



## Dexter Lorance

Transcript of an Oral History  
Conducted by  
Anjuli Grantham  
at  
Larsen Bay, Alaska  
On June 14, 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 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 following transcript is nearly a word-for-word transcription of the oral history interview. 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

Dexter Lorange, interview P-1002-12 by Anjuli Grantham in Larsen Bay, Alaska, 14 June 2015, (Kodiak, Alaska: Kodiak Historical Society).

**Key Words:** Seafood processing, canning, Larsen Bay, Whitney Fidalgo, Exxon Valdez

Cover photo: Dexter Lorange, photographed in Larsen Bay on June 14, 2015. Photographed by Breanna Peterson for West Side Stories. P-1000-7-466.

## Oral History of Dexter Lorance

AG: It's June 14, 2015 and I'm sitting here with Dexter—

DL: Lorance.

AG: Could you spell that, please?

DL: L-o-r-a-n-c-e.

AG: Okay. We are in the carpenter shop at the Larsen Bay cannery, and this interview is being done for the West Side Stories Project with the Baranov Museum. Thank you, Dexter, for your time.

DL: No problem.

AG: Could you begin by introducing yourself? Just tell me your name and your position within the cannery.

DL: Well, my name is Dexter Lorance and I'm considered the cannery foreman, which that would be a title, but we carry many badges.

AG: What are some of the other badges that you carry?

DL: Carpenter. I get here early spring, start the place up. I'm the first one in, [last] one out, know the place backwards and forwards. They rely on me right now [...] to know the place. I'm about the only one that really knows the big picture for now.

AG: Where are you from and where were you born?

DL: I'm from Oklahoma, born 1951, and probably migrated with the Okies to California. Went to school in California, graduated in '69, came to Alaska in '71 with a pregnant girlfriend. Started working in Anchorage at Whitney-Fidalgo because back then was before the pipeline and you needed some work. I've been doing it ever since.

AG: What was it that brought you to Alaska to begin with?

DL: To exit out of California. I had no desire to live in that environment. It's just been one

adventure after another. I've always been an adventurous person. I hitchhiked across the United States in 1968 when I was seventeen and came back and realized I didn't really want to live in California. I figured Alaska was about as far as I could get from there. I bought a 1957 Ford pickup and drove all the way up the Alcan with my pregnant girlfriend and we had my daughter in Anchorage and been moving on ever since.



Fish coming in by rail to the Whitney Fidalgo plant, Anchorage, 1972.  
P-1012-3.



Herring coming by rail to the Anchorage plant from Prince William Sound, via Whittier. P-1013-6.

AG: Tell me about that first summer [...] at the Whitney-Fidalgo plant.

DL: Well, they have a half-pound line and a tall line. [...] I lived in downtown Anchorage, and we were working about twenty hours a day, maybe twenty-two sometimes. All the fish came from the Yukon, a lot of it. Came on rail cars from Prince William Sound. It came from Cook Inlet. The tenders we had [...], we had these big flat scows and in the springtime we had a steam donkey that ran by the boiler and you would

winch these flat scows out. The tenders would take them all over Cook Inlet and anchor them off, and then the gillnetters would bring the fish to the scow and they'd just put burlap bags on them. Then the fish would come back to the cannery. I didn't know that fish had eyeballs for the first two years because all the sea gulls would eat the eyes out of all the fish (*laughing*). They would pull into the cannery, and they had an old bucket elevator and it was on Ship's Creek, and it was about a 30-foot tide there. [...] That first year they never really used a pew. I think pews were outlawed by then, but they would somehow get the fish off these old scows and it would be hot and dry and no ice and smelly. It was a good introduction to fish.

AG: So what did you do?

DL: I was just working on the line in the cannery. My first job they picked me to be kind of a machinist helper, so I've been running the machines more or less since then. I've always been mechanical, as cannery workers go. It was a good place to work. Anchorage was awesome. I had such a blast there. I'd get hired by the superintendent to go track the Japanese down and they'd be at topless bars all over Anchorage, and I'd pick 'em up in my truck and I'd be touring.

AG: Who was the superintendent?



Herring eggs, 1972. P-1013-4.

DL: Dan Bonney was the superintendent at that time. I saw Dan actually a couple of years ago down in Seattle. He was working for Crowley Maritime. We really had a lot of fun there. We'd go out and play baseball at midnight. Anchorage was a lot of fun.

AG: I think it's so interesting this idea of fish being delivered by rail.



DL: Yeah. That second year I was there we did herring. The herring were caught in Prince William Sound, put in totes, and rotted. They call it smacking. We built these giant tables that were about 25, 30 feet long. The people would come and we would dump a tote of this rotting herring in it, and they would get paid by the pound for taking the eggs because the eggs were, I guess, in the process of salting this herring, but the smell was over the top amazing. McDonalds called the cannery, wouldn't allow us to go eat lunch there. If you went to lunch at like Safeway and you were in line, people would just move out of the way and let you to the front because you stunk so bad. The smell was horrible.

AG: So you were just extracting the eggs.

DL: Yeah.

AG: What's smacking?

DL: That's just a word that they use when they break the herring in half to get the eggs out. Now they just take the herring, freeze it all, ship it to Korea. They do the same process or whatever they do with them.

AG: So you don't even use a knife. You just use your hands.



Smacking herring, ca 1972, Whitney Fidalgo Plant in Anchorage. P-1013-1.

DL: Yep, it was rotten enough to—. They just waited. It was a hundred percent salt brine, probably, and they just let it rot. In the process, the salt cured the eggs.

AG: What would happen to the eggs after they were removed [...]?

DL: They were processed somehow by the Japanese and I'm not really sure. I probably never paid attention, plus it was a long time ago.

AG: So the Whitney-Fidalgo plant did herring and salmon. Did it do anything else?

DL: No, that was it. Then they had a cold storage by the airport. [...] We'd get all the bad fish from them to can. We got tons and tons of Yukon dogs. That National Geographic book, I can show you in the back of it, the very back of it, all these guys that I knew. They were flying fish that summer. Typical summer. They would fly fish from Bristol Bay on these big Hercules, fly it to Anchorage, bring it to the cannery. We'd back it up, throw it in the grinder, and throw it away because it would be too rotten to process. Another typical cannery fiasco of "who's on first."

AG: I was wondering what qualified as being bad fish?

DL: Well, they used to say if you could hold them in your hand and they didn't fall through your fingers, then it was questionable. We had a load come in one day, and I was young and I was learning. [...] We had an old Filipino crew from Half Moon Bay in San Francisco and they'd been in that cannery for forty years. I loved them. It was awesome to work with them. They were all in their seventies. They threw, God, I don't know how many fish got thrown out. I was sniffing fish with them, what I called it. I had this gag reflex, so if I gagged I threw it out. They probably threw half the fish back in that I threw out. That was back in the '70s, then the '80s came and it got less, and now you rarely see that.

