was kind of mundane, hard work, not much pay. Back then the price of king salmon and so forth was good, but they had kind of decimated their runs down there. 1960's was tough. Southeast Alaska didn't do well. There was very few openings and a lot of criminals around robbing creeks and so forth.

AG: What was done to prevent that?

RL: Well, Fish and Game implemented this new program. They called them stream guards where they'd put people out in a tent, give them a gun, a boat, a couple barrels of gas, and patrol the rivers. And then they had radios so they could talk to the people in town, law enforcement, and so forth to keep the boats away from the rivers. It took a while. It came back though. Pretty good fishing down there as far as I know. We didn't even have gillnetters back then. There was no drifters that I know of. It was trolling and seining. That was it.

AG: And did you seine?

RL: No

AG: Why not?

RL: Well the trolling thing was kind of a fly by night thing. The guy I knew, it was just the two of us and I wasn't really cranked into anything fishing-wise anyway. It was just a job. Something to do in the summer.

AG: Was it after high school that you joined the Coast Guard?

RL: Oh yeah. We moved back to Seattle my junior year. Then after I got out of high school, that's where I went.

AG: Why?

RL: The Coast Guard?

AG: Yeah.



RL: Vietnam. I didn't want to go shoot people and I didn't like snakes. Didn't want to go overseas, that's for sure.

AG: What year did you graduate from high school?

RL: '64.

AG: Okay. So could you maybe talk a bit more about that? How was going into the Coast Guard a way of not going overseas?

RL: The Coast Guard, at that time, didn't have an impact in Vietnam. That came later on. [...] When you were 18 you could get drafted, but if you signed up with a service before you got drafted, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, whatever, you weren't going to get drafted into the Army. And that was kind of a prime [deal]. But I'd known a lot of people in Ketchikan, Coasties that went to our church there and so forth. They kind of gave me the lowdown of what life was. And one of my best Buddies, his dad was the cook at the Coast Guard Base. And so Saturdays, whenever we could, we'd go down to the bowling alley and spend all morning bowling, and then we'd go over to Dave's dad's place there at the Coast Guard Base and they'd feed us and watch movies on Saturday. [...] The Coast Guard Base was wide open. We could walk right in the gate. There was no gate guard, nothing. And we started getting to know the guys on the ships and the boats, the rec hall. They had a big gymnasium. It was a nice place to hang out for a bunch of teenagers. So that was kind of like got me a little bit of a clue of there was another alternative than being drafted into the Army.

AG: So that was a real fear for boys your age?

RL: Definitely. We'd heard enough stories just in high school and seeing some of the films that were coming out. Let's see, the Kennedy and Johnson administration, there was enough stuff on the news. Oh my gosh, it [...] like made a big impact. We got color television my senior year in high school. Everything was black and white before that.

AG: And suddenly you have color television and you're watching war overseas.

RL: Definitely. Enough newscasters. Let's see. Walter Cronkite.

AG: Was there a path not taken at that moment? Was there something that you had other interest in doing but felt that for whatever reason the Coast Guard was the right path?

RL: Yeah, that was the plan. I mean I hadn't planned on staying in for twenty, but after two or three years I realized that it's a pretty good job. And I got transferred down to Oregon. That's where I met my wife, Carol. She lived in a little town called Bandon. It's kind of the very southern part of the Oregon Coast. It was a pretty good atmosphere down there. Lots of tourism. Actually, [...] I was in a lot of boat rescues, lifesaving stuff that was, I guess rewarding. We had some really good leaders. The Chiefs that run the show pretty much, they started kind of breathing down my neck about, "Why don't you just sign up for another four? They're going to give you some big bucks if you want to hang around. [...] What else would you like to do or go?" And so I told my CO one day, I says, "You know, if I could get a job in Alaska again I'd probably sign up for a couple more years." It didn't take but about twenty-four hours and there was a message for me to report to the Commanding Officer's office. So I got in my truck and drove all the way up to Newport and he says, "Sit down here. I want to talk to you. If I give you a job in Alaska, would you sign up for six more years? And \$18,000?" So where do I sign? She [Carol] and I had just gotten engaged, so it was a big boost. We were able to put some money down on a pretty good sized mobile home, pay my car off, and we were off to Homer, Alaska within about a year.

AG: What was your job in the Coast Guard?

RL: I was what they call an MK. It's a mechanic. Diesel engines, gas turbine engines, boilers, all that stuff. Pretty much in the engine room. So I pretty much spent most of my time working down there. Small boat stations. We rode on the boats. Every boat has to go out with a boat's mate to drive it, usually a seaman to handle lines and so forth, and then an MK to make sure the engines are working and things aren't blowing up downstairs.

AG: So [...] were you deployed when the boats would go out?

RL: Yes.

AG: Okay.

RL: Life boat stations are like, I want to say, twenty-five or thirty guys, two or three boats, and they pretty much patrol an area on the coast. Most of them are located on a river. The Columbia River, where I live now, they've got like twenty boats and over a hundred guys. So each boat has to have three or four people on it, and then they run a duty cycle every night. There's somebody there, at least two boats, a whole boat crew, somebody up in the communications area to talk to them on a radio. So it's a pretty big operation. The smaller stations got a cook and a bunch of guys driving the boats and engineers fixing them and everybody does everybody else's job. They trained us to drive the boat even though we were not qualified to do that, but everybody had to know. What happens if the boat's mate gets conked on the head and washed overboard? You got to be able to figure out how to get it, pick him back up.

AG: Where did Homer fit in the scheme of things?

RL: Well that was a buoy tender job.

AG: Okay.

RL: One of the black boats like the one that's in Kodiak. So we were fifty people on that.

AG: What was the boat?

RL: *Ironwood*. It's still alive. It's in Astoria right now still.

AG: And in what year did you move to Homer?

RL: '68.

[...]

AG: So now it is June 20th, 2015, and I am back at Shark Cove with Budd [Richard] Lather. So we left off, it was 1968 and you re-enlisted in the Coast Guard, or I guess that's what you call it, and headed up to Homer to work on the *Ironwood*. How had Alaska changed from when you'd left that you'd noticed?

RL: Well, I don't think we knew too much about changes because I'd only been in Ketchikan, so we'd never been up to Anchorage, Homer, any of these places. In fact, we hadn't been to Kodiak until after we'd been in Homer for a year, so we got to see pretty much everything first time. A lot of sightseeing stuff on the ship traveling around. We took care of the buoys from clear out to Adak, up to Dutch Harbor and everything in Cook Inlet. So we got probably some real big exposure. The ship had been in Hawaii. That was the big kicker. So we were gone all the time. My wife, she came up like right after New Year's. We took off and we were gone for like a month and a half, and our trailer house still hadn't showed up. It was being shipped. So she was living in a Homer hotel all by herself, a bunch of other Coast Guard wives, waiting for their housing things to get straightened out, too. But, I don't know, I guess we saw Alaska from the beginning. This was right around the time

the pipeline came in. What year was that? '69, '70, before it actually started pumping oil or was it later? I can't remember. When did the pipeline actually start? Anyway but we had stopped in Ketchikan on the way up to Homer. I think it was like New Year's Day or the week before, something like that, and I hadn't been to Ketchikan in oh, five or six years. There wasn't a whole lot changed there. I don't know, Ketchikan doesn't change too much. Now with the cruise ships, it is. We were just there. Last fall we stopped in for three days.

AG: Nice.

RL: Showed the apartment building my family lived in. [...] We got a driving tour of Ketchikan.

CL: Yeah, where their house used to be there is a motel there now.

AG: So what sort of activity do you remember around the pipeline?

