

Name of person Interviewed: Marty Olsen (MO)

Facts about this person:

Age: 69

Sex: Male

Occupation: Retired fisherman

Home ports: New Bedford, Boston

Residence: Fairhaven (?)

Ethnic background: Norwegian American

Interviewer: Millie Rahn (MR)

Transcriber: Sarah Smith

Place interview took place: Oral History Station at HDC

Date and time of interview: September 24, 2005

INDEX / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: New Bedford; Fairhaven; union; regulations; Norwegians; superstitions; dangers; bad weather; Narragansett stern trawler; boat cuisine; diversity of fishermen; fishing families; future of New Bedford; fishermen in the media

[00:00] Born in Wildwood, New Jersey; father was fisherman; moved to Fairhaven; joined the Army; got out and started fishing; retired from fishing in 1996; fished out of New Bedford and some out of Boston; Boston was different; Boston had no union so no benefits; they didn't get enough time home

[03:00] The union in New Bedford was good – they organized the vessels and amount of landings; everything fell apart when the union ended – there were no pensions or welfare benefits, no organization of schedules; union started in the 1940s, pension fund started in 1959; no union today; union was honest and up front

[05:29] Things improved in fishing from when he started to when he retired; better conditions, boats better equipped, switched from side trawling to stern trawling; future of the fishery – it's not a good sign when the government steps in; too many rules and regulations; let people clean up their own act instead of getting the environmentalists involved; conditions are changing because water is getting warmer; fewer lobsters, cod, haddock because water is warmer; Russians fished everything out with factory trawlers but the fish came back

[08:16] None of his children fish; son went out and didn't like it; daughters married to shore people; need to have a good wife

[09:33] Had a few close calls with bruises and broken ribs; had a couple of fires and broken pipes; can fix everything with black tape

[10:33] The old timers had lots of superstitions; if you saw a priest you shouldn't go fishing that day; if you saw a funeral procession you shouldn't go fishing; don't let a woman step on a net; don't whistle; don't make pea soup; don't turn against the sun if you're backing out of the dock; they were very strict about these superstitions; over time these dwindled

[12:24] Fished out beyond the Hague Line before that was in effect; usually fished offshore; had to fish inside 200 miles when that went into effect; fished Nantucket Shoals, Culivator, the Leg; weather determined how far you would go

[13:16] Was in one bad storm on the Narragansett in the 70s; making ice; had to wait under the Cape for two days; another time they were behind a Coast Guard cutter for three days; it was too rough to bring them in; the Coast Guard brought out their two new cutters; cutters were really bad in the winter and they put them in the shipyard after that;

[14:58] The Narragansett was the first stern trawler; the old timers believed it would never work; his father fished on it when it was almost new and out of Newport; Jack Jacobson bought it and then Reidar; fished with Reidar for 8 or 9 years on different boats; he's a good friend

[17:13] Father was Norwegian from Norway; mother was German from Philadelphia; Norwegians are good people to work with; fished with the "League of Nations; fished with Latvians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Irish, English, Icelanders, one guy from Israel; misses fishing sometimes; it's a different breed of fisherman today; they always made sure they had a good cook; today all they worry about is taking out pizza; some of the Norwegian cooks had been to culinary school; they weren't afraid of spending money on food; you get hungry fishing

[20:15] They have a pension meeting every where he sees other retired fishermen; they have a meeting with coffee and doughnuts and tell stories about the old days; Hambone was an old swordfisherman who moved to Connecticut and had lots of stories to tell

[22:50] New Bedford will pull out; people are different today; they have different ways; everything is faster today; the government should leave people alone – they don't need all the pressure; fishermen and boat owners get too greedy; places go down and then they bounce back; they had some bad years in the past; prices were bad; one time they were told they'd get five cents for codfish, brought the fish in, could only get four cents; they steamed up to Boston and sold it there for five cents; buyers were sometimes nasty

[25:37] Likes to eat fish; worked on Union Wharf in Fairhaven opening lobsters when he was in school; didn't like lobsters so much then; hands were raw; had to get the meat to come out perfectly; always had jobs down by the docks as a kid, painting boats, always working; didn't live too far from the docks

