

Name of person interviewed: Mike Yortson [MY]

Facts about this person:

Age 50 at time of interview

Sex Male

Occupation Currently manager at New Bedford West Marine, previously was a shipbuilder and marina manager

Residence unknown

Ethnic background: Portuguese

Name of person interviewed: Mary Yortson Sylvia [MYS]

Facts about this person:

Age 93 at time of interview

Sex Female

Occupation: Fisherman's wife, mother, mill worker

Residence: New Bedford

Ethnic background: Portuguese

Interviewer: Janice Fleuriel [JF]

Transcriber: Kayleigh Moore
Erin Heacock

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: September 25, 2005

INDEX/KEYWORDS**KEYWORDS**

Mother; Son; Portuguese; Fisherman's Wife; Providence; Rhode Island; New Bedford; Fairhaven; Massachusetts; World War II; Mill Worker; Shipbuilding; Summer Fest; Whaleboat Racing; Tugboat Racing; Marina; West Marine; Beetle Boat; Lost at sea;

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- [00:01] Introductions; Mary was born in 1911; Had two sons; Michael was born in 1955 in Providence; Family moved to Providence after death of Mary's first husband;
- [01:57] Family immigrated from St. Michaels in the Azores; Mary worked in a doctor's dining room in Providence; Met her second husband at the hospital; He was a maintenance worker; Mary's first husband, Manny Cruz, was lost at sea when she was 29;
- [04:00] Mary tells story of getting engaged during a Valentine's Day blizzard in 1940; Manny picked her up at work with a bouquet of flowers and a stuffed bunny; They were married in June 1940; Mary was a bride in June, a mother in June, and a widow in June; Manny was a skipper for Francis J. Mantle's boat; Had a lot of fishermen at her wedding;
- [07:54] Honeymooned at the World's Fair; Would see husband off and as he returned at a point of land and he would blow the boat's whistle as he went by; First son Ronnie was born;
- [09:40] Manny left Mantle's boat due to problems; Went to work for Frank Parson; When Ronnie was born the boat was named Ronald and Dorothy after Ronnie and Parson's daughter; Night before Manny was lost at sea, the family went to the circus; Almost stayed at the New Bedford Hotel, but too expensive; Manny left the two at home as normal; Mary had company and had a strange visit from Parson before finding out her husband was lost; Mary found out he was lost in the newspaper; Police discovered his body 12 days later; In his billfold had Mary's wedding photo and a 1911 nickel in honor of her birth year; Says she lost a lot of weight but her son kept her going and surviving;
- [19:06] Had very good parents; Moved back to New Bedford when Michael was 10 or 11 to take care of Mary's mother; Growing up Mary didn't have much self-esteem, although had a lot of suitors now that she's older; Father owned a barber shop and a pool hall; Father received respect; Mary would go dancing;
- [23:21] Did not grow up in a fishing family; Portuguese families would picnic on Palmer's Island on Sundays; Neighbors would shuck scallops and the kids would play; Father also owned a bowling alley near Asschunet Park; Mary could take the trolley car to the bowling alley;
- [25:51] Tells of close knit group of neighbors where Mary grew up, all types of ethnic groups; Neighborhood is no longer there due to construction of highway; Only landmark left is Orpheum Theater;