RL: Oh well, in Homer, all we had was those oil rigs, the guys from Cook Inlet. There was nothing down there that was, I would say, any indication. There's a lot more people showed up. Homer kind of grew. Because a lot of people that had families, they must have talked to their friends down in the lower 48, so things started getting busier. We actually sold our trailer house. We didn't even move it. When we moved to Michigan, we sold the trailer. There was still a housing shortage there. It was really tough. Not anything in rentals, you know.

AG: So what was the first time that you came to Kodiak?

RL: It was probably the summer after we came to Homer, and we went over to Kodiak to work on the ship. There was some things that needed to be fixed, and so we stayed in Kodiak for like two weeks, I guess. Well she flew over on a plane, and we hung out for a few days here and we wandered around. I remember the Fairgrounds and running around town on dirt streets. [...] There was a bank downtown where the harbormaster building is, somewhere right in there, and it was in a trailer house. Other than that, the Coast Guard base was a big transition there. Lots of changes going on. The Coast Guard was taking it over from the Navy, so it was a lot of people leaving and empty housing. It was kind of a, I don't know, strange situation, but we were so busy just working on the ship, getting things fixed up. After being in Hawaii for sixteen years, I guess the ship was in terrible shape. The heating system, you know, nothing worked. They didn't need heat when it was in Hawaii.

AG: So it sounds like Kodiak was in a moment of flux.

RL: Um-huh. Well even when we moved here in '77, right? The road to Monashka Bay was not paved from, I don't know, East Elementary, somewhere around in there. It was dirt all the way out there. Then of course the road right at the Coast Guard Base, that was all dirt road out to Bells Flats. When we moved into our house there in Bells Flats, we didn't have electricity for a couple of months, so we were kind of just camping out there. We had to build our own driveway road. Trying to think. We didn't have a whole lot of neighbors. Bells Flats was just a bunch of Quonset huts still. There was people living in Quonset huts out there.

AG: How long were you in Homer for?

RL: Two years.

AG: What happened then?



Shark Cove cabin. P-1005-412.

RL: We got transferred back to Michigan. That's where Wendy was born. Muskegon, Michigan. It was a lifeboat station set up back there. Bunch of forty-foot steel lifeboats, you know, save the Lake Michigan boaters basically. A bunch of tourist stuff. It was a pretty good job. In fact, it was kind of nice because my grandparents lived about fifty miles away so we got to see them a whole lot, and I hadn't seen them since I was a teenager.

AG: What was the kind of trajectory then that brought you from Michigan back to Alaska?

RL: Well, pretty much the same thing. The ship that I was on came back and forth. We got transferred to Seattle, so we came back and forth to Alaska quite a bit on patrols. It's same boat that is tied up in Kodiak right now. That *Monroe*. That big 378 [footer]? We came up here and we'd spend thirty, sixty days running around the Bering Sea patrolling the fishing stuff. Anyway, we had stopped in Kodiak for a R&R thing for three days, and I looked up an old friend that we knew from Seattle, Steve Alvine. His father, he owned the boatyard down there by the Powerhouse Restaurant [Fuller's]. Anyway, we visited them and talked to them and he drove me around. We went flying. He had a [Cessna] 180 on floats, so he took me out to Port Bailey to see his folks. And we goofed around in town a little bit. So when we got back to Seattle I'd found out that I had been promoted. And they said, "Well, you're going to be leaving here in the next month or two, so you need to put down some places you want to go and see if any of those places are available." And I had put down Kodiak. Carol wasn't too sure that she wanted to live on an island, but it was a lot of thought and prayers went into that. And sure enough, that's what we got.

*(Brief conversation and pause regarding troopers checking their crew's licenses)*



AG: So tell me about the patrolling that you did in the Bering Sea. Was that a time in which it was checking for illegal fishing activity?

RL: Right. You know, there was a transition there. I don't know what all the political stuff was going on, but there was a lot of foreign fishing vessels that were still operating up there. And the prohibited species, they were dragging and catching halibut and crab and processing it and that was against the law. So we seized a number of good sized fishing boats, you know, two- three hundred foot boats, escort them down to Dutch Harbor, offload all the cargo, and they would inventory it, put in SeaLand containers and put a lock on it, basically. A lot of times they took the skipper and maybe the chief engineer or somebody and haul them up to Anchorage and put them in jail. So it was a pretty serious time. Didn't last a whole long time, but definitely it made an impact.

AG: So these were foreign vessels that you were apprehending?

RL: Yeah.

AG: Where were they from?

RL: Japan mainly. I remember one was Taiwan. I can't remember exactly all of them, but we'd go over there in like the rubber boat there, climb up on the ship and the officers would kind of disperse. They'd have a clipboard and they would wander around the boat, and they'd want to see this or that if they suspected there was something because they'd get the ship's logs and read them. And if they were in this area and they knew that was a non-fishing area, they would immediately put them under arrest. And then, of course, after they started getting down in the fish hold and opening up frozen boxes of halibut, that was a no-brainer right there.

AG: Was it quite tense to go on these boats?

RL: No. [...] They were just fishermen. Somebody had an agenda, but mainly the crew [...] were just along to get paid. Once they'd get them down to Dutch Harbor some of them would just leave. They'd get on a plane and fly away because they were basically seamen, or what do you call it, able-bodied seamen, whatever. They were just handling the fishing and so forth.

AG: Did you have a translator?

RL: Oh yeah. Yeah, everything. We had Russian, Japanese. I think there was probably some of the guys spoke Chinese, too.

AG: Did you do any kind of lifesaving operations as well, or was this really a patrol?

RL: That was pretty much a fisheries patrol. [...] I don't think we ever got into any helicopter rescues or anything like that. We usually carried one or two helicopters onboard. We would pick them up in Kodiak and take them with us. So the flight crews out of Kodiak, [...] basically they were temporary. We didn't bring anyone up from Seattle.

AG: And at this point, what's your position?

RL: As far as what?

AG: In the Coast Guard. [...] What was your rank?

RL: Oh, I was a Chief MK then. E-7.

AG: So responsible for the engine and everything? Making the *Monroe* go?

RL: Yeah. Actually it was the Boutwell. I'm sorry, it wasn't the Monroe. Same class of boat. Exactly. There is probably one number digit between the Monroe and the Boutwell. [...] There is a little



USCG Cutter *Storis*. P-779-6-10.

history there. *Boutwell* was Lincoln's Secretary of State, I think, or Secretary of Treasury, something like that. That's where the name came from. Yeah, they are the same boat. I was working in the engine room. That was my position. It has two big Fairbanks Morse diesels, 3500 horse [power] apiece and then it had two Pratt and Whitney FT4 gas turbine [engines], about the same engine as in a 727 airplane. So we could run around on the diesels and make 12 to maybe 15 knots, but if we used the gas turbines we could get up to 30. So anybody that tried to run away from us, it never happened. And then we had the helicopters, too. So if we got hot pursuit out in the Bering Sea after some boat that knew we were coming, it didn't take long to chase them down.

AG: So, '77 you and your family move to Kodiak for the first time.

RL: Um-huh.

AG: [...] Were you on the *Boutwell* at that—?

RL: No.

AG: What was your duty at that point?

RL: At that time, I got transferred from the *Boutwell*. It was the Base, the Air Station. I was working out of Hangar Two there and we had a boat. It was a forty-one foot aluminum, kind of a high speed search and rescue boat, and we used that in Women's Bay and out in Chiniak Bay to do training for the C-130s, helicopters, and so-forth for all their practices to lift an injured crewman off of a boat or something. And so for two years that's what I ran there, was the shop and the boat.