AG: Quality is now a major concern.

DL: Oh God, major. Mark [Thissen], at the store, he tells the story, he was one of the last bad load fish, questionable fish. He was on a tender, [...] but they brought a load of bad fish here and it was like "ehhh!" I had to smell them, and I still give Mark a hard time.

AG: It was like being brought back to 1972 or something?

DL: Yeah. Well like last summer, [...] one of the seiners sent in a bunch of bad fish, and [...] who do they ask to check the fish out but me. So I'm out there going, "Oh man, give me a break."

AG: It must be hard to say no because they're expecting to be paid, huh?

DL: They're expecting to be paid. That's the problem. They think that they're not gonna get caught. Well, you know the tender, what boat delivered to the tender, what boat does not have ice or RSW [refrigerated sea water], or what boat is suspectly derelict in delivering their fish or whatever. It's just like an arrow. I knew exactly where they came from.

AG: So tell me more about these Half Moon Bay Filipinos that you worked with.

DL: Well, it was a crew. They probably were traditional cannery workers that came up back in the probably '40's, I would imagine, to Anchorage and they just came every year, year after year after year. They were very old school to the fact that they had the Filipino foreman and everybody worked under him. These old boys were just ancient, literally ancient, as far as I was [concerned]. You get the younger ones, but now days you don't see that as much. Kodiak, as you know, there's quite a few Filipinos there.

AG: Did they talk about their experiences in the fishery much?

DL: No, not really. Those guys didn't speak the best English either, but that's who I ate with most of the time, was those guys. And we had a Japanese crew. What was the name of that company? Kyokuyo, I think it was. That was a huge corporation and that's who owned Whitney-Fidalgo at that time.

AG: So what sort of work would the Japanese crew do versus the Filipino crew versus the white crew?

DL: The Japanese, like here, they just got work visas, and they strictly only do eggs. They don't do anything else. Back then, more than now, they only did sujiko and that's salted eggs. You get the eggs, you [put a] layer of salt, layer of eggs, layer of salt, and then you put big weights on it, cure it. When they brine it, they brine it in some chemical that's not acceptable for the U.S. I didn't see any domestic eggs until just in the last ten years. Before that everything was exported. Before the '90s, the Japanese ruled. The price of fish went from in 1990, I want to say '90, '91, right after Exxon, and they were gettin' ninety cents from a cash buyer up front, and the next year they got six cents, like by '92. So it went from ninety [cents] to two [cents] for pinks. Sockeye went from \$2.40 to, I don't know, 80 cents or something.

AG: Per pound or for the eggs?

DL: Per pound. That made a big difference, but that's because the Japanese markets fell and that was all economics.

AG: So the Japanese, back at this Whitney-Fidalgo plant, they were just handling the eggs?

DL: They strictly were handling the eggs.

AG: What did that mean? What sort of work does that imply?

DL: They graded them. The eggs would come in and they did all the grading. [...] We called it the leg room because it was all women that worked there and they just did all the processing. They did all the salting and the layering, but the Japanese did a hundred percent of the grading. They would grade all the eggs.

AG: What sort of grades are there?

DL: They had a board that was about four feet long all in Japanese.

AG: What sort of work would the Filipino crew do?

DL: Most of the Filipinos did clean up and worked in the fish house in Anchorage. And then here, my history here, we had a lot of Filipinos in the beginning and we've had Native crews. The history of the crew here from the '70s and the '80s has just been incredible. I mean just crazy crazy.

AG: In what way?

DL: Well, when I first got here, it was like a wild west show. I became cannery foreman in 1980. Somehow with that title came kind of a bouncer role. I used to have to break up lots of fights and the crew was always drunk. Fun. It was always fun but a little scary (*laughing*).

AG: I can imagine. Was the mess hall, I'm still thinking about the Whitney-Fidalgo plant, was it segregated?

DL: Yep. In Anchorage, they didn't feed everybody. They only fed the machinists. The Japanese had their bunk house. They cooked for themselves. The Filipinos cooked for themselves. We had a cook that cooked for about ten of us, but we never ate. We didn't like our cook, so we'd always go up town 'cause you are in Anchorage. You could just go up and have a nice lunch or dinner or whatever. When we were canning, of course, you go up and eat [at the mess hall] because you don't have time.

AG: Was the food different or was it just different dining facilities do you think?

DL: No, it was just a bad cook. The same here.

AG: At this point, you know, it's the time of civil rights. There is desegregation happening in the south. What did you think about the fact that it was a segregated facility?

DL: It was still early on enough that it was, in my mind, accepted. It was later on, not too many years after that [...] the Filipino crew in Ketchikan filed a law suit. It was either against New England [Fish Co.] or it might have been Whitney. I don't think it was Whitney. It was one of the other canneries. Because of the machinist thing. All white people were machinists and all Filipinos weren't. The Filipinos won the suit. I never did really follow that one, but after that it just— and then through the '80s. The only thing that ever bugged me about segregation was the blue room with the superintendents with their big egos.

AG: Could you describe the blue room? What was that?

DL: They had their own private food and they had maids just like in a restaurant. We all just ate in the common area and ate common food.

AG: Who would eat in the blue room?

DL: I'm assuming most of the immediate foremen's and the superintendent's wife, his relatives, some highline fishermen would probably eat there, that's what I'm assuming. I think this blue room has been going on since Monte [Hawthorne of the book *The Trail Led North*] and I'm sure it has, but it was dying out by the time we got here. Gary Wiggins was the last guy that I knew that tried to do the blue room.

AG: Was there a blue room in the mess hall?

DL: Yeah. Yeah. He was the last of the old superintendents, but Whitney had their own. Then that summer I spent out in Naknek, that was hilarious. That was really fun.

AG: When was that?

DL: '74. 1974.

AG: So '71, '72 you were at Whitney-Fidalgo in Anchorage and '73 as well.

DL: Then I think I went to Bristol Bay, might have been '75, because I think I was in Anchorage three or four years. I can't remember. I came here in '76, but I did one summer there [Bristol Bay].

AG: Why or how?

DL: The cannery shut down in Anchorage, so they transferred us out to there. There was no fish in Bristol Bay that year, none. I mean basically no fish at all. But I had a blast. I mean, gosh darn. Then we came out here, and there was no fish here either really. The '70s were pretty bleak.

AG: What reasons were given for that?

DL: I just have my own thoughts on that, and that's from creek robbing, over fishing, no management. They went into that limited entry in '75 and from that onward, and closures and good management, that totally brought it around.

AG: You mentioned before you always were mechanically inclined. Did you have any sort of training in anything that—?

