

Name of person interviewed: Myra Lopes [ML]

Facts about this person:

Age unknown

Sex Female

Occupation writer, historian, daughter of a fisherman

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

Home port,

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

Residence (Town where lives) Fairhaven, MA

Ethnic background (if known) Irish

Interviewer: Lynne Williamson [LW]

Transcriber: Janice Fleuriel

Erin Heacock

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: September 25, 2004

INDEX/KEYWORDS**KEYWORDS**

Fairhaven; Massachusetts; Fishing Family; Cold War; Newfoundland; Irish; Death; Society Status; Tradition; Lost at Sea; Generational Differences; Family Pressures; Pride;

INDEX

[Start of Audio]

- [00:01] Tells about herself including father and children; A writer; Newfoundland roots; Parents came to New Bedford 1940 via Nantucket and Boston; Father's fishing career;
- [02:23] Father's fishing career started in the 1940s; They were "topliners"; Many relatives in the industry who worked and owned boats; Types of fish caught; Share of the catch and sharing with neighbors;
- [04:20] Husband is German and Portuguese which is how she got her last name; Myra's ancestry is Irish; Family came from Newfoundland; Newfoundlanders stuck together as a community in Fairhaven; Carried on own traditions; Newfoundlander's pride in heritage and fishing occupation; Story about teacher labeling her father as "blue collar";
- [07:30] Spending time on the pier as a child; Living on the waterfront Fairhaven; Relatives all fished together; Memories of boats passing by on way out—father tooting horn, praying for fishermen
- [xxxx] Close calls; Brother lost at sea; Mother's first husband lost at sea and her concern for her family; Dad continued fishing after brother's death; Lost in a storm while on Venture I; Dad was one of 2 survivors rescued by Russian trawler during cold war, mid 60s; Repeats how prayer important; Russian story as example of camaraderie among fishermen;
- [18:30] Mother wanted father to stop fishing; Father enjoyed the work, made good money;
- [xxxx] Fishing gets in people's blood; Kept her own children away from the water, like mother did; Children went totally different directions; Fear is part of it the whole time; Father missed many special occasions; Dad didn't have own boat, couldn't time trips around family; Safer now with technology;
- [25:00] Talks about her father; Boats father crewed and/or captained; Story of buying most war bonds stamps at school because father just got paid; Attending their children's special events; Husband was a chemist, desk job; Not being able to go to father with upsetting things, so he wouldn't worry when out at sea;
- [29:01] Differences between fishing then and today due to regulations, materialistic culture; Importance of attending college;
- [30:35] Active in writing about Fairhaven history; Dad's emphysema and quick death after diagnosis;
- [34:24] Respect for father; Tells story of making her curfew; Family closeness despite Dad's being away a lot; Lot of music at home growing up and carried over to own family, including recipes, jokes, songs; Step dancing in kitchen;

[36:02] Daughter keeps the culture going but not quite same way; Story of grandchildren and generational differences; Hasn't written books about culture or fishing industry; Memories of fear as a child with father at sea; Lot of good things to connect with fishermen, along with the weather risks and being away a lot; proud of being a fisherman's daughter;

[40:06] Festival feels like a tribute to brother and dad; Feeling good being back at dock; Closing remarks;

[41:28]

[End of Audio]

TRANSCRIPT

[Start of Audio]

[00:01]

LW: Would you tell me your name and what you have been doing over the years in this industry?

ML: Oh. You're gonna be here for a while. I'm Myra Lopes Powers. I should add Leo Powers' daughter, my father was a fisherman. I live in Fairhaven, at 71 4th Street. I am the mother of 5 children, 6 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren. I'm a former teacher in the Fairhaven School System. And an author of 15 books.

LW: 15 books!

ML: Yes. I've had a wonderful time doing my thing. The last – since my family has grown up and each one has gone his or her own way, I became a writer. I wrote about local history of our town, and then did about the story of Joshua Slocum, the first man to sail alone around the world. Then I did fun books—a book about my grandchildren and my husband, 'Pa's Magic Pillow,' and then 'Around the Kitchen Table.' I have a new book coming out at the end October, and the title is 'Causy Goes to Summer Camp'— and Causy is my pet calf. So I've had a very full life.

