

Name of person interviewed: Geno and JoAnne Leech [GL] [JL]

Place interview took place: Fairfield Inn, Working Waterfront Festival

Date and time of interview: September 25, 2011

Interviewer: Markham Starr [MS]

Transcriber: Laura Orleans

Abstract

Geno has been on almost every type of vessel from merchant steamers to draggers, and it is on these vessels that inspired his poetry. With the love of his wife JoAnne, a restaurateur, Geno continues to be inspired by life on the sea

Demographic information

Sex: Male [GL]

Sex: Female [JL]

Ethnicity: White

Occupation: [GL] Fisherman, Poet

Occupation: [JL] Restaurant owner

Born: [GL] Oregon City, Oregon

[JL] Astoria, Oregon

Current Home: Chinook Washington

Key words

Role

Commercial fisherman (captain crew)

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Family, Family roles, family organization

Music and Dance

Arts and Crafts

Gear and Fishing Technology

Boats, ships, vessels

Business and Economics of Fishing and Other Maritime

Seafood, retail

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MS Your name and where you're from

GL Alright

MS And I'll just start in on questions.

GL Sure.

MP Yeah let me give a couple seconds here to get things right and then I'll let you know when maybe to actually start so...

MS Are you staying here in the hotel?

GL Yeah.

MS How was it yesterday out on the grounds?

GL Good. I'm just happy for the event that they got the, you know, that they had the weather come around and it looked like you had nice crowds and people that work that hard it's nice to see the response, you know?

MS Yeah.

GL For them you know. It's good.

MS It's really nice it didn't pour all day.

GL Oh yeah. On the other hand it would have made us homesick so...

MS [laughs]

GL But no it's good.

MS You came up from the Gulf?

GL Yeah. I just got off a dredge Tuesday afternoon in Jacksonville and flew back to Jacksonville, Minneapolis, Portland, met her [his wife] she doesn't like to fly by herself. Then we got on a plane the next morning, Portland-Chicago-Providence so here I am.

MS Yeah.

GL But I've been on Eastern time for awhile so I'm good, you know?

MS Well that's good.

GL Yeah. I wake up 4:15 in the morning, just like I'm back on the dredge, you know?

MP Alright I think we're good, if, when there's a pause we'll have no problem hearing your response, but you are a little low to the microphone, this is less sensitive so just, when you're asking a question just a little bit, probably more than you did yesterday. You can still hear it. And everything sounds good so just Geno if you could just make sure you're definitely talking into the mic

GL Ok

MP That's a grea, a great position that you're at right now. I hope that's not too much

GL No, it's alright

MS Ok so it's on record right now

MP Yup.

MS Alright so we'll, we'll start. I'm Mark Starr and we're here at the Working Waterfront Festival in 2011 in New Bedford and I'm interviewing at the moment Mr. Geno Leech. Uh if you could start and just say your name, who you are and where you are currently from.

GL Geno Leech. Chinook Washington.

MS And where were you born?

GL Oregon City, Oregon. South of Portland it was a mill town on the Welamet River. And now it's a suburb of Portland I guess.

MS Was any of your family in fishing?

GL No, no. Not at all. They were farmers, originally from the midwest, Dakota and Kansas and they migrated out to Oregon in the, right at the end of the War.

MS What type of farming were they doing?

GL Oh, just all general, livestock and wheat farming and that kind of thing. Back there but moved to Seattle when I was ten years old so that's kind of where my formative years were from. Graduated from high school there, Seattle back in the good days before the you know it really kind of boomed and took off you know. Seattle and Portland they were actually more like big towns as opposed to big cities. Different feel, but they're still nice places.

3:02

MS When you moved there were you near the waterfront at all?