[27:03] His father's father was a farmer; never met most of his father's family; his father's brother was a housepainter in Somerville; other brother was in Norway – doesn't think he was a fisherman; father sailed around the world, yachting and then on tanker or cargo ships; then started fishing; fishing is an interesting life; meet lots of interesting people from all walks of life in any fishing port; working class people keep the country alive

[29:05] Festivals are good; they're interesting and helpful; good for the people to get to know different things; he likes the cooking; some old time cooks around the festival

[31:00] Aggravated when a guy gets caught with drugs and he's been fishing a few times and the papers blast him as a fisherman; they don't do this to other professions; it blackens the name of fishermen; the papers do it for publicity and to sell papers; they maybe only made one trip so they're not really fishermen; they haven't been fishing forty years; the paper around this area blasts fishermen; a lot of people look down on fishermen; they're thought of as a lower class of life; most fishermen are proud people

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00]

MR: Let's see... um... why don't you say a few, you know, just say testing or something like that to...

MO: Testing.

MR: Okay, great. That's picking up well. Okay, great. Alright, um... Today is Saturday September 24, 2005. My name is Millie Rahn, I'm a folklorist, and I'm here in the Harbor Development Corporation building on the New Bedford pier with Marty Olsen, and we're going to talk about his life as a fisherman. Let's start if you could just tell me a little bit about where you grew up, um, your connections to New Bedford, and how you started fishing.

MO: I was born in Wildwood, New Jersey, 1938... and my father was a fisherman down there, and 1945 I believe we - fishing fleet kinda dwindled down there and they started coming up to New Bedford, fishing out of New Bedford. So, uh, we moved up here in '45 in Fairhaven and I went to Fairhaven schools. And, um, I went in the Army in 1957, got out in 1960, and started fishing in '61 I guess, something like that, around '61, steady fishing. And, uh, joined the union and uh was dragging mosta the years. Spent a few seasons scalloping but most of the time dragging. I retired from fishing in '96.

MR: And you did all of your fishing out of New Bedford?

MO: New Bedford and I was a short time in Boston.

MR: Aha. What was... what were the differences between Boston and New Bedford?

MO: Um... they're different style, um, there was of course, uh, there was no, uh, there was no union up there which was a bad... no benefits, no pensions, funds, no medical benefits where we had 'em here with the union boats. And, um, they had a different style, they came and go as they wanted, you didn't really get...[ahem]... excuse me... the proper time home, sometimes you went out the next day, and, um, it was a diff... I didn't care for it that much but I stayed up there for awhile, and... 6 or 8 months I guess.

MR: Was that out of the fish pier or...?

MO: Yah.

MR: Okay

MO: Boston Fish Pier.

[03:00]

MR: So... let's talk about the union for a bit, because we haven't talked about that yet this year in the interviews. Um, I know the union was a big deal in New Bedford. Can you say a little bit more about that?

MO: Well, the union was really a blessing for New Bedford because uh it uh, it didn't have to have all these pressure quotas. The union took care of it. It was union rules, union votes you went uh so many thousand pounds of yellowtail per man and uh... and um... it was more, you know you had uh, three days home, two... two days to start with, and then we went to three. So it kinda split the boats up. They didn't get too bunched up unless you had bad weather. And, uh... it was more organized. When the union left then everything kinda fall apart, and there was no pensions and no welfare benefits. There was boats came and go, come and go as they went and wanted, all kinda hours, we had sailing hours when, uh, we were with the union we'd... no sailing before 11 in the morning and, uh, no sailing after 5 pm. No Sunday sailings, no holiday sailings.

MR: Hmm...

MO: And, uh, it kinda kept things very organized. It was, it was a good benefit I think at that time for the uh...

MR: Do you know about when the union started?

MO: Uh, when the union started? The union was... I believe back in the 40's, I mean I'm not really sure

MR: Mmm hmmm. Okay, we can check that out

MO: And the pension, the pension fund started in 1959.