LW: Is your family from New Bedford?

ML: My – If you're talking about my parents now – My family came from Newfoundland and that's why I'm connected to the fishing business. They – My mother was from Salmonier. That's why I'm connected to the fishing business. My mother was from Salmonier and my father was from Argentia. And when they came here – First they went to Nantucket, from there they went to Boston, and from Boston they come to New Bedford in 1940 because that's where the fishing business was doing its best I should say. Not at its best, doing its best, was here. My Dad started working on the *Hope*. That was when fishing boats went out, came in, unloaded, put their food aboard and went out again. There was no waitover, no period that they had to stay in. And I remember that period very vividly, because he was home so little.

[02:23]

LW: What kind of dates would this have been, what years?

ML: Go back to the forties. 1940 was when we came to Fairhaven. He fished until the late '70s I would say. But he started fishing when he was 19 years old.

LW: Where? In Newfoundland?

ML: Yes.

LW: Were his catches in Newfoundland different from here?

ML: I don't know anything about the catches in Newfoundland. But I do know that when we came to Fairhaven, I would hear my mother say, 'They're one of the top liners.' So I guess that would tell you something about the catch. They always came in with a good catch. My uncle Jerry owned several fishing boats, and so all the relatives worked on these fishing boats. My uncle Allen bought a boat. He had the Clinton. Then again more relatives would come. Relatives would bring relatives from their homeland.

LW: What kind of fish would he catch?

ML: I know them all! Haddock, halibut. All of the, what we would call, the very special fish. Not the scrod. It was mostly the haddock, halibut. And lobsters, oh god, we

had so much lobster. And when my dad came in – I was just talking to a man out here about this – When my dad came in, he would come home with his share. And his share is so much larger than what the share is today. I don't think they get that kind of a share. He always had all kinds of fish and some containers of lobsters. I know our neighbors loved us because we took good care of them. Everybody got lobster, and everybody got haddock, or halibut, or yellowtails, whatever, codfish too.

[04:20]

LW: I'm intrigued by your name now. Did you marry a Cape Verdean or a Portuguese?

ML: No. My husband is part German and part Portuguese. His mother was German, and my husband's father was Portuguese. But I'm Irish. And I'm asked that question so many, many times. You don't look Portuguese! And I always smile and say I'm not, I'm Irish. The people who lived in Salmonier, Newfoundland, were, the whole community was an Irish group. They carried their tradition when they came here. They didn't, you know, you say some people come from foreign countries and they blend in. I think the Newfoundlanders kept their own ethnic group. And they had their own dances, and they all tended to go to the same church, and they had their corned beef dinners. And they kept their culture.

LW: Everyone I've talked to today has had Newfoundland roots.

ML: Isn't that amazing?

LW: [two names] And that's very interesting. Do you think that group coming here to New Bedford had their particular kind of culture here too? Special or separate or traditional?

ML: I think one thing about the Newfoundlanders, they're extremely proud of their heritage. I'll tell you a story that happened to me in school. It stays with me and I was only probably 10 years old when this happened. We had a teacher who was talking about culture, and society, and social positions in the community. And at that time it meant very little to me. I didn't know anything about that, I just knew we were one big happy family and we all got together and we always had a wonderful time. She was explaining the different steps of society and she said 'For instance, Myra's father is a fisherman, so we would say he's blue collar.' And she was getting her point across. And I raised my hand, this will tell you the innocence of youth, I said, 'No! Mrs. Fletcher, my dad wears white collars all the time. Whenever he leaves the house to go fishing, he leaves the house wearing a suit, a white shirt, a tie, a Stetson hat. Always! And when he comes home from fishing, he wears that outfit home. He never wears a blue collar.'

LW: That is a great story.

ML: Isn't that precious? But it always stayed with me because I thought a fisherman works so hard, they put so much of their heart and soul in their job, and we were brought up to have great pride in the fact that our dad was a fisherman. And any time there was something at school, and they needed someone to share, we always shared the story of the fishermen. And so we always felt very proud to say that we were, our background, was a fisherman background. That story stayed with me.

[07:30]

LW: And how about you? How did you get into the fishing industry? How did you begin your work?