GL Well no I was actually near a lake [laughs]. The waterfront in Puget Sound wasn't far away but I had really no interest in it. I mean I, it was all by accident that I started shipping out. I was after high school I started hitchhiking around the country just a big adventure you know? I wound up back in New York and New England and California. One of my trips was, I was 20 years old and I was started a trip out of Portland. I was headed for LA a merchant seaman picked me up about 45 miles down the road. Guy named Mark Teenez. And he'd just paid off a ship in Portland and he lived in San Pedro so you know he wanted somebody to split the driving so which was very common in those days. And so he pulled over and I already had the travel bug goin' and I found a merchant seaman so I the conver... we kept this conversation goin' all the way down and then he says well jeez you know I can probably help you out in gettin' your seaman's papers and so in a round about way and a little bit of money involved, not much, I was able to come through and get a Z card was the entry rates on it and then within oh I don't know, five, six months I got my first ship out of Seattle in December of '69.

MS And what type of vessel was it?

GL It was an old T-2 Tanker called the well, they would pronounce it, it was named after the Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania. It was built in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1943. It was in World War II. It was a navy oiler. And they, that was a classic vessel that was right up there with Liberty Ships and it was a Victory type tanker so yeah they were all over the world and they built many, many, many on both coasts. And they sailed well out, post World War II, for a long time. And they were nice lookin' vessels. Mid ship house. Kind of a three island vessel, raised focscle, mid ship house, raised poop, you know. So once I got the bug, that's how I kind of got the bug and I kept on going.

MS And what was she transporting, fuel oil?

GL Yeah, you know jet fuel, abgas, deisel. I did, it was coast wise, up and down the west coast, Alaska. So for a kid it was pretty exciting. I caught the bug and just kind of fell in love with that kind of life and wanted to keep goin' with it.

MS Where did you go after that particular vessel? What other vessels did you

GL Well I went back to the Union hall in Seattle I got kind of bumped up by a seniority union guy which was pretty common

6:00

and I was hanging around Seattle and you always wind up meetin' some guy. I met this old navy boatswain mate, guy named Will Parker. And he was from Illinois, but he was, he'd, he had been boatswain mate, he was on old ammo ship called Vesuvias in Vietnam and then he started shippin' merchant. He says look, if you can't get out, you outghta, what you could do to build up some union time, go back to the Great Lakes. They've got

unions on the west coast, east coast and the Great Lakes. So you all that time you could build time for a union book. He says go to Chicago. They have deep sea ships comin' in there and they run to Northern Europe. That's really what I wanted. As it turned out I got back there, I was kinda livin' in a flop house and stuff in the south side of Chicago. Well I wound up shippin' out on the lakes on a little tanker and old LST converted from World War II. And we went anywhere from Duluth, Superior to St. Lawrence River, you know? All these little ports and so I wound up doin' ten months on that which is pretty unusual for a lake vessel, but I was tryin' to roll up that time and put that season in, went back and wound up doin' two more years back there. So it was three seasons. '70, '71, '72. And there were a lot of nice memories. I was on some old war boats. I've got, I came up with a couple of poems about some of that stuff years later.

MS The older boats are pretty neat vessels.

GL Well they were then. When I was there, see, that's it was on that end of kind of that whole region. All steel mills was goin', Detroit was goin'. It was kind of end of an era, you know? And as well as those vessels. They built the first thousand footer in the last year. I saw the first thousand footer go through Sault Saint Marie. And lookin' at it was, you could see that it was pretty, you could see the end. For every one of those built they were gonna lay up twenty or thirty ships. The one I was on was built in 1909, old coal burner. Nice old vessels. Yeah.

MP I'm just gonna leave real quick, make sure there's a pause, I'll see you before the next one Mark.

MS Ok.

MP Thank you.

MS Did you ever get on to the European run?

GL Well no. As it turned out each year I went back I didn't. And so that was kind of you know somewhat disheartening in a way.