MR: And, you're saying there's no union now

MO: Um, not... nothing to speak of. If there is I don't know if there's any boats in it now if there is a union really.

MR: Yeah, I don't think so but...

MO: No, I haven't heard of 'em. But, um, it was a good thing, it was a good, it was really a super thing for this, for this industry, cause it really got it organized. But some didn't like it, y'know, I mean you had a... you saw what... what... what the boat was being paid, you saw what you were being paid, you saw the expense sheets, and, you know, it was pretty honest.

[05:29]

MR: I was gonna say pretty up front? What were some of the changes you saw over the years from when you started to when you retired?

MO: Well, better. Conditions were much better, boats were better equipped, uh, we went away from the old side trawlers into the, um, stern trawlers. Steel boats, better navigation equipment, better... better fishing gear - everything, really.

MR: What do you think about the future of the fishery now?

MO: Right now? It's - I don't know - when the government steps in it's usually (laughs) not a good sign. You know, it's too many rules and regulations, really, from my... my opinion. I think if you, um, if they let people clean up their own act it would be, um, beneficial instead of these environmentalists and, uh, they talk about these sea turtles and all this stuff around here...

MR: Right.

MO: I fished all almost, what, 30, 35, 37 years, I forget, and I never saw a sea turtle and I was all over the... all over the area. And I never once did I ever see a sea turtle. Of course the temperature - the water temperature is changing now, it's getting warmer up this way, so, you know, you do find different conditions. Lobsters are not as plentiful cause they're a cold water product, same with haddock and codfish - I mean, they're cold water fish.

MR: Yeah. Well, by... it's certainly my bias, but, as a folklorist, and I've worked with a lot of fishermen, I used to live in Newfoundland, and I trust the fishermen. They know what's out there or what's not out there...

MO: Mmmm...

MR: And, you know, their families usually have been fishing for a long time and they know things go in cycles.

MO: Yeah, they do. I mean, even when... take back when in the, um, was it late 60's, when the Russians were over here...

MR: Oh, right.

MO: I mean they just scooped everything that was down there. But it came back.

MR: Mmm hmmm.

MO: And I mean they had what, thousands of ships out here? Factory ships, and if they didn't, uh, if they didn't, uh, use it for, uh, for, you know, fish products, I mean they, they made their own flour - you could smell 'em before you could see 'em.

MR: Hmmmm...

MO: They would cook all that and make their own flour on those ships and, um, it was, um, and I mean that for then, you know, fish came back after awhile.

[08:16]

MR: Yeah.... Do you have any children or other members of your family that are still fishing?

MO: No. My – my, uh, children, no. No, no. My son is a electrician. He didn't get into this. Thank God I took him on a couple trips – he didn't like it.

MR: [laughs] Yeah.

MO: So he's got his own business now. And my two girls, well they're not... their husbands are shore people.

MR: Yeah. Well for some families, you know, they carry it on, and some just...

MO: Yeah, well, some do and, uh, I know quite a few that did. And, it worked out well, you know, it all depends. It's a different lifestyle.

MR: Yeah.

MO: You gotta have uh...

[08:59]

MR: Did you have any close calls?

MO: You gotta have a good wife. [laughs]

MR: Oh. Yeah. I know, um, I've interviewed some of the wives of both the fishermen and even some of the shore support people and, you know, what that life is like and...

MO: Mmmm... different.

MR: Yeah. And yesterday I was talking to some of the Norwegians whose families were back in Norway, and, you know... they go home at Christmas and...

MO: Yeah. Well, there was quite a few over here then.

MR: ... maybe one other time. It was tough. It was very tough.... Did you have any close calls when you were... out there?

[09:33]

MO: I don't know, sometimes there... I think we all had close calls one time or another. I don't... nothing really... some, uh, banged up bones but, uh [laughs], some broken ribs and stuff like that but, uh, no. No sinking. I wasn't on any ones that were...

MR: Great.

MO: No sinkings... we have...

MR: That's good.