ML: I think with me, I have a lot of memories standing down here today. My mom would come to meet my dad when he came in. And he would settle up, and that was the time we would go have lunch. And it was always such a special time when he came home. I wasn't able to go to school during that period of time, I had a heart condition, so I was able to be with them a lot. And I remember being down on the pier many, many times. If dad had to do something on the boat, he would let me sit in the pilot house. So we were much a part of it, of the industry. We lived on the waterfront in Fairhaven. When my dad was going out, course there were many relatives on the boat, and I've thought back over how dangerous that was, sometimes 4 or 5 relatives on the same boat. But when they would go by, dad would toot the horn, and we'd all be out on the hill at our home, that was on the waterfront, waving frantically as they sailed out to sea. Something that has stayed with me also, when the boats went out, whether it was my father, my uncle, it didn't matter who, my brother, we were taught to pray for the fishermen. And bad weather didn't mean cold weather. It meant that they were in danger. So we grew up with a fear that I knew my friends didn't have. And being Irish, we were Irish Catholic, and I've often said I had dimples in my knees because I've spent more time on my knees saying prayers then standing up, but it was whenever they were out and the weather wasn't good, we prayed. And there many close calls that my dad, all our relatives, almost didn't make it. And fortunately, they all came back except my brother; my brother was lost at sea. He was only 27. And he was washed overboard, and that was – My mother never got over it.

[09:45]

LW: Was he on your father's boat?

ML: No. He wasn't, he had been. He had been with my father and my two uncles. To begin with, when my mother came here she married a fisherman and he was lost at sea. Then she went to Nantucket and then married another fisherman. And my mother had 2 children from her first marriage, and we were brought up as one. She didn't want my brother near the water. So she would frequently say to my father 'Don't bring him down on the boat.' She didn't want him to get that longing to be a fisherman. And she felt it was there. And my father didn't bring him down as much as he brought the younger ones down to the pier on Sunday mornings or whenever it was. My brother grew up, went into the Navy, and then went into the Merchant Marines, and then said he wanted to be a fisherman. So it was there. Wanted to go on the boat. And he hadn't been on it very long. He was – They were dredging, the dredge came in, and someone wasn't paying attention. And he was washed over. They never got his body so that was always a very painful thing in our family. It never resolved. But my dad continued fishing. Though he had many close calls where he was almost lost. He was on the *Venture I* when that was lost in a storm. They lost power, the pilot house window was broken out. Three men – Two men were rescued by the Russians. I don't know if you know that story. It's an incredible story. They were the survivors of that horrible tragedy at sea.

LW: When was that?

ML: It was in 1966, January 9th, my son's birthday. And I was having the birthday party. I ran a private kindergarten, and my son wanted all the of children in the kindergarten to be at his party. We had just started, they had all arrived, and the phone rang. It