DL: No, no. My background from a kid, we were just poor. We were very very very very poor. I mean, I lived in a house with, I don't think we had indoor plumbing until I was



probably in the eighth grade. That kind of stuff, and that was in California. My mother cooked on a wood cook stove for years. [...] I think there's a lot more common sense involved when you're raised like that [...].

AG: How was it then that your skill was recognized on the line to become a machinist?

DL: Probably because you could speak English and you could make sense, carry on a good conversation. I've always been a good conversationalist.

AG: So it was more of the fact that you were white, could speak English, and have a good conversation that you think you were promoted?

DL: Probably. That's what I would say. Just willing to work and willing to do whatever. The willingness to do whatever would be more than anything. These kids, they don't want to do much. They just want to hang out and eat food. The same thing here. If you find one that's willing to go out of their way, like Cole. That guy's awesome for as young as he is.

AG: So [...] it made sense to you, the whole operation, or did you have some trainers or teachers along the way that taught you the ropes or were kind of mentors [...]?

DL: Well, not till I got here. In Anchorage there wasn't a lot. We had Joe. He was the old salmon cook, had been there forever. His voice was gone from smoking. Then Frank. He had gold teeth and he was older than dirt. He was in his seventies and he had been working there for also forever and ever and ever. A lot of people they get in it, like me [...]. I knew that I wanted to be a world traveler. My daughter, well, we were never married, but Linda, my girlfriend, they left and went back to California. She got married and life went on, but I started to travel the world. I came here and I'd work. The one summer I've missed in Alaska, I stayed in Kenya, Africa for a year, and I was teaching at a school. I was teaching world history at this school in Africa. It was fun.

AG: What year was that?

DL: 1978. Then I came back here in '79. I did a two year tour of the world in '78 and '79 then got back here, late '78. Went through India, Nepal, Thailand, and back to Alaska.

AG: Wow.

DL: It was fun.

AG: Yeah.

DL: I've done tons of adventures since then.

AG: This has been a lifestyle that can support that then.

DL: Oh, totally. Totally totally.

AG: How?

DL: Well, as long as you're willing to give up relationships with women that you've had, and just live a great life, and come up here and just work your butt off, and then have seven months to go out and play. But it's definitely not good for relationships (*laughing*). Most women don't like you being gone for four or five months at chunks.

AG: Where did you work in Bristol Bay and for what company?

DL: Whitney-Fidalgo. The same one. I think we did like 5,000 cases that year. It was nothing. The stories there, I could just go on and on and on. I could talk to you for days about stories of people doing stupid things.

AG: Were you able to notice, because this was also around the time that they had those court cases that you mentioned, were there changes in the crew once it became something that it was less segregated, or were you there for the integration? Do you remember that taking place?

DL: No. Like for instance, what I see, it's always been whoever is in charge. Like for instance, Whitney in Bristol Bay, Bill Derouger is this guy's name. Bill was one of those old redneck, very redneck, very stringent superintendents. Old old old old school. He hired ninety percent all white people, very few Filipinos, and most of them were college kids. In the year that I worked there, he had hired [...] a lot of the football team from Washington State [University]. People things like that. He was strict. He was very very old school. I don't know, but then you get to Dutch Harbor, I worked out there, and you could see it there more than anywhere. These places are like little cities. Whoever's at the top is making the decisions, be it they're gay, be it they're Filipino, and it's all reciprocal of who's favored and who's not favored. I've never been to King Cove, but I've heard they run five hundred Filipinos out there, and they have a big Filipino boss, I'm sure, and it's a union out of Seattle. The best crews we've had were mixed out here. The best times we've ever had was when it was fifty percent women, fifty percent men. Everyone had a lot of fun. I could send you a hundred e-mails of a hundred people that have thanked me for all the fun that they've had. As far as any transitional, it's strictly was who was hiring. [...]

AG: How do you hire for a cannery?

DL: Well, you recruit all these kids from colleges and stuff, and you show them some pictures and tell them of all the adventures they could have, and most of them do. It's a good life experience. But I think the mentality for those guys out here is that they hire for these boats, these floating processors [...]

AG: So then you went to Dutch Harbor after Bristol Bay?



Larsen Bay Cannery, 2015. P-1000-7-16.

DL: No, I came here. Then the Native corporation bought the cannery from Alaska Packers. They finally sold out I think in '75, '74. I don't know how long the Natives, whenever that claims act and all the money, and blah blah blah. Then we came. They had a bad pack one year and lost the cannery, the Native corporation, so it sat idle for two years, maybe one year, maybe two years.

AG: This cannery?

DL: Yeah. I want to say '81. Yeah, it sat idle for '81. The fishermen bought it in '82 and brought me back in '82, and I was here in '82 and '83. Didn't like the management. It was pretty sketchy. Then I went back to Dutch Harbor for '84. They just shut the cannery after '84 out there [in Dutch Harbor].

AG: Who's they?

DL: I think it was Castle & Cook. We had built in 1981 [...] a two, three line cannery out there. The fishing out there is just kind of up and down in Dutch. They have a pink run sometimes and they don't. So then I went to work at Ocean Beauty for two years, two summers, '85 and '86, and then came here for Kodiak Salmon Packers in '87 and have been here since. Alan Beardsley was the owner.

AG: Tell me about your first season here. How were you recruited?

DL: I was working for a fellow named Van Johnson. He was the foreman. I'd been following him from Anchorage to Dutch and around, and he brought me out here with him. I was the foreman and he was kind of assistant superintendent. Van's history, he went to Kodiak High School [...] His ex-wife, Betty [Hall], is in Kodiak. [...] Helen Hall, that was Van's mother-in-law. So there's a little history there. She was interesting. I loved Helen. She had a lot of historical stuff going on.

AG: So Van is the one that brought you here?

DL: Yeah. I was working for him, well, with him. I came out here with him.

AG: Tell me what year that was again.

DL: '76.

AG: So at that point, this was the Kodiak Island—

DL: Seafoods, I think.

AG: What do you remember of that first season here?

DL: Well, let's see. You mean the very first season I came here? We flew in on a Goose. There was no airstrip. There was no village, just little houses. The road ended up here. The bears were rampant everywhere. We would stand at the bunk house and hold numbers when the girls would get off the airplane, to number them, 1, 2, 3, 4. (*laughing*)

AG: On a scale of 1 to 10?

DL: Oh yeah, that was the days. We had an alcoholic port engineer, Bob Brokowski, I think was his name. We're young and we're just like, "I guess this is all acceptable." He'd get up and drink vodka and Everclear for breakfast and we're all just yelling and going, "Wow." And fights, oh goodness. I mean, unbelievable fishermen fights, gun fights. It's like the OK

Corral. Be woken up the middle of the night trying to break up fights and stuff, but we all had fun and nobody got hurt. It mellowed out after a couple of years, later '70s. By the time Alan [Beardsley] got it, we were just having big Pinochle tournaments with all the fishermen, and we'd take the mess hall and I think we'd play like twenty, thirty people. That was a lot. Now you don't see that so much.