- [28:57] Big adjustment for Michael moving to New Bedford from Providence; Mary kept him very busy with activities; Large age difference between Ronnie and Michael; Separate childhoods; Ronnie enlisted in the Navy;
- [32:26] Michael discusses his involvement in whaleboat racing in New Bedford; Whaling City Rowing Club; Uses monomoys instead of actual whaleboats as similar design; While Michael worked at Edie and Duff Shipyard, he had built whaleboats for the rowing club; replica boats designed by the Beetle Boat Company;
- [36:30] Mary worked for Carl Beetle during World War II doing odd jobs because all the men went to war; Tells a story of listening to the invasion of Normandy on the radio; Tells story of being taken away by a belt sander and making sails;
- [44:19] Mary was interviewed last year for the Working Waterfronts Festival; A play based on her life was produced for the Festival; An emotional production for Mary; Mary goes dancing weekly;
- [50:26] Mary depends on Michael for help; Michael is now manager of the West Marine store in New Bedford; Michael tells of his career since high school; Focused on carpentry in order to work into the shipbuilding business; Maintained relationships with former employers and friends over the years; Notes that the northeast has some of the best shipbuilding facilities; Was part of a Teamsters Union at one shipyard but was let go when the business was bought out; Had an accident and had a ligament in his knee replaced with Gore-Tex; Wouldn't work in shipbuilding anymore so became a marina manager at a New Bedford hotel and was the "social director" of the harbor;
- [68:34] Describes the location of the West Marine store; Founder of West Marine is the son of the founder of New England Ropes out of New Bedford; Explains that business philosophy; West Marine is dedicated to the community;
- [74:26] Tells a story of working on Christopher Reeves' boat; Mary was excited by the celebrity; Michael is a busy guy; Father went to LaSalle and both father and son were always busy;
- [76:29] Final two questions; Confirms spelling of certain names; Mother and son relationship
- [79:57]
[End of Audio]
[CD 1 of 2]
- [Start of Audio]
[CD 2 of 2]
[00:00] Overlaps with the ending of the first CD;
[01:33] Mary likes volunteering but her eyesight is bad; Volunteering by giving story; Michael reminds that the fishing industry impacts the entire community; thank yous
- [04:05]
[End of Audio]
[CD 2 of 2]

TRANSCRIPT

[Start of Audio]

[CD 1 of 2]

[00:01]

JF: ...2005, and could you just tell me your name?

MY: My name is Michael Yorston.

JF: Okay and your name?

MYS: My name is Maria Yorston.

JF: Maria Yorston?

MYS: Yes—Sylvia.

JF: Sylvia? Is that your middle name?

MYS: Yorston was my married name and I remarried so—

JF: Oh, okay, so now your last name is Sylvia.

MYS: Yes, Sylvia but I like to put Yorston.

JF: Okay, okay, interesting. Alright, so what I will do is start just talking generally. If you could tell me Maria—now we have Mary, is that wrong?

MYS: Yes, that's alright with Mary. That's fine.

JF: Is it too? Okay, okay, good, so either one is okay?

MYS: Yes. I prefer Mary, too.

JF: You do? Okay, good. So could you tell us as much as you want give details where and when you were born?

MYS: I was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on October 23, 1911, and on October 23, I shall be 94 years old. I have lots of blessings [inaudible].

JF: You have lots of blessings, you said?

MYS: Yes, and two wonderful sons.

JF: Okay.

MYS: Both made me go to [inaudible] what I've been through.

JF: Okay and you have been through—I know I told people I needed to bring Kleenex to this interview I think so—And Mike, so you were obviously then born in New Bedford.

MY: Actually, I was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on September 6, 1955.

JF: Okay, okay, now did you grow up though in New Bedford?

MY: I grew up in New Bedford. I moved to New Bedford when I was ten years old, after my father died when I was 10.

MYS: A year later.

MY: Yup, and then we came back to live with my mother's family in New Bedford so—

JF: I see, so you had lived in Providence after.

MYS: I was living there seventeen years.

[01:57]

JF: Wow, and where did you family come from originally Mary? What country?

MYS: St. Michael's.

JF: In the Azores?

MYS: In the Azores.

JF: That's a common island for people from here.

MS: Mhmm.