was my Uncle Jerry, who was part owner of the *Venture*, and he said he had some bad news for me. And he told me that he thought they were gone. He said 'I can't make contact with them. I've tried and tried.' The winds were 80 miles an hour. And he said 'The only thing we can do is pray.' And I recently thought about President Bush when he was told the country had been attacked. And everybody said, 'Well why didn't he do something?' I said 'Oh boy, does that bring back memories.' How did I react hearing such horrible news. I knew the party had to go on and I had to think about what was my next move. The only thing we could do was pray, we had to wait and pray. And a few hours later my Uncle Jerry called me, and said that he had just gotten a message that the Russian trawler had contacted *Venture I*. And they were able to communicate using a milk bottle. They put their messages in a milk bottle, and they tied the rope around it and cans on the rope and threw it over. And the Russian trawlers, there were three of them. One circled around the *Venture I* and poured oil on the waves to calm them. And one wave, incidentally was over the mast of the boat. So they did calm the waves, and were able to get the milk bottle that was floating in the water, they got the message. Neither could speak the other's language, but they got the word 'bloodman' on the note. And Donny Clattenburg [unsure of spelling] who was the engineer on the boat, but on this particular voyage, he ended up trying to keep the boat on course. My dad was first mate and Mr. Roach was in the pilot house. And the three men had been injured too severely, and the note said 'bloodman' and I don't know whether they had a picture or how they did it, but they were able to tell them there was another boat person with a broken leg and that was my dad. And they didn't come by for a couple hours. So this boat had to flounder around helplessly, no power, no radio, no compass, no nothing. Finally the Russian trawler sent a 20-foot—I guess we'd call it like a dory—to the side of the boat. And they first took the bloodman, which was Mr. Clattenburg[unsure of spelling], and his father owned a part of the boat with my Uncle Jerry. And they came back and they got my Dad. Then they sent another note to the remainder of the crew—there were 6 crew members in all—telling them that they were going to be towing them. So they were safe, they were going to tow them. But their message didn't go in a milk bottle, it went in a vodka bottle because they couldn't find the milk bottle. But anyway on the Russian trawler, it was a factory ship. Donny Clattenburg [unsure of spelling] had said when he was interviewed, that it was just like being in a fish house, it was so spacious, and all the work was going on onboard the ship. Russians were very kind, and very friendly and very good to the Americans. They had a doctor take care of them right away. And they gave my father a drink of vodka which he appreciated immensely. And Donny, they gave his juice, and it might have been – I think he was unconscious at a point there. And when he came to, they gave him juice. They treated both men and got them stabilized. And then they had contacted the embassy in Washington. The *Vigilant*, the Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard boat, came and met the Russian trawler and they took the two Americans by helicopter and brought them into Logan Airport and the ambulance was waiting for them there. And then they were taken to Brighton Marine Hospital. So our, we've had many experiences of close calls. And we learned the meaning of prayer. And I don't think I can ever say that if we've had a windy night that I've able to go to bed and go to sleep because I know you say a prayer for whoever's out on that sea. And there's so many fishermen

that dare to weather to storm because once they're out there, they don't come in, they stay out and face what they have to face. But I've felt that the men on that boat are true heroes because they remained calm even though they knew they may not have been rescued. It was quite a period of time they were there alone. Even when they say two men being taken from their boat, the remaining crew didn't know what their status was. And they remained calm, so I think they were, they should be labeled heroes in a situation like that. I marvel at the fact that the Cold War was on and when we heard that the Russians came to their aid, I knew we'd never see them again. But you know you have that Law of the Sea, the international feeling that it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, they come to one another's rescue. And that's what happened. It makes you stop and think if people can get along and help one another in a situation like that, why can't we do it? Why do we have to have a war? There's no answer to that.

[18:30]

LW: Did your mother pressure your father at any point or ask him to stop? After that?
ML: She did. She did. Many times. She had asked him—In fact she would say it very nicely. She'd say, 'Leo, you know what I think would be a great idea for us?' And he'd look at her, he always knew what was coming. 'Why don't we open a store, down on the dock? And we can sell supplies to the fishermen.' But that isn't what my father wanted. My father loved the sea. He loved being a fisherman. He enjoyed his role. He had no desire to stay in. But he would tell us there are times when it is frightening, but he said that's part of the job. I remember one time he explained to me about—I was telling him about my friend's father had a desk job. He was able to go to all her programs, and they could go on trips. I used to get my point across nicely. He explained to me, what he was doing as a fisherman, he loved it, it was in his blood. He said, 'You don't know what it's like when you're out on the sea.' I didn't know what it was like. So he really had a job that he got great enjoyment from. Hard work! I knew he worked very, very hard. Made very good money. In the '40s they were bringing in a bundle. They were depleting the fishing grounds, but they were really making a lot of money. So I was well aware of that. He explained to me about, 'A fisherman knows when he goes out, when he gets the weather report, he doesn't think in terms of hot or cold.' Never thinks of the weather that way. He said, 'We learned. If it's freezing cold, we work on the deck. If it's hot, and he used a few other words, we still worked on the deck. That's our job, that's our lot.' And he said, 'We live from trip to trip.' So he really was happy with what he was doing. My mother literally begged my brother not to go out fishing. He had promised her he was gonna give it up, and he never got the opportunity. I think fishing is something that gets in their blood, and they love the – There's such an adventure to it. They never know what one trip is gonna be like from another. And getting the catch, and then making the money. I mean there are a lot of good things to it.