9:00

And then I went back to the west coast and this same guy Parker he kind of migrated out there too and so what he wound up with a job on one of these, shippin' was pretty slow at that time and he wound up on a job on a, actually I wound up on a cannery tender for awhile workin' the river, then I got on a salvage vessel out of Astoria which was really a rich history, the salvage ship called SALVAGE CHEIF. They were, they're well known up and down the west coast and Alsaka, worked heavy marine salvage and I made a trip to Kawaii Island, Nawilly Willy Harbor. We went over there, pulled a big barge off the beach and so that was kind of a one trip deal. But eventually, years later I went back to that vessel. After that trip, this Parker was in Seattle he was on a survey ship, one of those NOAA ships called FAIRWEATHER it was a, they did hydro, they worked the west coast and Alaska. So I did a season full season with them, west coast, mostly

Alaska. The following year I started out the season with them, but I had sent in, with military sealift out of Brooklyn Atlantic and so I was down in California on that vessel and boom they had an opening. So I flew to Brooklyn and they flew me to England to pick up this tanker. It was a globe trotter. We went, we did the Med, loaded out of the Persian Gulf, back around to the Far East, back to the Med, maybe up to Spain, France, England. They'd cross over the Caribbean once in awhile. Did a couple US, east coast ports. So I did ten months on that and then I wound up doin' another six and then I met my wife, in Astoria, '76.

MS A little bit on that and then we'll get to, can you say what life was like on those particular ships, the globetrotting and

GL Well yeah, it was a little newer vessel it was built in the early 70s. They had, I mean I liked the older ships better and it was a newer vessel, smaller crew, but it was always movin' and it was always, and we always had a little more port time on those. It was all military cargo pretty much, jet fuel, deisel. And fortunately the thing had some breakdowns, there was always kind of machinery problems, mains and whatever. So we got some pretty good liberties, Singapore and places like that. Didn't have a port time like a freighter would, but hey when you're on the move and hittin' different ports it's always good.

12:00

And they were single men, you know. Didn't have obligations or anything like that. You can kind of cut loose with the lifestyle which I think is pretty important, get all that out of your system for down the road. You got some nice memories and you're not hurtin' anybody, you know.

MS What would a typical day be for you on

GL Well on one of those? On that particular vessel would be like, it would just steamin' it was pretty, it was no big deal, just a deck ape. So they were doin' like your normal steamin' watch are four on eight off. But on that one they kept throwin' a lot of overtime at you. But you gotta load a tanker, there's not much gear on it, so you doin' deck maintenance and stuff, no big deal. In port after, they did a lot of tank cleanin' on it, butterworth and washin' tanks. You know they have different systems on that stuff now, but that's kind of what was kind of the end of that kind of stuff. You might do sixteen hours cleanin' tanks and stuff, down in the bottom there you know? They didn't necessarily have all that saftey stuff goin' on in those days. They do now, you know?

MS Especially being an abgas tank [laughs]

GL Well yeah, we'd just be down there with boots, I never wore a shirt, just an old pair of dungarees. That was it. You know? I didn't think anything of it. When they butterworth it knocks a lot off the tanks it comes down and it kinda gathers at the after in the bulkhead so you're scoopin' and sweepin' that stuff out. I've had the experience twice where bein' kinda over calmer in the beginning stages of it. You know they check those

and gas free 'em before they send men down, but and there's usually a small gang of six guys, whatever and so. In both cases it was the same thought. You kind of got, I noticed at one point, everybody was just kind of stopped you know. And you just hear this blowers from up above you just kind of look at each other. But nobody's really talkin' and in both cases though I heard like this ringing kind of and it kind of sounded like a choir. It wasn't like angels or somethin' but it was like a Mormon Tabernacle Choir or somethin' just kind of this ringin'. So they always have a guy up above lookin' down at you once in awhile so he saw, he says get the hell out of there, it was the mate you know. But that happened one other time, it was the same kind of deal. But we didn't really think about, much about it, you know.

MS And you met your wife in what year?

GL 1976 in Astoria. I was just coming back and I flew back home from Japan and I was debatin' on whether to spend another time out there, whatever I was gonna do, but then I met her.