- JF: Interesting. Who came over? Was it one of your parents or grandparents or do you remember?
- MYS: My parents and my grandparents all came from there.
- JF: They all did?
- MY: Did they all came together mom?
- MYS: I think so—No, well my, I think my father—I don't know really, that part I don't know for sure.
- JF: Okay, yeah, so did you move to Providence after you got married or how did—
- MYS: I got, yes I got, I went to Providence and then I met my husband Yorston and I worked in a doctor's dining room in a hospital. They had a job—it was only doctors and nurses that came in my dining room and this is how I met him.
- JF: Oh, okay. Was he a doctor or—
- MYS: No, he was a painter, decoration—
- JF: Oh, okay.
- MYS: Decorator. But before he passed away, he worked at Johnson and Wales.
- JF: Oh, okay, okay, what did he do there?
- MYS: Maintenance, what would you say?
- MY: I would say more maintenance.
- MYS: Maintenance and took care of the boiler.
- JF: Okay, now was he lost at sea or—
- MYS: No, not Yorston.
- MY: Her first husband—
- MYS: Manny.
- MS: Manny Cruz. He was lost at sea and my mom got married when she was 29 her first time.
- MYS: Yeah 28, I was going to be 29.
- JF: Oh, okay, so that wasn't your dad then.
- MY: No, no.
- MYS: No see, then I moved to Providence then I met Yorston, but you want to know about my husband that died at sea?
- [04:00]
- JF: Well, that would be—If you want to talk about it, yeah sure.
- MYS: Yes I do. Yes, he was going out to sea and that day it was an awful blizzard and I was working, I was working at the Hathaway Mill and my, he came—He had no car but he had a taxi driver that drove him around. He went, and there was a blizzard so when I, it was such a blizzard! So I was working so he came back, he came from fishing, he couldn't go on, so he stopped by my moms and he asked 'Where's Mary?' And this is 1940, St. Valentines Day. So he came to pick me up and when I came out at 4 o'clock, mother said I was coming out of work at 4 o'clock, he was out there waiting in a cab for me. And he couldn't get into the go upstairs to get me. The gate was closed so I used to come by the main office so when he saw me trying to walk in that snow to the office, he got out of the cab and stood by the door to help me get in the cab. Well when I got out I was surprised to see him and he got me in the cab, he carried me to the cab because I had no overshoes and when he did he had a bouquet of roses for me and he had a bunny for me also—
- JF: A bunny?!

MYS: A bunny!

JF: A live bunny?!

MYS: Not a live bunny

JF: Oh, a stuffed bunny?

MYS: Yeah, a fake bunny and I was thrilled and I was going to get married that same year. Now this was 1940 and I got married in June, so this was February to June. So we planned our wedding that day, and we happy that day was soon coming, then my baby came along after I got married. I was a bride in June, a mother in June and a widow in June.

JF: Oh my!?

MYS: One year right after the other. He was 29; he died when he was 31. And I was 30 a widow. So we had a—But in the meantime after we got married that first year we had—He used to, he was the skipper on the Francis J. Mantle and when he would come in after 8, 9 days, we used to go up there and get, return the money and a whatever it was. I wasn't familiar with that. That was all new to me, but we went along. We went to see Mr. Mantle and bring and give him all the details of what went on while he was out fishing in and the money. But then after that, like in the meantime about when that happened. 1940, I had a lot of fishermen invited to the wedding which was Mr. Gallot fish pier, Mr. Tashaun, Mr. Calhoun [spelling?]. These were men all in the industry, the business, the business industry, and of course since a young boy was always fishing or on a boat so as he grew up he became the skipper. Am I talking? Am I doing all right?

JF: You're doing—this is a very interesting story.

[07:54]

MYS: I'm not saying every little detail of—I hope I'm giving a very good idea. And so that year I got married like I said. The first year was calm, but it was a very joyful and happy and we went on our honeymoon to the World's Fair and we stayed—I remember the—Where we stayed at was the President Hotel and I was like a Cinderella that never got out of the kitchen and all of a sudden the thing was thrown at me and I didn't know if I was coming or going, but we were happy as a young bride would. And then, when he used to go out fishing he'd call me before he'd go, and he'd—I'd go and wait for him. Somebody would take me in the car. I didn't drive then and I'd go to near the lighthouse as he was going by. He'd know I was going to be there because I told him I said I'd be, I'd see you off and he'd blow the whistle.

JF: Oh! Did he see your car there?

MYS: He saw me—Yeah, and I got out of the car, and I'd wave and then that was it. And that was my romance time, but then as time went on, then my son Ronnie was born and he was thrilled to pieces because then we got married and here he was a father at 29 going on 30. And, oh, everything was so rosy! So we had a lot of plans for this little boy.

[09:40]

MYS: And so he—Then he went, left Mantle's boat because he had problems. He had to take a share and he gave it then he didn't comply with it. Said was he was single, he didn't care because easy come, easy go, but now he was married he thought he should do, keep his promise but he didn't. So he got upset and he left it. As soon as he left