MO: ...couple with fires and that's, uh, that's a nasty thing on a boat. But, got put out fast and we didn't have any problems and... pipes breaking, water, but you get it fixed. Always had... I used to kid years ago, even the old timers used to kid about it... always make sure you got enough rolls of tape on board. Black tape. That was... fixed everything with black tape.

MR: Oh, okay, right.

MO: [laughs]

[10:33]

MR: Um... speaking of the old timers, did... were there any superstitions or things that you did to protect yourselves?

MO: Oh, sure. They had a lot of...

MR: [laughs]

MO: The old... some of the old timers, they really had some superstition.

MR: What... do you remember what some of them were?

MO: Oh, number one, if you, if you, uh, if you saw, um... well one was a prie... if you saw a priest on the way to the boat you shouldn't go out that day.

MR: Ah!

MO: And another one was if you, if you saw a funeral procession – hah – that was a bad day to go! I don't know if they just made them up to... so they an excuse to stay home or uh...

MR: [laughs]

MO: ... or if it really was but, um, don't let a woman step on a net.

MR: Ah!

MO: Oh, I'm trying to think... there were, there were so many of 'em, you know? Don't whistle.

MR: Right...

MO: And, uh, along with the New Foundlanders and the Nova Scotians they used to, uh, forbid any cook to make a pot of pea soup.

MR: Mmmm hmmm? [laughs]

MO: Because it was gonna be a howling gale of wind... but they had, oh, tons of, uh, superstitions. Don't turn against the sun and if you're backing the boat out of the dock, don't turn against the sun. All that kind of, uh... but, uh...

MR: Don't say pig [laughs]

MO: But it dwindled with age, you know. People got a little more realistic and, you know, forgot about some of those things. Life still went on.

MR: Yeah.

MO: You know, it's funny, some of 'em, they were, some of em were real stern about it.

MR: Well, you know, sometimes it really does make sense, and that's kind of the occupational lore that's passed down....

MO: Mmm.... Yeah, yeah.

[12:24]

MR: ... from generation to generation. How far out did you go fishing? What were some of the spots you went to?

MO: Well, we went before the... the Hague Line went into effect, we went out beyond the 200 mile limit.

MR: Mmm hmmm

MO: But then, uh, when they put that Hague Line in we had to stay inside that 200 mile but, we were... I was usually offshore most of the time. There's certain times of the year you fished on Nantucket Shoals. And then it was further east, Culivator, and all the way down to the Leg... what they call the Leg down eastern part of George's... We really went all around the... the area.

MR: Mmm hmmm

MO: Weather usually figured where, you know, you were gonna go.

[13:16]

MR: I was gonna ask about weather, yeah.

MO: Yeah.

MR: Cause a lot of those close calls had to do with storms and storms are very much on our minds this weekend

MO: I... one, uh... I was on the Narragansett back in the 70s with Captain Jack and, uh, and uh, we, uh... Oh, it was, uh, howlin', and we were making ice. We finally got under, got under the Cape, put the anchor out, and beat some of the ice off, and we laid there for two days.

MR: Mmm...

MO: We were loaded with ice.

MR: Wow.

MO: But we got under there, so we were alright. Another time we were behind a Coast Guard cutter for three days...

MR: Mmm...

MO: It was too rough to bring us in. They had to keep jogging us around. It's when those new cutters came out, the Vigilant and the Vigorous. I think they were, what, two hundred, two hundred and seventy, three hundred feet, somewhere in that... and they had just launched those boats. They'd only... hadn't really had a good try out in the wintertime with them. And they found out they were awful. They were rolling bottom up and they'd... we were behind 'em, we were in a little Narry and, uh, they would call every twenty minutes, half an hour. "Everything alright?" "Oh yeah, we're fine, but we're not doing *that* good". They were just... they, they took 'em... they took 'em and put 'em back in the... [ahem]... excuse me... they took 'em and put 'em back in the shipyard I believe, and put some rolling chocks and some bigger rolling chocks or something on 'em because, uh, them guys were really suffering.

MR: [laughs]

MO: But all we could see was the stern of that thing going...