15:00

She invited me to dinner and I never left. That's an old joke, but anyway. No she invited me to her house for dinner and yeah, well yeah it was actually a community college. I was, I had always kind of played around with writin' a little bit so they had this English class or somethin' and I was, she was sittin' behind me or somethin' and I didn't bother to take a pen or a piece of paper or anything. She felt sorry for me, tapped me on the shoulder and gave me a pen or piece of paper or somethin'. But I just, for some reason I didn't like the guy's approach, I mean I'm not hard to get along with or too judgemental, but I met her in the cafeteria one day and she said she came from a commercial fishin' family, so it kind of got me thinkin' a little bit. But that isn't why I went after her, but that's kind of how that started.

MS And then were you still shipping out after meeting?

GL No, no, no. No I went to, I started, were you at this event, did you ever do Dave Densmore? Probably? Oh well he's been at this event before. Well I was, that summer I met whose been at this event and he's well known up and down all these events and he's from Alaska. He had a little boat called the RESOLUTE. So we met one time, just by chance and he was lookin' for a guy. He's always lookin' for a guy. It's a little 45 foot, he had drag gear on it set up for two men dragging, also could just switch over to salmon trollin', so started out salmon trollin' with him and then he threw the drag gear on there and you know, and so it was just Oregon/Washington coast, pretty much down and out Columbia River north. And then eventually I went, and then I jumped on a couple other boats,

MS Fishing?

GL Yeah, dragging, crab, dungeness crab. Eventually I did wind up with Joanne's, one of my in-laws which was a big bonus for me, unfortunately it was kind of the last year or

two that he owned the boat, but he was a well respected guy, he's a highliner and he was one of my all time favorite skippers.

MS How did you like the fishing as compared to the kinds of work?

GL Well it's totally different you know for one thing you're there's just somethin' about steamin' just being at sea with nothin' but sea and sky.

18:00

And just kind of globe trotting and hittin' ports and movin' on, it's, you know I could very easily have continued with that. And a few years later I did make a trip back out on a freighter to the far east and it was pretty temptin' to keep goin' you know, but...so fishin' is totally, it's an apples and oranges as far as I'm concerned. Fishing boats, you know you're right down in it. I mean you're feelin' every bump. You're hittin' every wave man. You're gettin' beat up, not all the time. Sometimes it's a, sometimes it's a mill pond, you know. But a lot of times you're, you know, it takes like in any kind of weather, it takes about a third of your strength just to stand up, as well as doing your work. So I always respect, there's a lot of things I liked about fishing. It makes you feel more alive and you're kind of tuned in with the elements you know. Even though you're not the captain or whatever, you're always kind of paying attention to weather. Even when you're home you know you watch, you find yourself watching cloud patterns or you're lookin' at the way the wind's hittin' the tree or whatever. You're just kind of tuned in. Then when you tied up, comin' off a trip from fishing, you just feel, your feet hit the float and you got some fish to take home or a crab or whatever, and the beer tastes better, the whiskey tastes better, the music sounds better, you know. Everything's better. You just, it's almost like you earned something just even though it's a short trip, maybe it was uneventful, but it's always good to get back and, yeah. And fishing you earn every damn nickle. You work just as hard whether catchin' fish or not, pretty much. You're still goin' through the motions you know. And, some boats, I've been on some good ones, I've been on some bad ones. I've been on boats that I wasn't on 'em when they sank, but I've been on some that were, that eventually did go down for one reason or the other, you know. And

MS When did you get out of fishing?

GL Well we, you know there was a long haitus of this, there was a big gap in my last year fishing was like at that point it was '84, 'cause we started a restaurant in this little town where she grew up. It was in an old church building, turn of the century church building. Wound up being a dinner house. So I was actually pretty happy. The boat I was on at the time it was NASTUCKA, it was a nice old wood dragger built in '46. I liked the skipper, he was makin' three, four day trips in and out.