it, the Mantle's boat, Parson, Frank Parson bought it over because all at the wharf he was one of the youngest of men to go out to sea, a young fellow. And they said 'Guess what? Cruz just left Mantle's boat.' So Parson got hold of him and tried to persuade him to run his boat, one of his boats. He had two boats. One Richard and Arnold, and this one, the Beatrice S., and then when he came home and he said, 'Oh so and so'—He told me the story so that's why I'm repeating. And then he said, 'I want'; 'he wants me to go and bring you and meet his wife and wants talk with me.' I said, 'Fine.' So I went and he went to work for him and anyway, then my son was born and he said 'When my son, if it's a boy, I'm going to name that boat after my son.' Well, it was a son. My son Ronnie, so it was named Ronald and Dorothy. Now this is Parson's daughter and they named the boat after her and my son. And this is as far as it went and it went on and on and on. Then the time that he went out that day he, that happened, the night before, all we had, he had been there 3 days and in the meantime he was a little longer in because they were doing something to the boat before they went out again for another 10 days. So he was thrilled to pieces. There was a circus where now there's development. And we went to there, and when we went to the circus, Mother's day with the baby, he was a year old. Yeah, he was going to be soon. Yeah, a little over a year, a year, about a year. And anyway, he was going to have a birthday that week and we said 'Let's go and celebrate, let's see the circus!' And in the meantime when we came—Now anybody at that time that lived in the New Bedford Hotel had to have money, so he's on his way back, he couldn't get a cab because it was so—Well, we didn't mind to walk so we walked all the way where the bus the bus terminal was there for quite a while and came walk all the way and as we got near the New Bedford Hotel he said 'What do you say we stay over here.' I says, 'Oh no!' Meanwhile I was so, so, well, we were short of money at that time. Right after the war, you know I mean very thrifty. I said 'Oh we have such a nice everything new', I said 'I want to go get the baby, I miss the baby' so just down there a few hours so we went and got the baby at my mommy's house and came home. And it's funny because after I went to work many years later at New Bedford Hotel. And that brought all the memories back, and I said 'Look at that, I could have spent a whole night in here and felt like a big shot!' But anyway when that happened, now this was in 1942, we had celebrated my son's birthday the day before and we had just the family. The afternoon, I had children of the neighborhood to celebrate while he was at the dock doing what he had to do. Then that night was the family. Well, the next morning he went out fishing, but before he went he was sitting on the bed, hugging his son, Ronnie, and you know they had them blowers?

JF: Uh yeah! The party things?

MYS: Yes, and he was blowing that and I said please his head he was trying to catch it and I said please don't do, don't let, he'll put that in his mouth, so anyways, he kissed him and he hugged him and it was the two of us and then he got up and I packed up his bags and I took the baby in my arms and I went near the window and I took the baby to say bye to his daddy, which he was just a baby. A day and a year old, a year and a day. That was the last time I saw him. But I did speak to him during the day, he kept calling me up and said he was busy working, but he was going to talk to me before he left, which he did and wished me well and he said 'Give the baby a big hug for me.' And the first thing you know—I had company later on in the evening. I had no, that

- they had thought that he was going to be home, and I said 'No, he just left this morning.' So in the meantime, then I got a call from Mr. Parson to tell me that he had been, 'Was he home?' And I said 'No, he didn't home. Did he come back?' He said 'Well I'll, I'll talk to you later.' That was it. He would not say it, but that had happened, he fell overboard.
- JF: Oh, was that what happened? There was no storm or anything? He just fell overboard?
- MYS: No storm. Accident. I read the write-up papers in the library and, of course, I denied it that he was a good swimmer. He, they came to tell me at 11 o'clock at night.
- JF: Oh no! How far out was he? Very—
- MYS: Well, it was around Wood's Hole.
- JF: Okay. Wow.
- MYS: So it was in the newspaper. I could have brought it. I could have brought it and all the write-up was there to life.
- JF: Well, I can make a note that's there in case they want to—
- MYS: And it will tell you what I said even I said you nervous you don't know what your saying it said Ronnie's name that he had stayed a day later to celebrate his son's birthday. And then I kept denying it and they said 'Well, is there another Cruz?' I said 'There's one but I didn't with it because I said yeah there is one.' That's all I said that I kept denying it and they, the police called right away again to the station and I said and they told me. After that I went to, I don't mean it and twelve days later they found his body.
- JF: Oh, they did? Wow.
- MYS: Then I went up to with my mother and my father-in-law and my oldest brother and a cousin of mine that drove the cab. And we got down to the police station, got his clothes and it; the billfold had my picture, my marriage picture. After even all them days, it was just as good as ever and the year I was born, 1911, nickel.
- JF: Oh! Was that on purpose? Or was it just do you think coincidence
- MYS: Well, it was he thought it was great, so he kept that nickel. And then when I got off—They skipped on us and they left my mother and I in the car. And while we were in the car awhile I said, I was crying all the way so I said 'Please I'm going out mother' and she said 'Well, you're not going alone' so I went and just as I was about to enter where they had the [inaudible]. A cousin and I, I felt like I was just falling. I never faint in my life but I felt so weak and he just picked me up. Of course, I went down to 79 pounds. I wasn't—I didn't weight much but 79 pounds that's all I just didn't want to, but I survived but I—You know why I survived?
- JF: Why?
- MYS: Because I'd my son to live for and he has been a wonderful son and now God has blessed me with another son and these are my blessings.
- [19:06]
- JF: That's great! I wish we could record your smile. So had you, growing up was your family a fishing family also? Or, your parents, was your dad?
- MYS: I stayed home till I was 28 years old. I worked in the mill. I helped them out, I was the main, the head, all the others were much younger than I so I babysat and I worked for the house, but they were good parents, wonderful parents. And when I needed them, they were there, so when my mother needed me, it was hard on Michael