MR: Aahhh! Gosh.

MO: It... for almost three days. We finally got home. Three different Coast Guard cutters, we finally made it home.

[14:58]

MR: Wow... Now you mention the Narragansett, and that comes up a lot when people talk about New Bedford. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

MO: About the Narragansett?

MR: About the Narragansett.

MO: Well, that's really the first, uh stern trawler, steel stern trawler in, uh, that was ever fished in this area. The... the old timers said they'd never work. They didn't – wouldn't believe it, you know. My father was on it when it was, uh, almost new. When it was fishing out of, um, was fishing out of Newport. 'Course Blount owned it. He built it – speculation. Didn't sell it right away. So, they had a few different skippers on there trying it out, and finally Jack Jacobson bought it. He sold the Salvy (?) J and he bought the... bought the Narragansett. Did quite a bit of work on it. And, um, he had it for- for years. Put a new engine in it... And then somebody else bought it. And then Reidar had it for quite awhile. I was... I was there with Reidar.

MR: Yeah, he was trying to restore it, and... I don't think that worked out, did it?

MO: No, I don't think so.

MR: Yeah. Yeah, I have to...

MO: I fished with Reidar for, oh, altogether I guess 8...8, 9 years I guess.

MR: Oh! Good for you.

MO: Um, Narragansett and the, um, Chivas Regal. Then they had the Viking built.

MR: Oh, right.

MO: And then the, uh, they also had the Pat.. the General Patton.... And when he'd stay home I got the honors to take it out.

MR: Very cool.

MO: Nice man.

MR: Oh, he's a wonderful man and his wife is so important to this festival and...

MO: Oh yeah. Yeah, we've been friends with them for years.

MR: Yeah I first met them, um... I also work on the Lowell folk festival and their son Tor was up making nets one year...

MO: Oh yeah, yeah – nice kid.

MR: ...We did all maritime stuff... he talks like an old timer...

MO: Oh, yeah, yup.

MR: He amazes me... he's so young and he just... he's been around it for so long. Well, speaking of fishing with Reidar who's Norwegian, what were some... was... were people from all backgrounds... I mean, all kind of ethnic backgrounds...

[17:13]

MO: My fath... my father was Norwegian, came from Norway...

MR: I wondered about that...

MO: ...But I was born ... but I was born here. My mother was German – born in Philadelphia, my father was born in Norway.

MR: Ah!... and your mother was German from Philadelphia?

MO: Yeah.

MR: Yeah, the... the Phil... the Phila... the, uh, Norwegian presence here is amazing, here in New Bedford.

MO: Mmmm... They're wonderful people to work with too.

MR: Yeah.

MO: But you – you go, uh, I mean, we fished – I fished with – with the League of Nations you might as well say, I guess, you know, really.

MR: I know there were... well... folks, people from Nova Scotia, I interviewed somebody yesterday, and... some Latvians? Did you fish with any Latvians?...

MO: Yup... yup... yup...

MR: ...Polish... Portuguese?...

MO: Spaniards... Portuguese... um... Irish. English. Icelanders.... Um, we even had a guy from, um... mm god, what was he from, he went... Israel?... I believe? I think he was from Israel...

MR: Mmm!

MO: ... was with us awhile, one time for awhile. And he, uh, he quit fishing around here and he moved to, uh, he went out to the king crabbing out in Alaska.

MR: Oh yeah.

MO: Yup. Never heard no more about him after that.

MR: Hmm... Do you miss it?

MO: Um... parts of it. But I – a different breed today. It's a... I mean, it's a different breed of fishermen, different... I mean it's different... they have different ways of life today – they don't... we always made sure we had a good cook. Today all they worry about is taking pizza out, and, uh...

MR: Ahh!

MO: ... that would kill me out there. Heh! Look at that every day! [laughs] But we always had... oh, we had some of the finest cooks... course you know the Norwegian cooks, most of them went to, uh... before they came over here they all went to school. Cook culinary schools and...

MR: Oh yeah.