[21:10]

LW: Do any of your children show an interest in this?
ML: I did what my mother did. I kept them away from the waterfront. My grandson, now I think he was the only one in the family I could sense might be drawn. He loves boats, he's on the boat all the time, but it's a Boston Whaler. I have a feeling that if anyone could be drawn to fishing, he could be the one. But, I think, the rest of us

feel, you know, we've lived that life of being very concerned when they leave the dock. You don't know if you're gonna see them again. It's not a very comfortable feeling. And we know in any life, in any job, there can be accidents, but I think the risk is greater for the fishermen. So my children went in totally different directions. We had five and they all went to different colleges. Each one pursuing, whether it was health care or business administration, they all took up something different. And not one is connected to the fishing industry, but they have a great deal of respect for the fishing industry because they've been brought up knowing what I lived as the daughter of a fisherman.

LW: In the situation that your family was in, with facing danger a lot, did that have an effect on your relationship with other fishing families?

ML: Oh no. No. Not at all. I think our fear, though I'm telling it in a lump sum, that's a lifetime. That was spread out over a long period of time. I think probably thinking back, what I, if I were to say something I didn't like about being involved in a fisherman's family, and I could probably say that about other people we knew, there's so many special occasions that come up, and your dad can't be a part of it. I had – I played the piano and every recital he couldn't be there because he was out on a trip. We understood it, so there was never any discussion about it. Programs at school, dad could never be there, but my mom always told him about it. You know, you took the pictures or whatever. It's just that other families, other fishermen families, I think we have a great deal of understanding and respect for them because we know what they're missing, but we also know what they're getting. We're very much aware of a lot of them own their own boats so they can do their timing a little differently. My dad couldn't stay in. He had to have that week's pay. Where I think today it's very different. They can set their time and say, graduation is the first weekend in June, someone else can take the boat or whatever. It wasn't like that then.

LW: Do you think its safer now?

ML: Oh yes. I think Mother Nature's the same. The storms come, and the storms go. I think the dangers are there. But, I think, with technology they have now, and the fact that they can contact their family members so easily. The boats are built better, sturdier. And you know when you go on a fishing boat now it's nothing like what my father's boat was like. I mean there was you could probably touch the two walls, it seemed so small. But they didn't have any of the technology that you have today.

[25:00]

LW: What was your father's name?

ML: Leo Powers. Leo Powers. And he was on the *Hope*, the *Adventure*, *Venture*, *Venture II*, and captain on the *Pocahontas*.

LW: He [inaudible] that boat?

ML: No he took the Captain's position. He was Captain on, I think, it was the *Adventure*. Didn't like ever being Captain. Did not like it! I think he just didn't like the full responsibility. Never said that, but I thought that. He was a very hard worker, and I always remember people saying to me he was such a gentleman. But I told you how he came to work; the only thing missing was he didn't have a briefcase. He came very professional looking, but no briefcase. But we had many good times when we were growing up because my father came in with a good week's pay so that meant there were things that other kids could have and we could. But we didn't have the joy

of going off on vacations so that was one of the shortcomings. I think too, and you think back over those years, they sold stamps at school. All of the kids – It was for war bonds. It was during the '40s. All kids would come in with a dollar or two for stamps. My dad would send me in with twenty or thirty dollars. Not to show off, but his money was different. It came in a large amount, so therefore you spent in a large amount. So my class always got a gold star for buying the most stamps, but it was because of the fisherman's daughter who could do it. Those were the little things, I think, that made a difference when you're a child. But there were so many things thought that he wasn't a part of. I think those are sad things. I never dwelled on them, but I often thought it would have been nice had he been able to be there. But he couldn't be, so –

LW: And has that experience shaped the rest of your life?

ML: I think when my husband and I got married, I never put down stipulations but I think that one was there—we will go to everything that our children are in. He had a desk job. My husband was a chemist, so our lifestyle was totally different. We had five children. We were able to be a part of everything they did. But I think that was a carryover from my younger days. And when they went to bed at night, dad was there to tuck them in. If they had a problem, they could go to dad and talk about it. But when my dad came in, one of the things was we never ever did anything to upset him. You never told him anything that was unpleasant because he was only in for a short period of time and then he was going out for a trip and we didn't want him worrying about anything. So those things were the different things I think. But my husband and I said that we would take the vacations, we would be a part of everything that they were involved in, and we did and loved every minute of it. I know my dad loved every minute of bringing us up too, but it was just a whole different lifestyle. And fishing then was so different then it is today. Very different.