AG: Less camaraderie it feels?

DL: Yeah. I don't know the fishermen as much or the tendermen like I used to.

AG: What was your first impression of Larsen Bay and of the cannery?

DL: Oh, I loved it. I loved it in the sense that you just felt like you had just dropped off into oblivion. There was no radios, there was no contact, you had a ship to shore radio. I remember the second or third year in the '70s they finally got one phone in the village. If you had to make a phone call you would stand in line with twenty people. You were surrounded by so many wonderful villagers that you didn't really feel alienated. It was just great. It was just a great feeling. I mean you really felt like you were in Alaska. You know, this was the real Alaska bush scene.

AG: Who showed you the ropes?

DL: Victor and all the guys here in the carpenter shop. There was Pete Peterson, was just an incredible man married to a gal. He had a little tender called the Teal. Jimmy Johnson [...]. The whole village was just involved down here. Eli, Arthur Panamaroff, and they all took me under their wings. If you were willing to put out and work really hard and they felt you weren't just some b-s-er then that was perfect. I was willing to do whatever they did, so they really showed me the ropes.

AG: Was the equipment quite different from today?

DL: No, they're still the same. They were wore out. At least now we've got them to where they run better. They were always breaking down because they needed parts, but it's the same equipment.

AG: How would you get parts?

DL: Sometimes you had to make 'em, [...] especially back then. You couldn't just call somewhere and order them. Like now, I can order them on the phone and have them here within two days. I'm waiting on a part right now. [...] You had to have a lot of spare parts going into it, so you knew from the year before. Back then American Can in Seattle had plenty plenty of parts and they weren't that expensive as they are now because they made so much of them. They had them right in the warehouses. You just have your list that you needed and you always knew the main parts that you would always wear out or break.

AG: What parts were those?

DL: Like springs in the filler, the tumbler fork springs. Not so much the bearings, especially back then. The old bearings lasted a lot longer than these Chinese bearings. You would need bushings, a lot of bushings, but then you had a machinist that could make the bushings here so that kind of stuff wasn't so much. The seamers, you would need canning rolls because the old tin was so hard on all the knock outs and the seaming heads. That old tin was really hard on stuff, so you really had to have a lot of spare parts for the seamer. They were a lot lot harder to deal with, but this new stuff is like canning paper.

AG: How would you prepare for the season then?

DL: Prepare?

AG: Yes, to get everything in order.

DL: You mean from like when you flew in? You mean over the winter?

AG: Um-huh.

DL: Well, I always left that up to the office and I always have. They've tried over the years to suck me in, but I'm like, "No, I'm not going there," so I've never really had to deal with winter. More with Icicle now and a little bit with Salmon Packers. They call me or e-mail me, now it's an e-mail thing, but before it was always I gave them a list and that was it. They either bought it or they didn't. If they didn't, then I had to just deal with it. That's basically what it was. I'd give them a list of what I felt we needed, and you'd hold it down. [...] With Icicle [...] you give them a list, and it doesn't matter what's on that list, they will get it for you, which is awesome. Alan and those guys they had no money, so it was pretty tough. Basically, they would keep usually two people on payroll all winter and that person would buy or get whatever, and it's the same with Icicle. I will go to Seattle. I have gone a few times in the recent past to help them out but only just barely.

AG: I'm curious if you had much of a relationship with the vendors, the people that are making the machines?

DL: Yeah, [...] American Can especially. They have the summer guys that they would send to all the canneries because they're selling them the cans. So Wayne Mada, Kenny, oh what's Kenny's last name? There was a crew of about five of 'em, and they became some of my best friends ever because they would come and they would work on all the equipment with you, show you all this stuff, and they taught me so much, those guys, on the machines. Ron McBride. Wayne Mada was probably the closest I became with. He loved Larsen Bay and he worked for American Can. He would do the island. He was assigned to the island. He'd go to Alitak, he'd go to Kodiak, he would come out here 'cause we'd go fishing and hang out and just have a blast. They would call and I'd kind of lie a little bit, "Oh, Wayne, he's busy," and we're out fishing, you know, that kind of stuff. He's still alive. He's doing good. He's retired. Most of them have passed away though. A lot of them have gone, that old school, but they were great. If you got in trouble, you know, like Ron, he's in Cordova, he'd get on a flight and he'd fly here. When we did those two tours in Dutch, they even flew out there which I was shocked that they came out there, but they did. And as long as you buy their tin—. So like right now we have Crown, and Cory Henning is the Crown rep. [...] He might come out for a day or two. But he's really good friends of ours. He's a good guy. He mainly helps us with D'Angelos because that's always kind of a stickular, and they want to see a paper trail of somebody that's inspected the seams.

AG: Is D'Angelos the seamer?

DL: Yeah.

AG: So then American Can created the machinery in addition to the cans.

DL: Yep, they make their own. They made the collapsible cans. They also were making the two piece cans when they sold out. But the old guys, like Wayne and Ron and Kenny, all those guys, Harold French was another one, they also rebuilt the machines in the winter. So we could send the filler down and they would rebuild it, or a seamer down or a clencher.





Cannery equipment in a Larsen Bay cannery warehouse. P-1000-7-211.

That's what they did in their winter off season. They were that portion of American Can. At the same time that American Can was making cans, these guys were the Alaska connection. They made cans for all over the U.S.

AG: When did they sell out?

DL: I want to say '95, '96. Silgan was there for a while. We bought Silgan cans for a long time. Then we went to Ball, which was cheaper. Then Ball got in trouble because they went too cheap. Now we're with Crown, Cork and Seal, which is another can company I think out of Olympia maybe.

AG: These are the companies that own the machines or the ones that produce the machines in addition to the cans? Or did that all change when American Can sold? Do they still remake the machines and everything?

DL: No, that all changed. We have to rebuild our own if we want to rebuild. There's a couple of guys down in Seattle that do it, but very expensive. So we have a little shop in Seattle that we try to do everything in-house if we can.

AG: What's that?

DL: You mean rebuilding?

AG: What shop is that?

DL: Oh, it's just a little garage. It's not much bigger than this thing [carpenter shop].

AG: The Icicle?

DL: Yeah, it's pretty small. I think Trident has a bigger shop, and Ocean Beauty [...] has one right on the Ballard Bridge, right near the Ballard Bridge. It's a pretty big shop.

AG: So that's a place of antique canning equipment, huh?

DL: Yep.

AG: I'm wondering, you were around for limited entry then.