MO: You know they... they're very heavy on their schooling over there, and uh... oh, we had some fine cooks.

MR: Yeah, if people eat well, they stay happy – I mean it makes a lot of sense to...

MO: Oh we did, you know. We weren't afraid of spending money on grub, cause I mean we – that would...

MR: Yeah...

MO: We paid for that share of it, you know. But, uh, you know, we always had good... 95% of the time we had, uh... very good cooks. Chefs, some of 'em.

MR: Wow... Yeah, and it's fun to cook for people who like to eat. [laughs]

MO: Well, when you're working those hours, you know, you...

MR: You've gotta eat decently...

MO: ... you put some grub down...

MR:Yeah, exactly.

MO: And put down a hundred thousand in fishing – I – five days, and – and, uh, you're working, uh, eight on, four off.

MR: Yeah...

MO: You, uh, you get hungry.

[20:15]

MR: Do you still spend a lot of time with retired fishermen like yourself?

MO: Oh, yeah, I was... I go... we have a pension meeting every, every uh... couple – two, three months. In fact I – one – you probably interviewed Woody last year.

MR: Yes!

MO: Yeah, well, he was at the last meeting. And, uh, Louie Doucette? I think he's gonna be 95. Yup...

MR: I interviewed him as well, yeah...

MO: ... Yeah, he – he will – they all go to those meetings – we have a meeting up at the... Veteran's Post in New Bedford.... And, uh, we sit there and gab, and there's... still quite a few that go to it – I don't know, maybe – the last time wasn't too many there, about 35 I guess, but sometimes you get 50 pe- 50 of 'em, yeah.

MR: Wow. So it's kind of like...

MO: Have a little meeting, and then they have coffee and doughnuts and yak and then the old stories come out... that would be the place to sit and...

MR: Aahh!

MO: ... have your tape recorder.

MR: Yeah!

MO: They start talking, Woody and them guys they start talking about the real old days. Then another... another one from Nova Scotia – Dick McCloud...

MR: I just interviewed him yesterday!...

MO: Did you... him? Yeah?

MR: ... Oh my gosh!

MO: He's a hot ticket, eh?

MR: ... What a character!...

MO: He is!

MR: He...

MO: And, um... too bad you never got a hold of, um, the guy they used to call Hambone.

MR: Oh! I...

MO: He, uh, he would – he could tell the stories. He ended up, uh, his daughter lived in, um, I guess it was – was it Connecticut, I – yeah, Connecticut, somewhere around Stonington or somewhere. Course he was – after he retired, his wife died, and, uh, and uh... he went to live with his daughter. And he ended up, uh, talking to people over at the Mystic Seaport. You know, he was an old – an old swordfisherman and uh...

MR: Oh, okay.

MO: ... dragging, and...

MR: Well, I'm sure...

MO: ... and dory – an old dory fisherman...

MR: ... but I'm sure they interviewed...

MO: He had some stories! He could tell stories for – and he was good at telling 'em, you know? He would get right down in the detail and... really come out with 'em. Petersen was his name. They called him Hambone.

MR: Well, you know, um, Mystic had one of the early maritime oral history projects so I'm sure that they got his stories.

MO: They mighta got some but I don't know, but...

MR: Yeah, they've done...

MO: ... he was a... he was a... quite a man...

MR: Wow...

MO: Big strappin'... Know, there was nothin' phased him... he was a striker on 'em... his old time... them old swordfish boats years ago...

[22:50]

MR: Wow... So what do you think's the future for New Bedford?

MO: [laughs] What's the future for the world right now? Heh.

MR: Well, yeah.

MO: I... I think New Bedford'll always pull out. You know, I think if you got a... a backbone and a, you know, you got... the history here, uh... I can't see why it wouldn't... you know... might not be... well, it's... life changes anyway, so I mean you really... you have different – different people, different ways... course, you know, it's – everything's faster today, and so you gonna... you know, filet fish faster, and uh, different processing methods. I think they should cut down on – leave this – leave them alone, let 'em... how do – how should I put it? Leave 'em alone and, uh... the governments... they... lay back. They – they don't need [ahem] – excuse me – they don't need all that, um, pressure.