[29:01]

LW: How is it different?

ML: Well I think then it was – I listened to the rules now about how they have to be within a certain period of time. You know there are so many things that the fishermen of the '40s, I know that they would have had a real royal battle about it. Because they never looked at depleting grounds or any of that. That was their job. They went out and they did it and came home. But the regulations now are, I think, they are very strict regulations. And that makes a major difference. I think the lifestyle is very different too. And I think that when you make big money you live differently. And a lot of the – I see the younger fishermen; they have very lovely homes and beautiful cars and things like that. I think the fishermen of the '40s, even though they made the big money; it wasn't so much in that type of material thing. A little different. Although one thing that was stressed, in all the families, was the importance of an education. Every single relative knew they were expected to go on to college. It was the, you were to do better than your parents. And they all did for the most part I would say they did.

[30:35]

LW: Are you really interested in local history?

ML: I love it. I do.

LW: Do you look at it generally, or do you tend to focus on New Bedford's history as a port?

ML: I do Fairhaven history. Fairhaven. The reason I did the Fairhaven history was I was very much aware of the fact that there were no history books on our local history in the schools. I wanted to just get one book in there that was in the curriculum that they would have to teach. I thought that if I could get the school committee to endorse it, then it would become part of the curriculum and it would be forever. It's strange how things turn out. My dad had emphysema. You know all the fishermen smoked. They smoked Camel cigarettes. Not one pack, not two pack, but three and four. And it was just the times, and we didn't have the education then that they have today about the dangers of it. So he consequently had emphysema, and I had – I went to a doctor with him because he didn't like his doctor. I asked him why he didn't like his doctor. And he said, 'You need to come in the office with me and then you'll know.' I went to the office with him and he said to the doctor, 'Oh, my back is killing me.' And the doctor said to him, 'Well you're old, what do you expect?' And that was it. So we changed doctors, and when we changed doctors, the new Dr. Alkali [unsure of spelling]. He was absolutely wonderful, a wonderful man. My dad said his back was bothering him, and he said, 'Well, we ought to see what we can do to fix that.' And that was the difference between telling someone you're old, or you have problem. But when he sent my dad out to the office to fill out some forms, and he said to me, 'Do you know how sick he is?' And I said, 'No.' And he said, 'I don't think he's gonna live three weeks.' And I didn't realize this. I knew he had emphysema and never having seen it before, I thought there was another whole stage. And when we left there, on the way home, I asked him if he would move in with me. We didn't talk about what the doctor had said. But I asked if he would move in with me, and you know the people of that generation were very independent. No way was he gonna move in! So I said, 'Ok, I'll move in with you.' So I moved in with my dad, my husband would walk me over every night, and he'd say good night, and we'd kiss on the porch, and I laugh about it now. I wonder what the neighbor's must of thought. And he would go home and I would stay through the night with my dad. And we had a system so we had – I had three sisters, and we took turns. And he lived for six months. But during that six month period, I got to know him as I had never known my father. It was the most beautiful period. He shared so much of his upbringing with me, and what he was made it of. It was like getting inside somebody, almost like in a psychiatrist's office, but he did share all of that. And so I went through that whole period with him and when he passed away, the priest got up on the altar and said in his whole period as a priest he never saw such a beautiful death. So this beautiful little fishermen, who was almost lost at sea a hundred times, survived everything and ended up with a beautiful death.

[34:24]

LW: And I'm sure that's partly because he [inaudible].