*(Brief conversation and pause regarding troopers there to check their fishing licenses)*

AG: So it was a couple of years that you worked on that smaller craft then?

RL: Um-huh.



USCG Cutter *Confidence*. P-779-6-9.

AG: And did you continue to do that for the rest of your time in Kodiak?

RL: No. I got transferred to the *Storis*, the icebreaker. I spent three years on that. And then there was another white boat, the *Confidence*, a 210-foot patrol boat. So I was back doing pretty much the same thing. Patrolling up in the Bering Sea.

AG: How had that changed from the first time you did it?

RL: A lot less. There was pretty much no foreign fishing allowed. [...] Everything was joint venture. The bigger boats, Oscar Dyson and all these guys, had converted some of their big crab boats to draggers. And then a lot of the big Seattle boats came up and started working out of Dutch Harbor. So our patrols were greatly diminished. And the icebreaker, the *Storis*, we were just pretty much just running around taking care of search and rescue things. We had a big Taiwanese vessel that had got caught in the ice. We went up there and broke the ice and got them rescued. They were going to go on the beach at Saint Lawrence Island, I think it was. The ice had moved down. So a couple of search and rescue missions with that is all we ever did.

AG: I know that's one of the most storied boats in the Coast Guard.

RL: Right. Yeah, that thing's old. That's World War II. [...] It started out back in Greenland on that iceberg patrol and running from, I think maybe Boston, back and forth out there just keeping track of icebergs basically. Then it came to Alaska, I don't know, sometime in the '60s maybe, but it was a buoy tender, also. It had multi-tasks. It had a boom on it that worked buoys and stuff. But it's pretty old, a lot of problems. It was a mechanical nightmare, basically. I don't know where it ended up, somewhere, maybe Juneau. They made a museum out of it.

AG: No. They wanted to but it's been scrapped.

RL: Oh, no kidding. Where they sent it to California to the boneyard?

AG: Mexico.

RL: Mexico.

AG: So at that point did you retire or were you stationed elsewhere?

RL: *Confidence*. And I spent a year on the *Yacona*. We took the *Confidence* down to Port Angeles, Washington. And they deemed it, those 210s were too unstable up here in this environment. Too much bad weather and so forth, so they moved it south. Now I think it's clear down in Florida or somewhere. The *Yacona* was in Astoria and it was kind of an excess big tugboat. It had no use in Oregon other than doing the patrols, so we had a flip-flop, brought it up here. Of course, it's gone now, too. It's pretty old. I'd say it was built in the '40s, also. So anyway, that was my last year in the Coast Guard here. I retired off of there in the summer of '84. Then we bought this place in the summer of, well, that winter. So we started fishing out here in '85.

AG: So what was the first time that you came to the west side?

RL: Oh, let's see. I went out with Jim Fogle on the *Invincible* seining for a couple of months. We went to Packers Spit. We went over to Izhuit. We pretty much worked this Uganik area back then. So I got kind of an idea where the place was. And that's how I kind of got interested in getting into the fishing after I retired. I took a job at the college teaching night classes, welding and small engine repair, and got to meet a lot of the local people, fishermen, some of the politicians. DeWitt Fields and Alan Austerman were in my class. The Kouremetis brothers. Anyway, Don Fox and I got talking one night and he was telling me about setnetting and so forth. I said, "Man that sounds like a pretty good deal. Maybe I should look into that." And sure enough, Gary Cue called me up one Saturday morning, said he had a place for sale out here, if I was interested he'd make us a deal. So we talked about it and [...] he came to town. Because you guys were all living up there on, what is it, the cannery up there?

AG: Oh, at Shuyak?

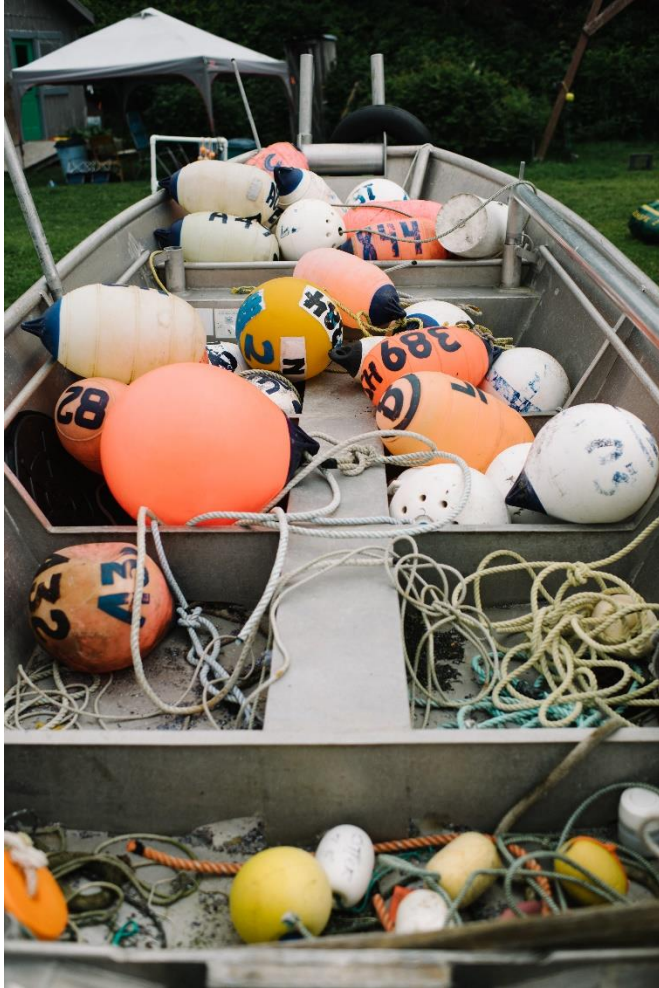
RL: Yeah. So he came to town for the winter or something, I don't know. They were living in an apartment down on Mission Road. He showed me some pictures, we talked about prices, and the fish and so-forth. Carol and I, we talked about it, we prayed about it for a week or so, and I called him back. So he and I flew out here with Steve Harvey, spent the better part of a day. Harvey just landed down here, taxied up on the beach and sat in the plane for a couple of hours while we walked around and looked at the place and checked the nets, all the gear. So took a couple of months to get our financing squared away. That's basically where we started.

AG: Backing up, can you tell me again what you did at the college?

RL: I taught welding class and a small engine repair, outboard motors, small engines and so-forth.

AG: So do you think it was your students that helped you to be interested in commercial fishermen or did you have some other interest before that?

RL: Oh, I was kind of interested in it before. I wasn't into a boat, that's for sure. So it was like I thought that there would be a job to do in the summertime, but I didn't want to be leaving my family. I'd done enough of that in the Coast Guard. The girls [...] were middle school. Angela was a



Shark Cove skiff and buoys. P-1005-442.

freshman and Wendy was seventh grade, so I didn't really just want to take off and go off on a big boat someplace. Done with that. But yeah, that's how. Just talking to the students. [...] Seemed more than half of my students were fishermen, and they needed either to be able to fix the outboards or the engines on their boats and be able to weld something up, fix it themselves.

AG: When Don Fox told you about setnetting, what about it sounded attractive to you?

RL: I think living on the beach, living in a cabin, have some place to hang out that was comfortable, or at least would be like a summertime thing. And DeWitt and Wanda Fields were members of our church there in town, so we knew them and their operation down here. And I had been to the Karluk before. I had flown down there with Steve Alvine. We had been on that river a couple of times, and so we had stopped and visited their site [Bear Island] with Steve's plane. Well anyway, Wanda was talking to me one day at church, I guess, and she says, "Oh, Weston has a book on setnetting. If you're interested, you can read the book and get an idea what it's all about." So I think the book helped me a lot before I really made the

decision.