MR: Yeah...

MO: And uh... and the... and the same with the fishermen and the boat owners, they don't need to get too greedy.... That - that's a bad feature too... Greed...

MR: Yeah... Well, that's so much a part of our culture these days unfortunately...

MO: Yeah. But, uh, I think they'll bail out.

MR: Well, I hope so, I mean...

MO: They always seem to, I mean, you know, places that go down, and then they bounce back up.

MR: Yeah. I mean, it happened here – well, it's happened here... over and over and over...yeah...

MO: Oh, well we've had... I remember years we had – we had some bad years, where it was... wasn't great, you know... prices were lousy, and uh, we didn't get three cents for yellowtail and four cents for codfish. We came it with a trip of codfish, a hundred something – a little over a hundred – hundred thousand – 'round a hundred thousand, and uh... we were supposed to get... we had called one of the buyers ahead of time and he said, well we... pretty sure... almost guaranteed you'll get a nickel tomorrow for codfish. Well we come in, put 'em on the board, the auction board then, and, uh... four cents. Wouldn't go over the four cents mark. So, uh, took it off the board... told the... skipper told the gang be back – back down the boat three o'clock this afternoon, we're going to Boston. [laughs] And we steamed – steamed all the way to Boston, sold 'em the next day, and got our nickel... [laughs]

MR: Oh my gosh! Phew! ...well...

MO: Did that a few times... Buyers, they were tough – some of them buyers were really... playing nasty, sometimes...

[25:37]

MR: Did you eat a lot of fish, at home?

MO: Yeah, I ... I still like fish.

MR: Yeah.

MO: I like any kinda seafood, really...

MR: My husband, um, grew up in Boston – South Boston – and he worked a lobster boat, very briefly, I mean he was just... lowest of the low... to this day he will not eat lobsters [laughs]. I love lobsters.

MO: I worked in uh, in... when I was in school on summer, I worked in McLane's all summer. On Union Wharf in Fairhaven. And all I did every day was open lobsters. I wasn't too popular on lobsters for awhile either... first two weeks my hands were ripe raw...

MR: That's what it...and....

MO: Openin' them lobsters all day long.

MR: Oh, and... the cuts and then all of that it just got...

MO: ... you had to open – and then when you worked in a place like that you had to open 'em so that the meat came out perfect – you didn't want no broken meat, you know...

MR: ... right...

MO: ... you know, the tail had to come out perfect, the claws had to come out perfect, you know – oh, it was... whole summer I did that...

MR: Hmm...

MO: ... but it was fun.

MR: Yeah.

MO: Was a dollar, you made a dollar, you know – you know, we worked, always worked, paintin' boats when we were kids and... you know, always doin' something. I was always around the waterfront – I didn't... I didn't live very far from the docks in Fairhaven so I was always around...

MR: Well, and you grew up in it too...

MO: Yeah, yeah...

MR: ... Did your family in Norway, were they fishing too? Your father's family?

MO: I didn't know much about, uh, his... uh, his father was a farmer.

MR: Oh!

MO: ... but they were all... his father I never met... fam... most of their family was uh, was dead early in life, his mother and the father, and there was, well there was one brother that was over here but he was, uh... he was a professional housepainter in Bos... in Somerville...

MR: Hmm...

MO: ... and that's the only brother that was over here the other – the other one was over in Norway, I don't... I don't know, I don't think he was a fisherman, I'm not sure... but, uh...

MR: Hmm...

MO: Wasn't much contact there...

MR: Yeah... interesting...

MO: The old man left - left over there when he was a kid... and, uh, sailed all around the world. Was yachting to start with and then he went on, uh... tankers or cargo ships or something, and that's when he coming over here.

MR: Hmm....

MO: Started fishin'.

MR: Wow.

MO: But...

MR: Was there anything you'd like to add or we didn't ask or...?

MO: No [laughs]

MR: [laughs]

MO: Not much, I don't think, that's... it's a very interesting life.