21:00

But it was obvious to me that this thing was gonna, was gonna take off you know, the restaurant. And she already had it rollin' but you could see it was right on the cusp. Everything was, it was a unique idea, it was a nice setting, the food was obviously wonderful. And the economy and everything was hittin' in all eight. There were more

people movin' around. It was, the timing was good. So I decided well when I come off the boat, you know I'd always wind up scramblin' around down there doin' somethin' for her and then goin' and I said well I gotta make a decision here. So I just go out off the, I'd gotten that restaurant, so I was involved there really till, I was always lookin' out the window a lot. So say from '84 to and then I went back out, I made the GREEN WAVE in '91 and I just, I just got too squirrely man, I just, I should have baled a little bit earlier even just for my own sake, but. So '91 I went to the Union Hall in Seattle and threw in. And after the GREEN WAVE was CENTRAL GULF LINES a freighter and I was pretty excited at the time because the board said that the vessel was you'd join it in San Diego, they fly you down there and you're goin' to New Zealand and Antartica. You know McMurdo Sound. So I'm thinkin' jeez I haven't been down there, that sounds pretty, you know, how many guys wouldn't want to go to Antartica. I kept thinkin' man, alright. Get down there, as it turned out I got talkin' to the crew that was payin' off and there just comin' back from there. They had it backwards. They were comin' from McMurdo Sound to San Diego. Well now they're goin' to run coastwise you know Portland, Oakland, Tacoma, then over to Far East, you know. I said well that's good. What the heck, you know. So I did a few months there. And came on home and kind of got it out of my system. I was good to go, you know. But I had to do that, it was pretty important. And then another year or two passed and we always had fishermen or seamen or whatever come in the restaurant and they'd always get special treatment [laughs] some guy just off a boat and forget the car dealers and stuff, you know. But this one skipper that I knew, I hadn't fished with him, but he, he as it turned out he was lookin' for a guy and just two men, and he's a long, he's an old lare miner. He'd come from it, his old man, kids, all of 'em. Nice boat, they take care of stuff and they catch fish. And so he says, well you wanna help me finish out the season? Hell yeah. So that was great. So I went back fishing. And I did two years with him on the COLUMBIAN STAR, Oregon and Washington, down to Tilimonk down and out the Columbia River up to the Canadian border.

24:00

MS So when did you get into the poetry?

GL Well it was a matter, actually it was with Blair on the COLUMBIAN STAR in '95 I guess it was, '94 or '95. And we had this other boat, we always had maybe a couple of two partner boats, that they were always in kind of radio contact put each other on fish, well Blair never had any problem finding fish. He usually put them on it. Well one of the boats, one was the LILY MARLANE, it had a very colorful history. I have it wound up with a poem about that one, the other one was the PANTHER, that was the name of it. PANTHER I loved that boat man, it was built in, built up in Puget Sound probably in the early 20s and these two brothers had fished it for fifty years. I think their name was Coscoa, Jack and Joe. I mean I never met 'em, but I met the, but they had that boat 50 years they fished it. Well then they sold it and this guy named Terry Salo bought it down in Astoria and he was a character man. So Blair would be out, he'd see the PANTHER on the horizon or something and he'd go "the Panther's on the prow!" you know. So I wrote a poem called "The Panther's on the Prowl." And when I finished it I read it on the radio to 'em and then we get into port get blown in or be in a bar or somethin' and they'd

wanna hear it. Well that's how I got to memorizin' these things because I couldn't always pack a notebook with you. And so then I wrote another one, you know. And I think that was Blair Miner's Truck, no that was Viking Funeral. It was actually based, even though it's kind of a tale, but Panther on the Prowl is kind of a comedy, the guys liked it. Viking was a little more serious and based on some real people, you know. All my poems are usually even if it's, there's always, it might be fiction, but there always is based on one, true something. Anyway, then I left Blair and went gillnettin' in Alaska the Monadneck and up there Bristol Bay with a guy named John "One Punch" Johnson. Then wound up back in the SALVAGE CHEIF on the salvage vessel. After all these years you know. So when I'm on the SALVAGE CHEIF I'd had written a few more. I didn't tell any of those guys about it except for one. As it turns out they started this fisher poetry gathering. It was gonna be the first year in Astoria which is now it'll be the fifteenth year and it's getting, they've had documentaries films coast to coast, all kinds of stuff on it.