AG: What was this book?

RL: It's all about setnetting from ground up. How to set the anchors, how to mend the nets, how to operate the skiffs and be safe, all the gear that was associated with fishing with gillnets. I don't remember the name of it, but it's by Weston Fields so you can probably find it online somewhere.

AG: I didn't realize that he had written one.

RL: Yeah. It's all black and white, a bunch of hand drawn bunch of pictures. I don't know. Have you read Wanda's other book, the big one?

AG: Um-huh.

RL: Some of the stuff's in her book, too. A lot of the same pictures.

AG: So then word was out that you were interested, so that's why Gary Cue contacted you?

RL: Yeah.

AG: Could you describe Gary Cue?



RL: Little short guy, dark hair, kind of talkative. He was in bad shape. He'd messed up his shoulder and his back really bad that winter, and I don't think he was interested in doing this anymore. And he had probably some prior history out here. Things were at an end for his [...] physical capabilities anymore. And he said he had issues with his crewmembers in the past, and so he was kind of like, throw up his hands. He's done. Going to do something else. Then he went out and bought a boat from Vito, the *Blue Star*. He tried seining with that for a couple of years, I guess, and I kind of lost track of him.

AG: How long had Gary been up here?

RL: Ooh.

AG: Or what do you know of the history of this site, I should ask.

RL: Well, Newgaard owned it, and that picture, what did we say? Was that picture '76 up there?

AG: I think so. '76, '77.

RL: So that was probably the year he bought it. Because they built this cabin, I guess, like right away. So what was that, '77 to '85? We'd been out here for a while. Him and Keith Moore. I guess we'd have to ask Don Fox because Don was a crewmember here, for sure. He lived in that little cabin that was right here where the other house is. It was just a shack. I mean they didn't even have glass in the windows. So they pretty much came together. Maybe the three guys. I don't know too much about this guy, Newgaard, at all.

AG: Do you know his first name?

RL: Yeah. It was kind of like—. He came in and Gary talked to him, and he gave him a price and he took off and never heard from him again. They figured he just went down to the states and drank it all away. Don't know anybody that was associated with him at the time either.

AG: Did you know anything else about the history of the west side or kind of the character of the west side before coming out? [...]

RL: No, not too much. We didn't even hardly know anybody. We knew Leonard Dever over in Viekoda. Of course, the Fields were down there [Uyak Bay]. Alan Austerman. Oh the Bielers had a site over in Viekoda, too, but they got started about the same time we did. They were actually living on a boat. Fishing Frenzy, Strawberry Cove. Be on the north side of Viekoda Bay. Kind of like right over the hill from Port Bailey. But no, we didn't know anybody out here. I think Steve Rittenhouse and Shawna had just gotten married. Lindbergs, I didn't know them. Of course, I didn't know Deedie [Pearson] either. I guess that was it. We pretty much got acquainted with everybody after that first year of fishing.

AG: Did Gary Cue call this Shark Cove?

RL: Yes.

AG: Do you know why?

RL: Sharks [*laughing*]. The place is notorious for sharks.

AG: Really?



Lather's home at Shark Cove. P-1005-406.

RL: Oh, yeah. We probably got eleven in one month that first year.

AG: In your net?

RL: Yep.

AG: Why do you think they hang out here?

RL: Well, I suppose it's just the lay of the land here. There are some pretty deep spots, and usually when the king salmon are moving through here, the sharks are, too. The theory is they follow the kings. That's their favorite food. So if we start catching king salmon, we're going to get a shark. It is almost a bet. But everybody else gets sharks, too. I don't know if we're the only ones, for sure, that are that many. [...] Every once in a while someone will get a whale in their net, and you can't explain that either. I don't think they home in on nets. It's an accident for sure.

AG: So could you maybe describe what you saw when you came out here with Gary Cue?

RL: Well it was wintertime. I'm thinking it was probably February. There was a lot of snow on the ground. The cabin had snow all around it. It looked like a tumbled down shack to me. Things really look bad in the wintertime. This window here, there was just a blanket hanging in front of it. It had been busted out and never been fixed. That whole downstairs area down there was just piles of rope and nets. Things were all kind of like just kind thrown in there out of the weather. It wasn't very, what would you say, real enticing at the moment. But after we went back to town and started figuring up the numbers and talked to a few people about it, I think it was a decision that took us awhile. It was just something that we thought we could do as far as an investment and get started on

a job. It wasn't working out too good in town. I worked at a welding shop, I worked at the college, drove a school bus, just a lot of piddly things to just find a niche and wasn't finding it.

AG: Could you talk about the house? How did it get here?

RL: Well, it seems that Gary and his crew had talked to one of the guys at the old cannery, manager or whatever. The old herring plant down there had some buildings that were falling down or were still usable. So they went down there with a chainsaw basically and cut the walls out of the cook shack and tore the roof off and floated it up here in 20-foot chunks on an old wooden skiff and put some pilings up in the ground and hoisted it up on the second floor and built it from there up.

AG: So what sort of infrastructure was out here? Was there running water, was there power?

RL: No power, no electricity or anything. There was a 55-gallon drum upon the waterfall here with a pipe running out of it, little one-inch plastic PVC. There was an oil-fired cook stove there in the corner and it had a hot water coil in it. And then they had built a shower down on the ground down there with some corrugated roofing little box, and that was their outside shower. It had a gravel floor and water came from that oil stove up in here. So it was no amenities hardly. One big room.

AG: Tell me about that first season.

RL: It was pretty rough. I think we made \$17,000. One permit and one boat, just pretty much bare bones. Made a lot of mistakes and the gear was not good. The nets were really bad shape. You could just break the webbing in them they were so worn out. The sharks didn't help anything. The outboards were barely fixable. We started out with two and by the time we got to town, the only one that was good was going to the junkyard. So we invested in some new outboards next year, right off the bat. But we fixed up the house and enclosed that downstairs. We did a lot of projects just getting the place livable. The girls took over that room downstairs.

*(Transmissions coming from the CB)*

AG: So how did you learn to set the anchors and all of that? Was it just based on that book or did you have anyone come out and help you?

RL: We did it just from the book. Pretty much got the idea. Weston was very descriptive about how you set the line in the skiff. You start at the bottom and everything gets piled upon top, and tie the line off to a rock and head out there. When you get to the end everything is supposed to be nice and pretty. And it kind of worked. We split it up. We put out two nets instead of one big long one. [...] Fished here and down there a little ways. And then our neighbor came over couple of times, Bob Allen. He's fished down there in Gull Light. He gave us some pointers here and there. And Steve Olsen owned Paradise, and he had been fishing here for quite a few years, too. So he was helpful, kind of friendly, just making sure we weren't going to kill ourselves right away.

AG: What were some maybe major learning curves or mistakes that you made the early years?

RL: Well, I think probably some of the mistakes were not having the equipment up to shape. We had to invest in some good line, and some good anchors, and outboards. And we had a new skiff built a couple of years later, too, because the one we got from Gary was pretty much worn out. We actually had Andy Edgerly cut it in half and add like four feet to it and make it longer for one thing. But yeah, getting good equipment was a big deal. And we got that hydro-electric plant working. Got a Pelton wheel from DeWitt Fields that he gave me. And I bought a generator from one of the guys on the *Sea Mac*. It's a belt drive generator that wasn't working for them, so we got some PVC pipe and rigged it up here so we had electricity all the time, and that's been a big improvement. Get the freezer, the refrigerator, lights. Makes life a whole lot easier.