DL: Barely. I remember it but—

AG: Were you able to see any changes in the fleet or in the fishery as a result of that?

DL: No, I think it happened before I really noticed it because in Anchorage you wouldn't have seen it [...] especially the seine fleet. Cook Inlet was mainly drifting and setnetters, so that wouldn't have changed any, but here it would have. I think you had to seine for so many years before you got a permit. It was something like that. I don't know if you know the history of that one, but I'm assuming that's what they did. You'd had to have fished like in '70, '71, '72 and they went back on the history and they would give you a permit.

AG: Okay. So, 1980 you became foreman you said.

DL: Here, yeah.

AG: At that point it was owned by the Kodiak Island Seafood, KISI.

DL: It was owned by KISI.

AG: Could you maybe describe the operation at that point?



KISI office. P-779-14-16.

DL: (*Laughing*) [...] The summer started out with, well, let me see if I can explain that one. [...] It was crazy. They used to poop on the beach. All the poop went on the beach when I first came out here and all the way until—. [...] You do things and you try to wrap your head around this stuff. We're out at the end of the fish house. The boats are—. Everybody is discharging all this poop in the water. They're offloading this fish in the water, going up this old elevator into the fish house and you're asking yourself, "Is this sanitary? I don't get it." They had hired a lot of Natives that were just drunk all the time. It was a little bit of mismanagement there. The superintendent was an old school. I think it might have even been Pete Marinkovich coming out of the '50s, and he was very very old school and very regimented. We were all union that year, but no fish. I think we did like 30,000 cases which is nothing. I can do that in probably two days

now. We had the old line shafting. We had the alcoholic port engineers. [...]

The fishermen were always drunk. And wooden boats. But we had king crab on the dock every day. It was great.

AG: Was this always a salmon plant or was there any other processing?

DL: It was always salmon. They've never processed, not that I know of [any other fish]. There was a herring plant over in Zachar [Bay] at the place there. We had an old wooden scow that the fish heads and the guts and everything would get dumped into. Then we'd tow it out to the middle of the bay over here and then push 'em all off in the bay, and then they would all float around and get in all the gillnets (*laughing*). Halibut fishing was phenomenal even right here at the dock. [...] I don't know if you know the history of the village. Dora [Aga] was the matriarchal mother. I loved her dearly. I'm very glad that I got to know her. Dora Aga. She knew the history of forever here and she knew all the herbs. She was like the doctor of doctors. She took care of everybody, but her husband [Johnny Aga] was this little guy and he was always drunk. He ran the Teal for Pete Peterson. Like one night, again, we're young and we don't know what the hell is going on, so he gets a hold of the scow, has us go with him, takes us to the head of the bay here, dumps all the fish heads there because he doesn't care, and then in the morning all the fish heads are laying in front of the office. Four or five days later you can't even make it from the office hardly to the cannery because the stink is so bad (*laughing*). Johnny would come in and we would not go with him, and they'd send somebody else, and he'd make four or five passes at the dock trying to dock this damn barge. We're all running like crazy to get the hell out of his way. That was so fun.

AG: When did that change?

DL: By the time I got back in '86 most of the old— Blazo, Mel Cooley, Charlie Aga, Nestor, Crazy Head, all these different people from the village had all passed on. So with that the village just calmed down. It just kept calming down more and more and more and more. Now you don't find that craziness that you used to have from that end of it. You could feel that change. You could feel it. Then they transcended from the wooden boats into the fiberglass boats and that made a whole different transition. Then in the late '90's or mid-90's, Salmon Packers was forced to acknowledge that if anyone under the age of twenty-one was drunk that they were a hundred percent responsible. That really changed it. Then the fact that the skipper on the boat became a hundred percent responsible for the deck hands, that put the straw. That stopped everything. That stopped all the fighting. That stopped a lot of the stupidity because it became a financial burden to the cannery and to the skippers. Before they didn't care. It was just whatever. Then after that, and that was by '98, '99, that really really changed.

AG: Before, you were describing the ways that were around here. Could you maybe talk a bit about the ways and which boats were on the different ways?



Larsen Bay fleet on the boat ways. P-779-14-14.

DL: Well [...] in the fall, all the wooden boats would come around and right up here on the road on your way to the village there was a track, and there was a little shack right out here. We've torn all the ways out of over there. It's over by the winter house, just past the white house, and he [Victor] would pull them [the boats] up and he would put cribbing on them on the tide underneath it, and then you'd just tow 'em with a line straight up, and then you would side track 'em. So you'd start stacking them up. The Flamingo, the APA 10, the Snowbird, the Kingfisher, the [...] Sprig, the Juliana. It was all the different fishermen. The Tarabochias, they had been here forever. [Jim] Totoff's dad, he fished here. I got to meet his dad before he passed away. They all fished these wooden boats and then they just started going to the fiberglass boats [...] 'cause those things were so dangerous and not very efficient.

AG: The wooden ones?

DL: Yeah.

AG: What about this other?



Victor Carlson. P-1012-33.

DL: Well the other ways, the only thing I can think that Victor told me was they would pull the scows, the big wooden scows, those big big big wooden ones, and he would store them there for the winter. He would tell me stories of trying to cable them up there and they had to block 'em. I mean these things were huge and they weighed tons, and they would slip off the blocks. It was

very dangerous. They used to use tallow, which was a lard, and they would put tallow everywhere and the bears would come down licking the tallow. The last one I saw on the ways, there used to be another right by the second Chinatown bunk house. Pete Peterson had pulled the Teal up there to work on it. He was launching it and the thing got away. That was before the blue building, so it had to have been in the early '80's. It just slid down and hit the mud. Didn't hurt the boat. It was pretty wild to watch it. Victor would tell me stories of the ways out there, and I just couldn't—. If you've ever seen a big New England scow, I'm sure you have, it's amazing that he could actually pull them right out of the water. Just catch those big fall tides, you know, and crib them up on shore, just creep them up there and leave them there. He pulled like three or four of them up at a time. Jimmy Johnson was all involved in all of that. Jack [Wick] probably was as a kid. He could tell you more of the history of the village. Jimmy would tell me the stories of the cannery over at Harvester [Island] where Wallace [Fields] is living. A lot of that came to the houses in the village. They tore it down and built. Jack, as a kid, I think used to play over there where Wallace is now.

AG: Yeah, I've seen photos of Old Uyak. Lots of the photos actually. It was around for a long time.

DL: Really? I had no idea.

AG: There are some really nice pictures that the superintendent took, and his wife, of the gardens out there and all sorts of nice stuff.

DL: What was I reading? I was reading something about that. They were having a war in Karluk and that guy left Karluk and came over and built this thing. Where in the hell was I reading that one at? I'd have to think about that.