27:00

So the few months before, the organizers didn't really know where to start it and they were kind of graspin' they wanted to see if there was any poems out there or music or whatever. Well they gave me a call down there one day and they says, I didn't know 'em, but they says we're doin' this thing in the Wet Dog Cafe and we heard that you have a few poems. I said yeah I got four or five or something. Had no idea. So that's where it started. The very first time you're on a stage, you didn't know any of this stuff, lights, sound, microphones any of this stuff. You didn't know any of that stuff. Well as it turned out, immediately like you know, you know when you get ahold of one, like, I went like four for four, like almost bein' a hitter in a big game goin' four for four at the inaugural one I probably did four poems. I knew over half the crowd and they're all having a bag and stuff. But you hit it hard and you knew you did. You get the big applause. Fortunately also maybe I've followed some guy that he was from I don't know, I forget where the hell he was from, but he had, he was kind of a stage hog. I didn't know at the time, but he droned and he had, you know, on and on, the crowd they're startin' to fidget. But the timing was good. You know. Because bang! They wanted somethin' to happen you know. So it's almost like it just, in those days, and I still do it to a point, you just kind of come out swingin' you know? Maybe that's not all good. Guys have a different approach to it. But sometimes you get too much adrenaline going, but that's how I did it. I still do that sometimes, if I don't watch it, you know. So that's where all that, everything started. And because of that event it always keeps everybody, not only myself, but everybody want to show up there with three or four every year. And then you start gettin' invited maybe out of town a little bit, regionally. Then pretty soon elsewhere. So it is, just all kind of evolved by accident, you know, more or less just accident. Everything in my life, I've never planned anything in my life ever. To this day. That's not all good, but that's how, that's kind of my M.O. you know.

MS So now are you doing, between still working on vessels and these types of gatherings?

GL Yeah. I mean I more going back and forth to vessels. I've had, for the last six years I've been on a, it's a hopper dredge. It's a Seattle outfit, Mansen Construction. But they

have these four, three dredges workin' the Gulf of Mexico, hopper dredges through shipping channels. So I had an opportunity from the SALVAGE CHIEF, the guy, chief engineer that I had been with told me, he gave me, they had a crew change,

30:00

or a crew member, whatever so I've been down there six years. Three weeks on, three weeks off. I fly back and forth. We make a crew change. Just eleven men. Worked anywhere from Port Arthur, Texas to Brunswick, Georgia, Laff[(ayette] Louisiana, Mississippi River, entrance Southwest Pass[age].

MS Can you give us some idea of what kind of material that vessel can move, how big the vessel and...

GL Well it's a nearly three hundred foot, it's like, I think it's rated about four thousand cubic yards but I think it does somethin' like thirty four to thirty six morally, mostly. So there movin' a lot of material and its, where it's really critical usually is like the entrance to the Mississippi River. They have, their river system and their shipping traffic is like, it would be like I-95 or something as compared with a country road. Everything, and they're deep draft you know, they can load to forty seven feet or whatever. So they try to maintain like at least 51 for 'em. The first twenty miles or so. And so it's pretty critical for that. Actually all that, Mobile's a lot of dredgin' Calcashoot Pass out near, below Lake Charles. All those are pretty critical to keep your shipping open. It's commerce, you know, it's like an artery. I've never been on one that was like boondoggles I don't think, where they were just whatever. It seems like it's, I never ever dreamed of bein' on a dredge it just kind of happened that way. They're talented guys though. There's guys from all over that, there's only a few of them that actually started out dredgin'. There are probably younger guys now comin' up where that's done. I've been with guys that was on merchant ships, commercial fishing, tow boats, whatever you know. And I just kind of fell into it, some kind of like prostitution or something, you get into it, you fall into it, you know [laughs] you know. No offense but I mean that's the way I see it. But the money's good.