Carol Lather, her daughter Wendy Carstens, and Wendy's children.  
P-1005-420.

AG: How did you know where to set your nets?

RL: Gary told me. He showed me exactly pretty much, and then Roger Benny, who was a crewmember and bought a place over at Trap 6, he came over one day, too. And we had originally set the net right here by the house, about 100 yards down the beach, and they both said no, it's farther that way. So we tied off down there and then Bob told me that there was another spot down there, has an old spruce tree right on the beach, and he said that's where they'd been fishing. And we've pretty much just stuck with it. They've always produced in those spots. Don't fix it if it's not broke, right?

AG: Um-huh. [...] Tell me about what it was like to be out here with your family and working with your family?

RL: It was great. We had good tender service getting groceries from town. Anytime we needed stuff we could send a list in. So I don't think we were hurting for food and any supplies that we could get up pretty quick. And with the girls, they had no experience driving boats or anything like that. So within a month they were rope-start 40-horse outboards, and they could start them, drive down and do the nets

all by themselves in about a month. So it was good work together with them. Sometimes Carol and I'd go out in the boat by ourselves and leave them here to wash the dishes. We had a gasoline powered washing machine, the old ringer-washer. They washed the clothes and hung them out here on the clothes line. It was kind of like better camping than it would be out of an RV, I think.

AG: What was your relationship with the cannery?

RL: We started out with APS there in town. I think that lasted about three, four years. It was pretty good. They took real good care of us. We knew some of the guys on the tender. Ron Thompson, Pete Kendrick. Those guys were really good to work with. We didn't use ice or anything like that back in those days. So we had a big old wooden trap skiff that we put the fish in under burlap, and then we got a new aluminum skiff that we could pull the fish into. So they were pretty easy to work with I think. Prices weren't good. That was kind of a shock. We thought that we were going to get paid more for the fish. That didn't come until we hooked up with this cannery down here. The

Uganik Cannery was owned by the fishermen's association. I can't remember the name of it, but then it was Chugach and then Cook Inlet Processing and now Ocean Beauty basically. So we kind of stuck with them over the years.

AG: I'm curious why you started with APS when there was a cannery around the corner.

RL: They weren't running. It wasn't running that summer we came out here. There was a bankruptcy thing or a takeover and something didn't go right. And Gary had always sold to APS, so he and I went down to APS and met John Sevier and he said no problem, we'll buy your fish. So we were hooked up basically. It wasn't like we were starting out without a market.

AG: How did things change when the cannery started working again? Did you sense a kind of difference in the bay?

RL: Yeah. They really were interested in fishing and getting more fish. Del Valentine was the manager. He's pretty personable guy, definitely business and very experienced. He'd been up in Bristol Bay, too, so he knew what he was doing. Of course, they were spending a lot of money fixing that cannery up. It had gone downhill seriously. [...] I think it was CIP, Cook Inlet Processing, was the ones that really put a lot of money into that place. That bought new boiler, new retorts, did a lot of work on the docks and everything. And they took care of our skiffs, too. That was another good thing is we'd just haul all our boats down to the cannery and they'd lift them out of the water and put them back in the cannery for the winter. We didn't have to take them to town. That really helped a lot.

AG: Did you feel like the dealings with the cannery were usually fair?

RL: Yeah. [...] They took pretty good care of us. It wasn't any, I want to say, reason to be switching canneries, flip-flopping around 'cause the prices didn't make a whole lot of difference. All the canneries on the island were, I'd say, they were pretty even. I don't think anybody was getting any big deals as far as prices anyway.

AG: So you established yourself out here, improved the infrastructure, when was it that you purchased the second permit and what made you come to that decision?

RL: Well there was a fellow in my class, Gary Gilbert. He was kind of a property manager in Kodiak, and he had owned a site in Viekoda with a couple permits. And he was having some issues with production and not sure that he really wanted to get into it that serious, and he just mentioned to me in class one day something about, "Well, if you know anybody who wants to buy a skiff and some nets and maybe a permit," and so we jumped on it. It was a good price. I mean we paid 70,000 bucks for a permit, another skiff that was pretty good shape, aluminum anyway, a bunch of nets, that anchor puller we got down here in the yard. I think there was a generator. So I think we did pretty good, and the nets were in better shape than the stuff that we were using at the moment. We were having some issues with the neighbor down there. He wanted to bring his nets around and fish down here where our nets were, really close, just past the limit. So by getting that second permit we pretty much put the property lines in perspective, is that the right word? Not to be getting too crazy about it or anything, but some fishermen tend to be real aggressive when it comes to moving their nets around or encroaching on their neighbor's fence line, I guess you'd call it.

AG: Because the fence line really only exists based on tradition, right?





Lathers' skiff, viewed through the window of the family's cabin. P-1005-430.

RL: Right. Yeah, there is nothing legal about it. You don't have a whole lot of legal rights to anything. There's a 900-foot rule and that's pretty much it. But there's just so many places that you can setnet and [...] you need to protect your area, but you don't need to go out and be causing hate and discontent either. We've had seiners come by and pretty much fish right off our nets before. It hardly ever makes a difference. If they fished right in front of you it'd be different, but usually it's a kind of a one or two day ordeal and they finally go away and go try it someplace else.

AG: When you got that additional permit, was it quite easy to incorporate it into the operation that you already had, or were there some modifications that you had to make, get some new crew, etc.?

RL: Well, we did [...] need more crew members and we had that other boat, so it worked out. We just had more nets to deal with and more fish, so it definitely paid for itself.

AG: How would you store the nets in the winter?

RL: Well pretty much everything was in those white dump totes. We'd stack them in there and move them into the shed. We had these big insulated totes out here later on. You can get one or two nets in those things and keep them out of the weather. So they're pretty forgiving. You can throw them in the yard out there underneath a tarp pretty much and they'll be alright.

AG: What sort of other advances have taken place when it comes to gears, skiffs, fishing technologies?

RL: I think the biggest thing is the bow rollers. Being able to have another way to move down the net. The pressure washer for cleaning all the jellyfish and kelp and all that stuff out of your net. [...] We have a power net roller to pull the nets in instead of pulling them in by hand. That's a biggie.

Used to be it would take us an hour and a half to pull in a net. Now we can do it in like fifteen minutes.

AG: When did you add that?

RL: Oh about five years ago?

WC: Yeah, after we got Toshwak. It was too many nets to pull in, so it was probably like '09. We did one year of trying to pull them all in by hand, and we needed to figure something else out.

RL: [...] it's 9 pm that is the closure time, so we would have to start at like noon and start pulling nets to get them all in by that time. If it was rough or you had problems or anything broke down, it was kind of sketchy deal there.

AG: When did you have the bow roller, and who is it that kind of brought that to the bay?

RL: Well let's see. I think Andy Edgerly and Tom Kouremetis were some of the guys that originally. I think they got it from Leo Kouremetis down in the south end. Moser Bay people down there for some reason had a hotline into the newest and the best. That's the first time that we ever seen a pressure washer to clean the nets, too. But Andy Edgerly did one of my boats and then I had the other one done the next year. So all of our skiffs have bow rollers on them since probably 1989, '90, somewhere in there.

AG: So I know in the '80s it was kind of a tumultuous time out here. There was a lot of people that went missing or were killed.

RL: Oh (*laughing*).

AG: What was that like?

RL: Yeah there was what, one or two years, there was more murders here in Uganik Bay than there was in the whole state of Alaska (*laughing*). Nah, it wasn't that bad. Yeah the Nickerson guys got killed and what else happened? Oh, Coyote's—

UNKNOWN: Something with Coyote.