AG: Let me know. That sounds like something good to read. You mentioned before that you were in a union for a year. Just one?

DL: I think two years and that was it.

AG: Tell me about when and how unions came to be and then not be at Larsen Bay.

DL: Well, let's see. Alaska Packers I think was union, so when they sold it to the Natives they continued carrying that union. Then when the fishermen got it they just cut it off and that was it. I just stayed here working here. [...] My friends that stayed in the union, they've retiring very well. [...] I just stayed here because I was having too much fun. I never really cared about unions. Probably never cared about retirement till last ten years, and I went, "Oh, retirement. Hm. Now I remember why I should have been in the union!" (*laughing*) But I'm fine.

AG: What was the union?

DL: It was part of the Ironworker's Union out of Seattle. Still is. It still exists. Peter Pan in King Cove, I think AGS. Peter Pan and AGS I think are the only two unions. Maybe Trident, part of it, but I don't think so.

AG: Just the machinists?

DL: Yeah. It's a machinist union.

AG: What about cannery workers unions?

DL: They still exist, some of them. I was at Ocean Beauty when the Filipinos, their union, went on strike and they voted it out. That was in '87, '86.



AG: Was that in Unalaska?

DL: No, that was in Kodiak at Ocean Beauty there. That was a big to-do, but that was a terrible union what they had going.

AG: What was wrong with it?

DL: Well, you had three people collecting the dues and they got paid everything. They collected say \$100,000 worth of dues and they paid each other's salaries of \$30,000 each. So that left about \$10,000 dollars for all the people. It wasn't a very good deal. I don't know, but that was what I was reading and kind of the disclosure of why they're pretty disgruntled. I don't know. [...] I'm sure the Alaska Packers must have been a union cannery. They had to have been. I don't know that much about the history of the innards of the Alaska Packers.

AG: In your experience, there was just the two years of where there was a machinist union here, but was there any other sort of unionization activity or talk of it even?

DL: No. Not that I can remember.

AG: What about strikes?

DL: Well, there was three or four different strikes. [...] The problem with strikes was is that the town fishermen would go on strike and these guys would go fishing. Then these guys would be on strike and the town fishermen [...] would go fishing. That one year I remember they were on strike here, and the town fishermen screwed them over, went fishing, made bank money, and there was just all this animosity. I've had people spray "scabs"—. The year they fished here and they didn't fish in town, [...] the town fishermen came later, after they'd settled, but they would spray "scab" on the side of the dock. All kinds of stuff like that. I've never seen any violence from it but definitely a lot of bickering and a lot of bad feelings.

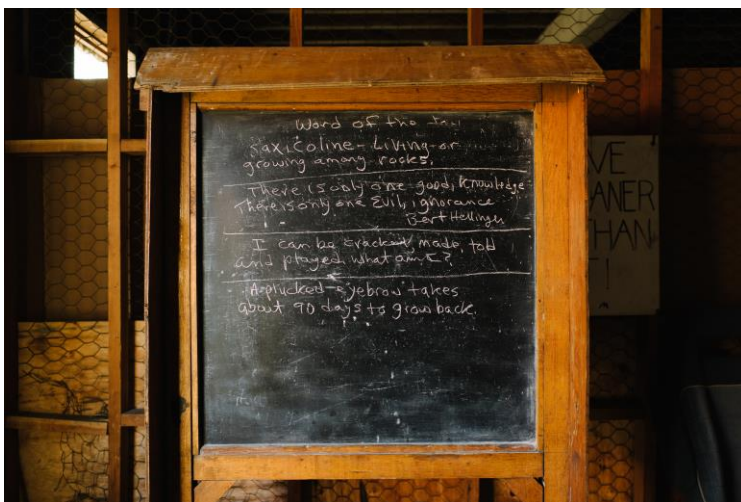
AG: Why was it difficult to coordinate between—?

DL: Communication. [...] We're talking old traditional fishermen. Nowadays, you probably wouldn't have that difficult of communicating, but one, you had no way of contacting each other. Now you've got internet, you've got all the SAT phones, on and on and on. Back then they were kind of segregated. You had Old Harbor fishing, you had Kodiak town fishing, you had Larsen Bay fishing. And every once in a while, [...] there were a few people here that would go creek robbing down on the south end or the town boys would come this area more than these guys. For years they would never go north. Now you find quite a few people going to Afognak, but before they always just traditionally fished within this [area], and every now and again, rarely would I see Old Harbor fishermen here. I still don't. I mean you still once in a while catch 'em.

AG: Why do people stay localized like that?



Lorance's door within the Tiltin Hilton. P-1000-7-172.



Chalkboard near the mug-up line, containing Lorance's word and quotes of the day. P-1000-7-187.

DL: I think just out of not knowing where to fish and not understanding . They know they can catch fish here, they know the areas they can fish, they know they're gonna make money. That would be my guess.

AG: [...] Just speaking to Jim [Toteff] and Joe [Lindholm] yesterday, they talked about 1982. Apparently that was a year in which management changed, I guess the Kodiak—

DL: Yeah, the fishermen got it that year.

AG: Were you involved? Were you ever a part of that management structure or one of the directors, for example?

DL: I was the foreman, the cannery foreman.

AG: How was the transition from being the former owners to the new UniSea fishermen owners?

DL: Those guys cut their own throats. They hired a bad guy. [...]

AG: So you weren't around much for those years?

DL: No, they only owned it for like three years. I think '82, '83, and '84. Then they were closed '85, '86, somewhere right in there. I came back out here in '87.

AG: Why were they closed for those years?

DL: Well, they were trying to sell it. The fishermen were just trying to dump it. I think Alan [Beardsley] bought it just dirt cheap. I don't know if you know Alan Beardsley. He owned a bunch of stores island-wide. He was a storekeeper and owned a bunch of businesses. [...] Was he the mayor of Kodiak at one

point? He might have been. He might have been. He bought it and then just started it up. It was pretty rough the first few years. He just didn't have any money and the place was just falling apart. I'd have to take wood from one section of the cannery to another section of the

cannery in the springtime just to be able to drive forklifts. He had derelict forklifts. You couldn't even walk hardly, much less drive over by the mess hall, the dock was so rotted. It was really bad. Icicle has spent millions in lumber.

AG: So even though it was so rough you stayed on?

DL: Yeah 'cause it was a challenge. It was fun and I got paid, you know. I didn't care. Where else are you gonna go? You're gonna go and get bored. I couldn't work at Ocean Beauty.

AG: Why not?

DL: It's just town. It's just not exciting, you know. There is nothing exciting. There's other canneries. Bristol Bay is boring. It's flat and buggy and it's a very short season. Cordova would have probably been nice, but as you move to south east, again, you get into towns. I would rather be here or Chignik or even King Cove or somewhere remote. That's why you come to Alaska. I don't come up here to hang out in Kodiak. I had fun those two summers I was there, but it wasn't—.