MS Alright if you wanna take a break will swap just for a few minutes.

JL He's really done probably enough.

GL No. Go on.

MS Just a minute.

GL Yeah she. Don't sell yourself short.

JL I'm not good at this.

GL No you're good honey.

JL No I'm not.

GL Yes you are.

JL Ok [laughs]

GL We've been married 31-32 years now.

MS Wow. So, when you saw him what did you first think?

JL Huh! What did I first think. Well he needed help. [laughs] I gave him the pencil and he didn't use it. No I was, I have to admit I was attracted to him, yes.

33:00

MS This was a literature class?

JL Yes. Yes it was, literature, writing and writing class I guess.

MS Was that your major?

JL Uh, part, yes. Music was part my major too.

MS Now he said your family had some fishing history?

JL Yes, my father was a fisherman. He was a troller. And then he did go out on crab boats too. But he had his own boat and it was a trolling boat. So we always had fresh fish. I just grew up with fresh fish my whole life.

MS How did your father get into it? Do you know?

JL Well he came from Sweden and first he came to Chicago and then he actually there were relatives up on the west coast and then he came out that way. And first he started in the logging companies and I think he worked on some bridges and that. And then he got into fishing. It was a natural because of the history around where we live.

MS Did you ever get out on the boat?

JL Yes I did. However, I used to get sick. But it was kind of interesting. On the Columbia River when we would go out there I was ok, but it was the ocean. But there was a, we had to take ferries that crossed from where we lived to Astoria, Oregon. And when I was going to school in Portland, I would often time miss the bus, they wouldn't make connections and my father would come on his trolling boat and pick me up in Astoria and take me back to Chinook.

MS And then how did you get into the restaurant business?

JL I didn't plan it. I always enjoyed cooking and my family were really good cooks. I bought the, well I heard that there was pews that were going to be sold because I was an antique collector and I lived in Astoria at the time and I always wanted to have a summer home or something in Chinook where I grew up. So I thought well I'm gonna go see if that church isn't for sale, because if the pews are for sale it must be. So make a long story short I bought the, we bought the church. And was going to make a home out of it you know for, recreation home. I thought it would be fun. And Geno was gone shipping and he thought that I would be nice for me to have something to do to keep me busy [laughs] so I thought ok I'll just start a little, serving a little food here, just on weekends and that's the way it started and it just kept rolling.

MS And was it a seafood restaurant or was it all

36:00

JL All, all, but mainly seafood, specialized in seafood. It was a fine dining place. I didn't really, didn't plan it that way it just developed. There was a need at the time. Astoria was, I guess you could say, a dining desert and we had more cars from Oregon because we're just right across the river than anything so, yeah it was good when we first started.

MS And how has it been with having somebody who comes and goes quite often for periods of time?

JL Oh no? Oh well there are times that it is difficult at times, but I've come to, it's ok. It's ok. Well I miss him, but it was a little difficult getting things all ready to go to come here when he was just a turn around and we left. But no, it's been fine.

MS And let's see, did, in terms of poetry and literature, do you get involved in all or do you do your own thing?

JL Well, we also I have to say, we also opened Little Ocean Annie's which was another part of our restaurant, fish and chip and chowder house. And so we ran that for many years and that was very successful. And so I have three grandchildren and I always wanted to do something you know for them to remember me by, remember us by and I wrote a little children's book, Little Ocean Annie and her Clam Dog. So that's one of the reasons that I am here and then I also do food demonstrations.

MS Now is that book fairly new?

JL Yes. It's been about a year, year and a half. Mmmhmm.

MS And illustrated?

JL Yes. Yes a friend of mine illustrated it and I've read it in many schools and it's really fun for the young children. It's about up to third grade.

MS That's neat. So how many children do you have?

JL Three. No excuse me, three grandchildren. One son.

MS Did he go into maritime business at all?

JL Well when he was a kid yes. But he's a chef. He's a very good chef.