RL: Coyote's son? Danny Bowers. He got shot over there in Village Islands.

AG: It was his brother.

RL: It was his brother? Then Deedie's crewmembers, two of them got drowned about the same time it seemed like, too. Did she talk about that?

AG: Huh-um.

RL: Their boat overturned when they were setting the net out. The Coast Guard came out but never did find the body of the guy. But the girl, they found her floating and she didn't make it either.

CL: Deedie already told her about that.

AG: [No]

RL: She said no. Probably didn't want to talk about that.

UNKNOWN: I'm sure.

WC: It is pretty upsetting.

CL: It was very hard.

RL: We got a lot of scrutiny over that, too, because now all the lifejacket things, flares, radios in the boat, all the safety stuff. Coast Guard really came down hard.

AG: After that?

RL: Yeah. They spent pretty much the whole day out here with a C-130 and two helicopters searching for bodies. So it put a whole lot of scrutiny on the setnet. I mean, there's people never wore life jackets. We wore life jackets from day one. I told the kids that you're not going out in that boat without a life jacket. And then started getting more and more stuff. Carry flares and putting radios in the skiff, so if we got a problem somebody can call you, or if somebody over there has a problem we'll hear it on the radio.

AG: Do you remember when the Nickersons disappeared?

RL: Yeah.

AG: Could you maybe talk about that? The summer of '88?

RL: I don't know if we knew anything was going on at first other than they were missing. And Rob Shepard, their crewmember, [...] I guess he had talked to the troopers about something. And he'd gone to town to the cannery and was wanting to make sure that he could sell the fish and all this stuff. And the cannery wasn't buying the story. And then the troopers came out. And Gary Cue was the one that found the bodies. Did you know that? Yeah. Anyway, and then let's see. They found the skiff over on Noisy Island. That was one thing that was a clue. They said the hole in the boat was punched from the inside out which the troopers right away figured something was a little bit weird there. But somehow they got into the cabin and did some forensic work. And he had tried painting over the blood, or he'd washed the blood off the walls and then painted it. And they finally figured out that his whole story wasn't going to buy it, though. And then let's see. The mother, Nickersons' mom and, I guess a grandson, showed up. And they were going to take over the fishery and she was asking for help. We had gone out there, our older daughter and her husband, to help her 'cause her net was all over the place. The anchors had dragged and broken and the kids had gone out to help her. And she told them that she couldn't do this anymore, and the grandson had fallen out of the skiff twice, and she knew that she was way out of her element. So if my daughter and my husband wanted to fish out there, she would let them use the cabin if they put away the gear and take the skiff to town whenever they went in. So that's kind of how we ended up fishing out at Noisy Island. She wanted to sell it to my daughter. But she and her other son got into an argument about the price was too low, and he thought that she was just giving it away. And I didn't see the financial there. That place didn't produce that much fish to make it worthwhile, but I realized that Noisy Island was a potential. There had been a fish site there at one time, and the cabin was still kind of there, too. So I applied for a permit and we put a tent up there and we started fishing off of Noisy Island after that. So our second permit, we kind of split up. We fished here and took the other permit out there and fished that for a couple of months. It's definitely worked out. It's kind of rough, but it's as good as one of the outside sites, especially early.

AG: When was that that you started out there?

RL: '91, I think.

AG: So as soon as you could kind of get your stuff together after the Nickerson fiasco.

RL. Um-huh. Lacey Berns bought it from the Nickersons. And then Brent Cathy bought it from Lacey a couple of years later. He fished it for quite a while. Since then he's sold it to this kid, Jimmy. What's Jimmy's last name? Jimmy Converse, something like that. He's from Phoenix. He's not even fishing it right now. He's over in Bristol Bay, I guess. He only comes and fishes it in July, August, a couple of weeks. It hasn't panned out. Nickersons did good for some reason, but since then I don't think anybody has made any money at that place.



Noisy Islands, Uganik Bay. P-1005-290.

AG: And what do you call your site out there?

RL: Otter Limits.

AG: And why did you name it that?

RL: Brian, one of our crewmembers, came up with that because they'd always called Nickersons' place was Noisy Island, Noisy Passage, something like that. And so we just x-ed out the Noisy part of it and made it Otter Limits because there is a ton of otters out there.

AG: And then, of course, the next summer was the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.

RL: No, it already happened. Oil spill was in '89. We moved out there in '91, I think. So it was after the oil spill, after this bankruptcy thing in here, too.

AG: What was the bankruptcy?

RL: Chugach went belly up right after the oil spill. In fact, we didn't get our money from 1990. We were halfway through the summer and they declared bankruptcy and they owed us about \$80,000 I think it was. All the setnetters in the bay pretty much had not gotten paid but maybe their first two or three checks. Some of them didn't take any checks all summer. They'd just wait until the end of the season. We don't do that anymore either. We get paid every two weeks or at least once a month.

AG: Why?

RL: Just because you don't trust the cannery. (*Laughing*) Anything can happen, you know. And really, we didn't have a clue that they was problems. I think Chugach was part of a Native corporation. I think they definitely pulled the rug out from a whole bunch of people for whatever



Carol Lather. P-1005-431.

reason. And we'd questioned Del about it, Del Valentine, who was the manager. "How come you didn't tell us?" And he's, "I didn't know." They didn't even tell him that they were in trouble.

AG: So mid-season you get the announcement that they are bankrupt?

RL: Yep. We pretty much, I don't know, kind of waddled through the rest of the season, hoping that they were gonna pay us. We didn't have a choice. No other cannery was going to come in here to pick up our fish. So we kept fishing, hoping that this was all going to happen and everything would straighten out. You know how that went. Twenty years before everything got finally settled.

AG: And that was 1990?

RL: I'm pretty sure it was.

AG: So right after the Exxon summer?

RL: Um-huh.

AG: Could you tell me about your family's experience with the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill?

RL: We came out here to go fishing. I was working in town. I had a job at Sea Land. I'm trying to think. [...] Carol and the kids came out, we brought food, we were ready to go fishing, and then we got the word basically that we weren't going to fish. That Fish and Game wasn't going to allow it or the state wasn't going to allow it. So Exxon showed up with their big tenders and hired all the crewmembers and people to clean up the beaches. [...] I wasn't here. I worked in town there. Carol came back into town probably after a couple of weeks. The kids just stayed here. They were all college age by that time. What were you, 17?



WC: I was still in high school.

RL: So you and Delaina Heath, Duddings people, my son-in-law. There was a bunch of people here.

WC: We started cleaning oil on the Trap 6 area, and then they whatever gave us the word it was good enough so then we moved over to Long Beach. We cleaned Long Beach most of the summer. We'd skiff over there in the morning and come back in the night.

RL: So they worked basically twelve hours a day. They paid us to use our skiffs. And then when we brought them to town in September they pressure washed them, cleaned them up for us, got the oil off our boats. We didn't even put a net in the water all summer. They supplied the food and pretty much we're here every day, picking up bags of oily beach debris and everything else. But it was kind of a crazy fiasco summer. They had tents over there on the beach so that during the day they had a dry place to hang out or eat their lunch. I don't think anybody stayed on the beach at night. They all went back to their cabins.

AG: What were the long term impacts for the bay or for your family?

RL: Well it took a long time for that market to recover 'cause next year the fish prices were terrible and for ten more years before prices actually came up to something that was halfway acceptable. The oil showed up a couple of times after that. We didn't have anything down here inside the bay as much as it was out there at Miner's Point and Noisy Island, Trap 6, some of the places that got a lot of, what do you call it, current, off of the Shelikof.

WC: We got a son-in-law out of the deal, too.