ML: He was loved. He was loved, yeah. We were all there with him. And, you know, the closeness in the family, even though he wasn't there, it always amazed me when I looked back on it, we were very close. The bond was tight. A loyalty, respect. I was told that I had to be in the house at 12 o'clock. My husband and I have chuckled about this. We ran to get home at 12 o'clock. And I said I never knew why. My dad

never said if you don't such and such will happen. It was 'Myra, I'd like you in at 12.' And I was in at 12. And I said isn't that strange, there was such a deep respect and that was of that whole generation. And I know other fishermen daughters have said the same thing. What they said they weren't here all week, they were out fishing, and yet we obeyed. But we had a lot of music in our home. Dad played the harmonica and the accordion. And we had step dancing. I've carried a lot of that over into my own family. My children have, in fact, not my children, my grandchildren have said they remember how I used to push the kitchen table over so we could all do the step dances to the Irish music. And I didn't realize that had made such an impression on them, but it did.

[36:02]

LW: So you were a step dancer?

ML: I'm not a good step dancer. I just know how to make my feet go with the music and have fun. And we knew, they had – My parents had taught us the Irish songs, and Patty Fagan, things like that. So when St. Patrick's Day came around, we made a big, big thing of it. That's what my grandchildren, I think, remember.

LW: Do you still do that now?

ML: No, they're all older now, and I don't think they'd appreciate it. I have one 17 and one 15 in the area. No, we don't do that, but I remind them all the time that they're Irish.

LW: Seventeen, eighteen year olds can be pretty good dancers.

ML: They're good dancers, but they have their own music, and it's just a whole different generation. What was good – Bringing up my children, I could keep my culture very much in front of them. We did the – We had a custom at home where my mother would make the homemade bread, and the 'Lad in the Bag,' you know things like that. I kept that going and passed on the family jokes, and songs, and things like that. When we get to the grandchildren, I leave it up to my daughter. She keeps the culture going, but not quite the same way, and that's understandable.

LW: In any of your books, did you write down some of these?

ML: I've done nothing. Nothing!

LW: Would you like to do that?

ML: I think up the line I will. I've done nothing about the fishing industry either. I could very easily have written what it was like to be a child of a fisherman. And I could see myself waiting at that window waiting for my dad to come home. It was a long period of time, and yet it was five days. But to a child, it's a very long period. I can remember many, many things where this fear, a terrible fear that gets in, when you're a fisherman's child. But I've never had any of that in my marriage. And I realize looking back on it, I now see what my mother went through. She had that fear. And I had it as a child. There were a lot of good things though. You tend to stress on the – You connect the weather to the fishermen, you connect the many occasions when they have to be out on the boat to earn their living. But there were a lot of good things too.

LW: Maybe someday those memories will find their way into one of your books.

ML: I think so. I think also when you lose people in your life you have to have a period of time to let that heal. Then you can reach another point where you can not only talk about it, write about it, but handle it differently. And I think it'll come. But I'm very

proud of being a fisherman's daughter! When we were growing up many of my friends had fathers who worked in the factory. A couple of them had their own farms. I lived in Fairhaven since the '40s. Didn't really know that many who's dad had an office job. They were hard working people. The next generation I think is when the office people seem to have the roles. It was no longer the factory, and it was more, if they were in fishing, they owned the boat. It was a little different. But I was brought up to have a deep sense of pride in the fact that my father worked very hard for his living and he was a fisherman, and I was proud to be a fisherman's daughter.

[40:06]

LW: That's wonderful! Well thank you so much!

ML: I've enjoyed this.

LW: You're really, really lovely. And the way you express [inaudible]. Thank you very much, Myra.

ML: Thank you. It was my pleasure. And just being here this weekend, I said, it's a tribute not only to my brother, who had such a short life, but to my dad, whose whole life, entire life was the fishing business. So just being down on the dock, though I don't know many fishing families here, in Fairhaven, I know a lot. The Issacsons, the Risdalls, the Jacobsons, I know all of these people. When we came down on the dock before, everyone knew us and waved at us. That changes as you get older and there isn't that connection. But it's a nice feeling to be down here and to know you're with fishing people, fishing industry. I've really enjoyed it.

LW: Well, we'll hope that this festival becomes an annual [inaudible].

ML: I hope it does. Maybe I'll have a book here next year. Now there's an incentive! Thank you very much.

LW: Well we'll both conclude the interview at 3 o'clock on Saturday, September 25, 2004, with Myra Lopes. Thank you.

[41:28]

[End of Audio]