MR: Yeah.

MO: It really... and um, you meet some wonderful people. All walks of people and life and... they always seem to meet around the fishing industry. I don't care what port you go in.

MR: It's interesting you say that 'cause that's what I always say about the work that I do, I meet the coolest people in the world...

MO: Mmm...

MR: ... because I work on festivals I do going to communities and, you know, interview people about everything, but – people are really interesting...

MO: Yeah. The working class people really... well, that's what keeps the country alive.

MR: Yeah.... Um... what do you think about the role of this festival... in New Bedford now?

[29:12]

MO: I think anything they do helps. I think it's a, you know... you, um... they - they had them years – for the years they had those big shrimp festivals down in Louisiana and Texas and, um...

MR: ...that's...yeah...

MO: ...they had the, uh, crab festival in the Chesapeake, and... I think it all helps. People get to know different things about the country when they have these, uh, affairs, you know. It's like the feast, and, uh, you know, it's all – I think it's interesting, and... Think it's helpful. Plus good for the people.

MR: Yeah...

MO: You know...

MR: ... well I think it's good for...

MO: ...get to know people, get to know different things, and... different types of cooking, and... that's what I go for, the cooking – to eat. [laughs]

MR: Well, I'm... this afternoon and – and tomorrow I'm doing the Foodways Stage as well so...

MO: The what?

MR: The food stage – the Foodways Stage...

MO: Oh, yeah, yeah...

MR: ... where people are gonna demonstrate their recipes and...

MO: Oh yeah. Yeah...

MR: Yeah!

MO: They got some old time cooks around, they'll put some... some good fish chowder on, and...

MR: Yup.

MO: The good stuff!

MR: Yeah, I have... don't recall right now what people are going to make but, yeah, I mean... I think it's – it's interesting... every generation seems further disconnected from the source of food, whether it's farming or fishing or whatever. And to see... where things come from, what goes into it, and also there's so much...

MO: Excuse me...

MR: ...information about the negative stuff in the newspapers, you read about fishermen or about the regulations or whatever, when people have a chance to put a human face on it and see it's not black and white... you know, it's very grey...

[31:00]

MO: Well, it's... you know, what gets me, and that aggravates me, is, um... you read the papers and these – jor – guy pulled up for drugs, and... whatever... and, maybe he made one trip fishing. Well, they have to blast it. He's a fisherman. But the guy that worked in, um... any other business... could have been a president of a company – they don't put nothing about what he did. But fishermen, right away – they gotta blast him as a fisherman... blacken the fishermen's name... that irks me!

MR: Yeah... yeah...

MO: And you see it so often, you know, it's – heh... why they do it, but publicity for them, I guess... and sell the paper, you know...

MR: Yeah, it's...

MO: It's sad.

MR: It is sad.

MO: Because most of those people, they never... you can't really classify them as a fisherman, they maybe made one trip, maybe they fished a year.

MR: Right...

MO: They didn't fish forty years, you know.

MR: And if they keep up that behavior they're not going to fish for very long... Yeah...

MO: No, well, you know, not going to live long either but... I mean it's the way the paper has to, uh, blast it, on – especially around this area.

MR: Well, when I was in Newfoundland... people would say “Oh, I'm *just* a fisherman” and I would say “Huh? What do you mean *just*? Your family's been fishing for four hundred years, I mean, it's incredible!”...

MO: Yup, yup...

MR: ... “Don't - don't put yourself down!”

MO: Mmm...

MR: You know, just...

MO: Well, it's because...

MR: It's a way of life...

MO: ... because a lot of people always look down on fishermen.

MR: Yeah.

MO: They always thought that was a lower class of life.

MR: Nope...

MO: But most fishermen are proud people.

MR: Oh yeah!... And really know, I mean, literally know how the world works 'cause they see a lot of it.

MO: Mmm. Yup. All walks of it.

MR: Yup.... Okay, well, I think we've got quite some good stuff here...

MO: Hope so.

MR: ... so I will say thank you very much and I'm gonna turn this off...

[33:00]