RL: Yeah, we got a son-in-law. He was working next door and met our oldest daughter, so they got married two years later.

AG: You mentioned before you had some fishing partners.

RL: Yeah.

AG: How did that work out?

RL: Oh, it was kind of a short term deal. We started out with one of my neighbors, and we went 50/50 right down the line for a couple of years. And then another friend of ours that was interested in doing something, he helped us invest in that second permit. And so he came on for a couple of years. And we had an airplane together that we used for spotting herring and some other interests there in town and then fly supplies out here and so forth. [...] I think right after that oil spill, they saw the light. Fishing was not going to fly for three partners. So I sold them my interest in the airplane, and they sold us the interest in the fishing sites. And then they went to Saltry Cove. There's a lodge out there that they leased from a guy named Jim Magoffin, who was the beginnings of Mark Air. It was Alaska International Air, AAI, back in the pipeline start. A guy made a lot of money off of flying stuff up to Fairbanks pipeline, you know, getting that haul road built, some of the stuff up out of there. He's a very wealthy guy from I want to say Alabama, Georgia or Alabama. And they lived in Fairbanks in the summertime. So they had this lodge out at Saltry nobody was using, so Bill and Doyle had made some connections with him and leased it like for ten years and hauled people out there to go silver fishing and deer hunting and so forth. [...] The partnership lasted about five years, I think.

AG: So it sounds then that you come out here and setnet out here in the summer, but you did other fisheries in the winter?

RL: No, Carol had a job at the high school. She worked there full time, and I had numerous mechanical jobs around town. Worked for Sea Land, drove trucks for like the local gravel outfits, and paving and stuff like that.

WC: Shelikof Marine? You worked there for a while.

RL: Yeah. Shelikof? What was the name of that place?

WC: Shelikof Nets?

RL: Yeah. Where Arc 'n Spark is there was a marine store there. Worked for that place, outboard mechanic, for a couple of years.

WC: College.

RL: College was part-time.

RL: And then I got a job at the Coast Guard Base.

CL: Contractor.

RL: Heavy equipment. Mechanic. Snow plows. Road graders. All that runway equipment. Fire trucks. So I worked there pretty much and they fished. I didn't come out here in the summers except



Toshwak. P-1005-472.

maybe a weekend or two and hang out here for a while. But fishing was not productive enough to just do fishing. We couldn't afford it. Too expensive to live in Kodiak and just be a setnetter.

AG: When was it that you got the third permit?

RL: We got number three and four when we bought Toshwak down here and that was seven years ago. The Paganos owned that forever since we came out there. Mike Pagano and his dad, Frank, they are from Anchorage, and they have connections here, Kodiak, long time family. I don't know all their relatives but they had been here for a long time. I think at one time Frank might have been president of a Native corporation. Lesnoi or Afognak Natives.

CL: Koniag.

RL: One of those corporations. He was instrumental there. I'd only met him one time in all the time I'd been out here. The kids, his



Toshwak cabin. P-1005-478.

sons, and all his nephews, and stuff pretty much fished that site down there.

AG: Could you describe when the cannery shut down, what happened, the change or the sense of the closure?

RL: Oh. So let's see. Mike Shoop and a partner owned it, and Ocean Beauty decided they wanted to buy it, I guess. So Ocean Beauty ran it for a couple two or three years, and I guess they decided that it wasn't making a big difference. I think part of the deal with Shoop was that they'd give it back to him in ten years as long as he didn't ever process fish. And they just pulled everything out. The boiler, all the retorts, the generators, everything they could barge out of there. And they took it to Alitak and maybe Bristol Bay. Pretty much gutted the place so all there was left was just the buildings. And so it's kind of like a shell now. There's nothing there that is worthwhile. But it was kind of like a end of the times. It was really nice when it was operating. The kids all remember going down there and buy 25-cent ice cream cone. And if we wanted to go down there on Friday afternoon for a steak dinner, we'd call them on the radio and say we're going to come down and visit and can we put in reservations for a meal, and take the family down there and have a real meal in [...] the dining hall with the crew. It's pretty interesting. But they were very supportive as far as I need something welded, I need a pipe fitting, I need some lumber, we could run down in the boat and pick it up. We hauled ice. We could pull our barge up to the ice shack and put a pipe down there, fill the totes up with ice and drive it back up here and put it back on the anchor, and we'd have ice for two or three days. So that's when we started icing our fish. It was the beginning of a new, what would you say, operation and bigger and better and faster, and then it all just went poof, away. That was kind of the beginning of the filleted skinless, boneless product. Somebody came over from Finland or Sweden with these filleting machines and pretty much spent like the whole summer there keeping them tuned up and all that stuff. There was some Japanese crew came and they started with this ikura. I think that was the name of it. Salted frozen salmon eggs. So there was definitely some advances in industry going on, and that cannery was one that was participating. And I don't think those one in towns were. All they were doing was putting it in a can or freezing it. So whatever happened, I don't know all the details, but just like, "What happened here?" Kind of was crazy.

AG: How did the fishermen respond when they found out about the permanent closure?

RL: Well, I think everybody was kind of like taken aback. What they expect next. 'Cause the first thing they think is who are we going to sell our fish to now. There was a split in the different bays. Larsen Bay was interested in buying our fish, so some of the guys were selling to them. Tenders were coming up here from there. A couple of different canneries in town, let's see, APS and Ocean Beauty and even the Moonies, International Seafoods, at one time they were trying to get people all geared up. I think Ocean Beauty is the only one that really stuck their hand out and said, "We'll buy your fish. We'll take care of you." Tim Blott, Wayne Kvaniskoff, they were really up and up. Make sure that everybody knew that they were here for the duration, I guess you would say.

AG: But was there uncertainty to begin with?

RL: Oh yeah. Everybody didn't know what to do, and I think there was a lot of selling going on, too. Broken Point sold. Let's see, [...] Jack Alexander, he left. He sold his place to Steve Rittenhouse over there. Of course, Paradise. That place sold. So there was some big turn overs. People just didn't want to deal with it anymore, decided there was jobs other places or something else to do. I think the same thing happened over in Viokoda. That place over there, half of those places have changed hands a couple two or three times since we've been out here.

AG: How did your previous career in the military impact or prepare you for setnetting?

RL: Well, I suppose the mechanical part of it is probably a big factor. Being able to fix the stuff that goes wrong without having to send it to town or have somebody else fix it for you. Driving the boats. I did enough of that even as a teenager, and before I even got in the Coast Guard we always had boats in our life, ever since we came to Ketchikan. So those two things right there, big help.

AG: What about management?

RL: Ha! The management? You talking about technical stuff? That's my wife. She does all the keeping track of stuff, and Wendy does all the lists for groceries. They cook, they do all the background stuff I guess you'd call it. I guess I spend the money.

*(chuckling in the background)*

AG: How did the kind of division of labor take place?

RL: As far as the crew?

AG: In the family. Yeah.

RL: Well the girls always were the crewmembers until they got older. And then once I worked in town they pretty much took over. And Carol just—. She'd be the supervisor. Crack the whip, get out of bed, get in that boat, get to work.

RL: And she's always—

CL: I worked, too.

RL: Carol always picked fish, washed dishes, cooked, do the laundry. She did everything.

CL: With the kids.

RL: With them, yep. And then when grandkids come along, we started teaching them. and now they're taking over. We've already gone through one. He's off working on the *Viekoda Bay* right now up in Bristol Bay. He's 19. But he fished out here. He started when he was like five years old riding around in the boats with us. Last couple of years he's been major crewmember.

WC: We got Toshwak when he was 12, so we expected quite a bit of him once we did that.