because he was only 11, 10 when he was lost his daddy, and he didn't understand but, and he cried! Michael and I cried all the way from Rhode Island to come to New Bedford because our life was there now and he had a wonderful, wonderful father, Yorston.

JF: Well, you just attract the wonderful men, it sounds like—

MYS: Yes, and you know what, I grew up and I never thought nobody cared for me. Because I was, everybody, all my friends was, and my sister was taller, well built, and here I am so tiny and then, I don't think they went for much tinier because—although once and a while, these are married men now, they tell me they say 'Oh boy, you were some chick!' I said, 'Why didn't you tell me then! I needed to know that!' And he—I said 'Shame on you talking like that to me in front of your wife!' And their wives are laughing and you know did you tell me—and I meant it, why didn't you tell me then. I wouldn't have been living with this inferior complex! So they said they said to, they say, 'Well, we didn't dare go near you! You know your father!' Well, my father had a barber shop and a pool room, and these boys used to go to my father's barber shop, so they respected my father. You know when he'd go down [inaudible] to see my father on the way to work on Colks Street, where they got Route 18, my father clapped, when he clapped it was like he said, 'Easy boys! Tone down your voice', that's what he meant and they did! They did! They were respected because whether it was I or a woman come with their son to have a haircut, and so that, they did that. I said my father was very nice, he never, never abused us, he always talked so nice and polite, very quiet and he put his point across. I said, 'Don't put on too much make-up. It's not nice.' Or else he'd say, 'You know, I want you girls to find somebody, good friends.' And that's the way it was. So they respected him, and we're still friends, and I'm friends with their wives them now and their children. That was my life because I had like an inferior complex, I didn't think I—Nobody cared for me.

JF: Nobody dared to tell you, huh?

MYS: Yeah, everybody dared to tell me I'm nice and yet I am—we used to, at that time when we went to a dance, we had to have a chaperone so one of my girlfriend's mother, that was neighbors to us. Our mothers would let us go. And she was the nicest, nicest chaperone we ever could have, but the boys that would ask us to dance and then they would go on their way, and that's the way it was at that time. But that was the way of life. Nobody minded because, you see, there was other mothers go, or older sisters.

[23:21]

JF: So when you married, your—

MYS: So it wasn't all sadness.

JF: No, well that great. That's great. When you married your first husband then, you didn't grow up in a fishing family or anything.

MYS: Oh I—pardon?

JF: You didn't grow up in a fishing family?

MYS: Oh, no, no, no. I was—we grew up in [inaudible – name of town] which is Route 118.

JF: So you knew the community and—

MYS: Yes, see I wasn't far from the Portuguese there. They used to call it Portuguese Navy Yard. And it wasn't very far to go to Palmer's Island. So all the neighborhoods would go on a Sunday, go on a little skiff and go to Palmer's Island and have a picnic out there. See but my family, the family Cruz, they were all—the father would, used to build boats and have a little shack down the Portuguese Navy Yard and then when they used to go for scalloping, you know bay scallops?

JF: Yes.

MYS: There'd be the mothers never went anywhere but they would all be there and there was the neighbors all around there shucking the scallops while the men went to pick them. So we would look forward to that season, that the kids would all play together you know? It was nice.

JF: Oh that's great!

MY: Mom, tell her—Mention about the, who's barber shop and bowling alleys and stuff.