AG: What summers were those?

DL: '85 and '86. I had a blast. I mean, it was great. It was just too much. Alcohol was too accessible. Partying was too accessible. Having too much fun.

AG: Well the '80s were a wild time in Kodiak.

DL: Oh yeah. Yes they were (*laughing*). Yes they were. I'm sure.

AG: In your time here in the '70s and '80s, what were some major technological changes that maybe transpired?

DL: We went from ship-to-shore to one phone. Then one year I showed up and there's phone booths. Wow! And then a few years go by, next thing you know you've got internet. Amazing! Now you've got a cell tower. Amazing! And now they're gonna have internet cell towers all over the village. Amazing! Then the lodges. You got all these fancy lodges here now. That's a big deal. That's a big big change. But you know when you can fly somewhere and you don't have to think about the rest of the world. You don't listen to the news if you want to. More in the past than now. Now you're gonna catch more news and more of what's going on in the world. But back in the '70s and '80s, you got here, who cared what was going on in the planet [...] 'cause you got nature right at your doorstep.

AG: What about in the canning line or the process that took place to process the fish? Were there any advances that—?

DL: Not really. They went from the G chink to the Ks, and that helped the process there so you didn't run out of fish all the time. But the canning lines themselves have pretty much stayed the same. We've always ran at 240 cans a minute. But the G-chink just allowed a lot more efficiency. A lot less waste.

AG: Could you maybe speak about when refrigeration really started coming and impacting the processing and the delivery and all of that?

DL: When I worked in Anchorage in the '70s, they had a freezer plant. They've always been around. But these companies that could afford it. Like when I worked at Ocean Beauty, and they still have a state-of-the-art freezer plant. So freezing has been around forever. I think probably since the '60s I would imagine. And then the canneries. But here it just allowed 'em

to be able to process another 180,000 pounds a day, is all it did, versus 650 [thousand pounds] or whatever we do.

AG: When was the freezer plant installed here?

DL: I want to say in '95, '96. I would say about there, right around that time.

AG: Was it a challenge to incorporate that new part of the operation?

DL: It was huge.

AG: Could you maybe speak about that?

DL: Well, it was because we didn't have enough room and they're trying to cram all this—. They needed a new building but they didn't have the money, so then they had these guys come up. Again they don't have enough money, so they buy this bad equipment and they try to make it work and they fight their way through it, and they've been fighting their way through it until Icicle comes along and throws more money at it, changes it, and now it's kind of efficient to the point of the capacity that it is. But to really impact this place for freezing you would need a new building. More room. More spread out, more freezing capacity. This thing is not very efficient, I don't think, not here at this cannery. But the cannery itself, we're two lines. There are two talls and a half. It's as efficient as you're going to get. One of the drawbacks is getting the product away because we have that barge now. Before we would have to store it [salmon cans] everywhere, and oh-boy, there were cans all over. It's not good for the dock, a lot of weight.

AG: When did they start bringing the barge in?

DL: From Icicle. Yeah, Packers would have never afforded it. They couldn't of. They would have never been able to. Even the last years that Alan had it and the Fields were part owners, too, they were struggling just to keep it afloat, to get loans from the bank. It was always in the spring, you get a loan from the bank against the pack. When the bank, I'm sure, felt that you couldn't make a profit, then they wouldn't give you that loan. That was always a big deal.

AG: Were there some years that it didn't operate?

DL: In 2000 it didn't operate. Alan called me that winter and told me that I didn't have a job. I was like, okay. So I actually went back to work at Ocean Beauty in Kodiak and I was there probably ten days or two weeks and a really good friend of mine was the foreman at that point.

AG: Who was that?

DL: Willy Southerland. Willy has been around forever. And I came to work one morning and said, "You know, Willy, I'm not gonna make it. I just quit. I'm done." (*laughing*) He's like, "What!" and he got all freaked out. I was just like, "I ain't gonna do it. I can't do Kodiak. I'm sorry. I just realized this." So that afternoon, Alan Beardsley called me, and he says, "Hey, how do you like your new job?" And I go, "I don't know. I just quit." And the Fields and Danelski, Pete Danelski, and all these guys had called Alan and said they needed, they wanted me to come out and stay the summer. So I came out here in the summer of 2000 by myself and had the best summer I've ever spent here. Forty hours a week, fishing, just hanging out.

AG: What did you do?

DL: Just making ice in the little ice house for the fishermen. I ran a little generator once in a while. That was the summer that I was staying in this house here. The fishermen could come and take showers there. I had all the food in there. A bear broke in the window and ate all my peanut butter. I was really upset that he ate all the peanut butter and he crashed through the other window. So the fishermen all got together and brought me some peanut butter (*laughing*). But that was a blast. It was really fun. It was three months. Forty hours a week. Shit, I was like, I was in heaven. Nobody here. I had them all trained. If you break anything or break any of the buildings, then I'm not going to let you take a shower. So all the local boys, they made sure that—. Yeah, it was great.

AG: So who picked up their fish?

DL: It went to Alitak. Everything went to Alitak that summer. It was processed down there by Ocean Beauty.

AG: Tell me about 1989 and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.

DL: Well, let's see. We got here not knowing we had a job. We didn't have to work. We started out the season with fifty cases of beer off the Martina (*laughing*). They pulled up, Ed Duncan who's passed away now, he's from Petersburg, I love that guy. But him and Foot, they showed up and we just we were processing just a little bit of fish from Olga-Moser. It's the school teachers down there. They were allowing them to fish. That was it. The whole bay was closed. The halibut fishing was over the top phenomenal because that was the first year ever that this was closed. For a hundred years. I had friends that came up that [...] everybody got jobs on boats, everybody made money. Even I would work at the cannery then. I'd get on a cleanup boat, go out and clean up oil, which was a joke. But everybody made so much money. Ed [Duncan], he knew the big boat out front anchored, so he would go fill up the Martina with fuel and we'd get big steaks and ice cream and go down to Uganik or go find a beach and barbecues. It was awesome. We basically got paid to do nothing. We kind of got screwed on that deal because we had been working in the canneries a long time and we just got ignored. Alan [Beardsley] and the Kodiak Salmon Packers made a lot of money, more than a few million, and there was no sharing at all. And the villages got millions of dollars. And the fishermen, not all fishermen [...] made a lot of money, but most. And then in the end they did. We, as workers, nobody got reciprocated for anything. We just were employees.

AG: What was the mood then?

DL: [...] The mood was just fun. We didn't care because there was no oil here. There really wasn't. I don't know if you were around then.

AG: I was very young.