AG: What's the church that you go to in town?

RL: Berean Baptist.

AG: Okay. And how has religion impacted or what's the kind of relationship do you think that religion has in fishing and setnetting.

RL: Well, everything we've done out here has been pretty much our faith in our religion. Part of the reasoning to fish here was to be able to employ crewmembers that were pursuing any kind of ministry or education in the ministry. We've had, I don't know, two or three kids. One of my nephews is a missionary over in Papua New Guinea. A couple other of the girls, they've been in similar occupations. Brian was a three-year ministerial student in California. Quite a few of the crewmembers. And we have put out our website flyers to a lot of Christian colleges and so forth, and part of the employment criteria I put in there that [...] the environment here is based on our religious beliefs or the background. And so these guys know when they came up here that pretty much no drugs, no alcohol. This is pretty much a straight campsite and there's kids here. Language is a big thing. And based on our ethics, I guess. And our church in town's been pretty supportive. We've employed a lot of the kids from that church. Pastor's sons. A couple of them were out here numerous times. And I'd say some of the members would come out and camp out with us for a



couple of weeks, fish, and just be here to be away from town. So it has been kind of a getaway for a number of people that we've known for many years.

AG: When did you move to Ilwaco?

RL: Oh, 2004?

WC: You moved from Kodiak in '96.

CL: '95.

WC: And then you've moved several times since then.

RL: Yeah, we left in '95. We went to basically Vancouver, Washington. And Carol and I bought an eighteen wheeler, so for ten years she and I drove trucks back and forth across the country, delivering refrigerated, frozen foods and stuff like that.

CL: Just in the winter.

RL: And then come up here and go fishing in the summertime. We got associated with a company down there that had lots of drivers, not as many trucks, so the drivers were switching out. So [...] summertime, we'd give the truck to somebody that was in the company and they'd drive it all summer for us. We'd pay them percentages based on what they did, too. So I always kept the truck busy. And then after about ten years we decided that was enough. Our bodies were taking a beating. Eating in truck stops and that whole lifestyle was done. So we sold the truck and basically retired as fishermen. So this pretty much all we do now.

AG: I think Uganik Bay, at least in the past because now it's more family oriented, but it had a rough reputation. What was it like to be this enclave of family and faith amidst the wilds of Uganik?

RL: Well, I think our reputation probably preceded us because Shark Cove was known as the drug connection. A lot of Gary Cues and his whole entourage there that was pretty much their background. I don't know how serious he was into it, but his crewmembers we've heard some stories about them waking up on the beach or out in the yard some place after a three day drunk or drugs. Nickerson boys had visited here a couple of times and were surprised that they couldn't come down here and buy some dope or something. [...] I would say that transition, by the time we came out here, that stuff was going away. And then later on the Coast Guard had, I guess, done some investigating, too. So Coyote and his bunch, they were pretty much down the road, too. I don't know who else was seriously involved in it. Too many accidents, too many incidents in town, and they realized that something was going on out here maybe that the Coast Guard was going to get interested. So I think everybody just pretty much, "Don't mess around or you're going to get caught or somebody is going to tell your story," I guess. Everything down at Packers Spit was crazy, you know. It was Coyote's, one of his boys got stabbed? Whatever, some of the other things, I can't remember all of the stories, but it definitely was not a very healthy environment here for anyone, especially kids. I don't think we've had any, I want to say, impact on it. It's just a sign of the times.

AG: What changes have you noticed within the bay?

RL: I think it's a lot more laid back and people are more interested in fishing and just enjoying the life out here and living out of town. A lot of gardens going in and people are interested in that. Everybody's got, what do you call it, internet and satellite dishes and so forth.

CL: Not everybody. We don't.

RL: Well I say half the people do, right? We're kind of holding back.

WC: We're skeptical we can even get it because we're on the wrong side of the mountain, so we haven't tried.

RL: Right now a satellite phone is just fine. We can make a call to town. It might take half an hour to get a connection but it's fine. No need to get involved with all that other, I want to say, the internet. Pretty soon it's time consuming and I think the fishing is important. Keep your minds on the job here. We've got lots of books. Kids read. They got movies, things get slow like they are right now, we find projects to do. Go cut firewood or work on our nets and stuff.

AG: Are there any stories that you wanted to share before we end?

RL: Stories? Stories about what (*laughing*)? The good, the bad and the ugly? Oh let's see, we can talk about the U-boat. That would be interesting, huh? We have another skiff that's down in Toshiwak right now. It was called the *Dragon Lady*, they named it. Well one night it was really rough and it was taking spray over the bow, anchored on the running line here. And it was far enough out that usually everything is fine. Well, it took on too much water. Carol woke up at like 7 o'clock in the morning [...] and she yelled something about, "The boat!" So I come out here and look out the window and there is this little aluminum triangle sticking up, bobbing this way. Only the bow, four feet of boat, was sticking up. So everybody panicked and ran around and we finally decided to try and get in one of the other boats, but the surf was super high on the beach. One of the guys, was it Drew? He got my wetsuit on and he was able to swim out to one of the boats and started it up. And he came in and picked me up and we went out there, tied a line on it, and we towed it around in circles out there to get most of the water out of it, and we were able to get it about half-way floating. And we dragged it in here as fast as we could, got it up in the surf, and hooked it up to that winch down there and dragged it up the beach a little ways so we could get the water out of it. And spent the next three days with a garden hose flushing it out, spraying everything off, working over the electrical system and everything else, and we got it running. And that winter when we took it to town, we had the Yamaha shop pretty much go through all the electrical. Put a new starter and all that electrical stuff in I knew was not gonna last. But that was kind of one of those bad days. But you know, we've lost, we've sunk our boats before on the beach. Usually we take the outboard off of them and flush them out, but that was the worst. We sunk one at Noisy Island one day just trying to get off the beach. The wave came over the bow like three times on the sand. And next thing I know I'm standing in water clear up to my knees and the boats not going anywhere. We're high and dry. So we spent half of the day bailing that thing out and waiting for the tide to come back in. But it's same thing at Toshiwak. They were putting a net out, somehow they got stern-to in a wave, took a wave over the back end and they sunk that boat.

CL: That wasn't us

RL: But that wasn't us. That was the Paganos. They did that. Crewmembers. But there was a seiner working off of Rocky Point just couple hundred yards away and saw it happen. So they zoomed in there and grabbed the guys and got them out of the water. They had no survival suits or anything on. Plus they were about 150 yards off shore, too. They'd have never made it to the beach. So there has been some crazy boat capsizing out here that should never have happened. It's just plain stupidity on our part. Not paying attention to what's going on or the weather and so forth.

AG: Have you ever had any major injuries or illnesses out here?

RL: No injuries.

WC: The guy at Paradise had appendicitis. We had to call the Coast Guard for him that one time.

RL: Yeah, they helicoptered him out.

WC: One of our crew was a nurse. So Paradise is calling late at night, "Is there a nurse in the bay?" Ilva wasn't here. 'Cause Don Fox's wife used to be the local nurse. If anyone had a problem they'd call her. So the guy that was fishing with us, talked to them for a while, decided yeah, it's probably appendicitis. So called the Coast Guard and they landed over there and got him.

UNKNOWN: What about last year? Matthew got fish poisoning.

RL: That's happened a couple of times. People get cuts and don't take care of it [...]

AG: Is there anything else that you would like to share right now, before we end?

RL: No, I don't think so.

AG: No final words of wisdom?

RL: Final words of wisdom. Hm. Nothing that I can think of. Maybe tomorrow. (*laughing*)

AG: Well thank you. Thank you very much.



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