MS Does he have his own restaurant?

JL He uh, not at the moment. He's actually managing two restaurants right now. Well for a big corporation. He's the, he's the food and bar manager. Food and beverage manager for two in Bend, Oregon.

MS And when did your father get out of fishing?

39:00

JL Oh my, let's see, that, he died at 97. He must have been out of fishing probably for 15 years before that. I kind of think that's about right.

MS What did your mother think of the fishing and was life in the house nerve wracking being a...

JL Well it was, he wasn't a high liner. He was a good fisherman, but he didn't have a big boat. So he couldn't go out far you know. But he did alright. But it was just like any other family around there at that time. It was some days were good, some trips I should say that he took were good, some were not. So. You know. That's the way fishing is. But I always remembered having good fish at the table.

MS And did you live in a, was it a fishing community?

JL Oh yes. Chinook. Chinook Washington. Geno says it's halfway between Cape Disappointment and Dismal Notch. [laughs] It sounds pretty, it's much nicer than that. It used to be, let's see, in the turn of the century, it was the richest little town per capita this side of the Mississippi. Because of the seining with horses and the gillnet. You know it was a rich little town.

MS They were seining with horses?

JL Yes. I have a book here after we do this I wanted to show you, they seined with horses. Course I wasn't born yet. But the history is good about it. It's very interesting.

MS Are they still fishing in Chinook now?

JL Oh yes, yeah. Oh and then they also had the traps, what they call the traps too. Fish traps.

MS Like weirs?

JL You can see the pilings still out there, the remnants of the pilings from that.

MS They're not doing any trap fishing now?

JL No. They're not allowed to do that anymore. They do gillnet now. But of course that is restricted also. You know quite, quite restricted. But they're still fishing, mainly around there. Lot of crab fishermen and tuna, tuna boats and they're also doing some black cod these days from out there. And then of course then we have the logging there too.

MS Is the economy doing fairly well with the recession out there?

JL Well they're feeling it. They're feeling it yeah. Yes. Yes. They are. We are.

42:00

But in the summertime, see places do a lot better because of the people just come for there for vacations. So we're seasonal you can say. As far as that's concerned.

MS Well great. I just wanna give, is there anything else that you would, either of you would like to add or talk about that I haven't touched on?

JL I'm just happy to be here and I've demonstrated food twice here before and so this is my third time and it was very fun to do.

MS What is going to be the dish?

JL This time I did lamb and scallop sliders so it was kind of interesting. I wanted to, I was told to maybe use a product from the area and of course scallops I know and they're wonderful from here so I decided, I figured out to do that, so made like a little patty and did sliders with clam, I mean with scallops and lamb, ground lamb.

MS Geno do you have anything else?

GL I'm pretty good. You know we have through these events we've always met people and some pretty nice connections. We got Campbell [Jon Campbell] coming out to the West Coast now and tomorrow we're goin' out to, or Tuesday to Menemsha with people, the Morgan family that we met because kind of this festival and one on Martha's Vineyard a couple years ago, you know so this is one of the positives of getting invited to something like this. It's a little local history book there.

JL The horses. You can still see when you go across the Astoria bridge, when the tide is low, it's amazing to think that the horses were out there right in the middle of the Columbia River

GL Yeah they actually had like barns up on pilings. They'd get 'em out there on some old scow, you know when the tide came the high water, they'd get 'em up and out of there. But they were kind of standing out in the middle of the river and then on Sand Island and yeah, pretty rich stuff you know. And the pilings for the traps really were a big deal out there. I think it was the late 20s with all of that. But you can kind of see the remnants of that stuff. There's a guy named Hobe Kytr out in Astoria that has some real good songs about the horse seining and stuff. Hobe Kytr he's pretty well know to these folklore groups you know. It's pretty good, nice little history about it.

MS Well great. Well thank you very much

GL Yeah

MS Really appreciate it.

GL Yup

JL Thank you.

45:05

End of interview