DL: What is your history? You live in Kodiak? Born in Kodiak?

AG: Yeah. Born in '82, I learned last night, the summer of a very controversial strike on the west side (*laughing*).

DL: Well you get Jim [Toteff] and Joe [Lindholm] going. They're fiery.

AG: Yeah.

DL: I'm supposed to go take a banya.

AG: Oh, yes. I'm sorry.



DL: No, that's okay.

AG: Can we continue for a little bit more?

DL: Yeah.

AG: Could you please tell me about the beach gang? Who was on the beach gang to start with, is it locals, or would you bring people in, and what sort of work do you do to start the season?

DL: Well, the beach gang traditionally were these macho male guys that [...] some would come from the south, but a lot of them would be the villagers. Their job was to offload fish, and to take care of the ways [...]. When you're on the beach gang, you're part of the carpenter crew. Then over time it just transcended into now they just attend to the fishermen. They move their nets, they move their groceries, they keep track of everything. When the big boats come in they pump fish off of 'em. Back in the day we used to have to hand-pitch, you know, push everything, or you had those bucket elevators. [...] I used to help the beach gang a lot. People were very proud to work. Even now, I think the boys are really proud to be on the beach gang because they're aside from the rest of the crew. All they're dealing with is unloading the fish and helping fishermen. They're moving a lot. They're always busy forklifting, doing fun stuff, tying, moving boats, putting boats in the water, pulling boats out of the water, so it's pretty neat.

AG: What do you do when you first arrive in the spring? Could you talk about getting the cannery ready for the season?

DL: Well, you first walk around and kind of look the whole place over, and I guess I try to go to the village and find out what kind of winter they had. Now you can just get on the internet, but before, if it's a cold cold winter, then you know you're gonna have more broken pipes. But the first thing you do is you go up check the dam out and start there and you let the water down. You let the water come down. You start slowly opening up everything, closing valves, checking out what's broken, remembering from the year before well this valve is too rusty, so you pull it out and it slows you down, and eventually you just open the whole thing up. And hopefully it doesn't snow or freeze. This year was not bad. As long as you keep the water flowing. But now, it's even easier because with the city water for the domestic [...] because before you had to get the creek water going for the domestic, too, so you had to scramble. Now you just turn on the domestic, and then that gives you a couple of weeks out. So it's a whole different ball game which is great. In the beginning when I first got here, [...] there was a wooden pipeline, an old wood pipeline, and you'd turn the water on in spring and it'd be leaking everywhere, and he'd [Victor] go up and throw boxes of sawdust in the dam to plug up all the holes in the wooden line, but all the sawdust would come down and plug up every goddamn thing in the cannery. You'd be spending the rest of the summer digging sawdust and rocks and everything else out of it because it wasn't filtered very well back then either. You'd be pulling stick out of the faucets. Now you don't get that.

AG: So when did you replace all of the piping?

DL: I want to say 2000 was the last year we had the wood line. 2002 maybe. When Icicle first bought it, I think the last hundred or so feet was still wood. Maybe more, maybe 500 feet. We finally got rid of it.

AG: You also mentioned before about the fish heads and the poop. When did that all come to an end?

DL: When the fishermen bought it, the state refused to give them a permit to operate unless they got a sewage treatment plant, which they did. They had no choice. It was already in the works. That last year that the Natives had it, the state had come in, told them. So they had already implemented all the permits and all the stuff that they needed.

AG: What about the gurry? The heads and all of that?

DL: That was also implemented by the state, and I think that was also in '81. 'Cause when we came back when the fishermen had it, they weren't doing that. We were grinding. We were grinding and pumping. Where the hell did we pump then? It didn't seem like we pumped out Frenchy's Point back then. I don't remember. I remember a grinder. [...] We still were using the scow, but we had to grind the heads. So we were grinding them and using a scow, but it would just spill over everywhere, and it was crabs and bullheads and everything under the cannery. So then they finally the state came again and we had to start pumping out. Now we can only have quarter-inch and stuff.

AG: And that goes out Frenchy's? Is that that pipe that I stepped over?

DL: Yep.

AG: What is Frenchy's named for, speaking of which?

DL: Don't have a clue. There's some Chinese buried out there from the old days, and I think there are some local white people from the cannery.

AG: Really? Out on Frenchy's Point?

DL: Yep, they are still there, and there are a few Chinese graves up in the village.

AG: I saw those. I actually thought that I could get to them by going over that like salt flat area, and I'm walking along in the grass and next thing you know I'm like "voop" and I had stepped up to my thigh in water (*laughing*).

DL: Jesus.

AG: This is not a path apparently.

DL: Yeah.

AG: I feel like it would be so cool one day when I come back to go around and get a tour. Tell me about the technological changes within the lines. Like you mentioned the egg extractor earlier and just all of the differences in processing I think is super interesting, just because I'm thinking of like historians in the future, these are the things that we're interested in knowing about. Like, how has fish processing changed in the past 35 years?

DL: Well, it's only changed through freezing more than canning. The canning's basically stayed the same. Icicle invented a machine called the Promation. It's a half pound line that does I think 500 cans a minute or something, but don't quote me on that. They actually invented their own machine, but no one's bought it, so it kind of went on the wayside. They still have one in Seward and one in Petersburg. Other than that, there's different modernization of the filling machines, they've gone from an aluminum bucket to a plastic bucket these guys have invented. But the speed of the machines and the dynamics of it haven't really changed at all. What happened, basically, with Alaska machinery, as they were automating down south for the pea canneries, for the apple canneries, for all these canneries, and they were inventing and putting millions of dollars in new equipment. Well, first California ran out of fish, Oregon ran out, then Washington ran out. Everyone assumed that

Alaska would just follow. Forget it. So they've never bothered to continue updating those machines. [...] The whole industry just got pushed to Alaska and that was it, forgotten. Only in the recent twenty years have these older guys, some retired from American Can, some other guys, have stepped up and like tried to automate. There's still Lars in Cordova, He's doing a lot of research on how to improve.

AG: Is there a lot of canning lines that are actually left in Alaska?

DL: There's quite a few. Yeah, there's a lot. I think there's Ketchikan's two canneries, Sitka now has one, that's the newest one they've just put in. Cordova, two or three. There's Bear & Wolf, which is now Trident, and Ocean Beauty. I can't remember if there's a third one. There's a big one in Valdez, and then on the Island [Kodiak] there's three now. King Cove. In Bristol Bay there's probably ten.

AG: So it's a healthy industry still.

DL: Yeah, I think so.

AG: Okay. Well, Dexter, I know you have a banya to take so I will stop this now after an hour and a half of questions.

DL: I hope that was helpful.



Dexter Lorance standing in the cannery carpenter shop, Larsen Bay, 2015. P-1000-7-470.