MYS: Oh yes! See my father had a bowling alley—first was a barber shop, then he had a pool tables, and then he had a bowling alley. I saw that bowling alley builder, that's on the water Petomscut [unsure of spelling] where now—Well through Route 18.

MY: Where the Merritt [unsure of spelling] Gas Station is.

JF: I don't, but anyway, that's a good reference.

MYS: And then he moved away and then here was my father's barber shop and, you know, they had Accushnet Park, you heard of Accushnet Park?

JF: Yes.

MYS: And the trolley cars would come right by there all I had to leave my, our home and cross the street, just cross the street, take the trolley cars to go downtown. Go up Petomscut Street [unsure of spelling] and then Accushnet Avenue.

JF: It was all much more connected then it is now, yes?

[25:51]

MYS: Yes, a lot lost, a lot lost and so then my father had, like I said, I had a write up about, you'd love it, and if I'd mentioned it before I would have brought that paper all about Water Street. And my friend, went to school with her, and she wrote this article. She used to write articles for the Senior Scope. And all about how we got used, used to be together and as one family, all nationality. And I remember my mother would go into this store, I forget the name of it, but she was Jewish, and she had to, like a, what do you call it, all kinds of linen goods and also yarn, general store. And so the neighborhood some of the neighbors, friends of my mother—my mother was very close to her family, but she had close family of the neighbors, they were very, very nice. We were brought up with them and we—I remember her going in the store and she would knit a sweater and so would all them, like a sewing circle, and they get along good. And I remember a lot and the Crawford's, [inaudible], and the boys went to school with me at Donagus School and so it was very, very close knit family all the way down Water Street.

JF: Wow! So it was like its own little neighborhood but not just one little ethnic group it was a mix.

MYS: All mixed and we all got along. Silverstein—You remember Silverstein? And Davidson, Wilmiaski [unsure of spelling] and Harry's Shoe store; they all were all wonderful, wonderful, wonderful people.

JF: And is that neighborhood totally different now?

- MY: That's kind of—
- MYS: Yeah, it's all done.
- MY: That was all torn down to put—
- MYS: To put the highway.
- MY: The only thing that's left there now is the Orpheum Theater, and that's as your going down [inaudible]the building that says Lesco on it I believe and it has some, what do want to call it, faces carved on it. It's the only building that's still part of Water Street. It was a very active—it was like the downtown of the south end. It was a lot stores. Jewelry stores. It was a very active retail center.
- MYS: There was a nice theater and they had state shows there growing up and they also had dancing.
- MY: The Royal Theater, the Orpheum Theater.
- [28:57]
- JF: So was it a big adjustment for you to leave Providence and come back New Bedford?
- MY: Well, I was ten year old, I was just missing my friends and stuff who I grew up with.
- MYS: He cried.
- MY: Yeah, it was an adjustment.
- JF: Well, and of course, missing your dad, that must have been bad.
- MYS: Do you know what? Because I drove the night, we came down by the Studebaker. I got him involved in the school that Ronnie went, it went like they switched right? Ronnie went to Devaul School, then I enlisted him in Church, McCarmer's Church, then he played accordion which he—His daddy bought him an accordion when he was seven years old. He played accordion, got him into DeRossi's, then I got him involved in—He loved sports and fishing, so he used to go—I got him involved with a cousin of mine when he was very, very active in baseball, then took him down to lot 13 right?
- MY: Yup.
- JF: So she didn't let you sit around and mope too much?
- MYS: No, I had to get him involved because otherwise—
- MY: I was an active guy.
- MYS: I wanted to get him involved in everything because that was what he used to do when he would go out with his father, it was fishing, it was skating, it was going to Roger Williams for sledding. I had to get behind him in the sled, but I went heads over heel after, so I had to be. And then its good because after his father died, I had to be father/mother to him, so I got him, had to get him involved to be active, but never, never did I want him to take him alone always with me, alone, when I had time to go on. When my brothers come and took him, my mother, to give me a breather, and so that I'd take him swimming. I'd say I became friends with the mothers of the kids that were his friends and they would all—and at that time there was no belt, no seatbelts, so they would pile in my Studebaker and off we went. So he had, he adjusted as well as I know it, that I can remember.
- JF: What was the age difference between you and is it Ronnie?
- MY: Yeah, 16 years.
- JF: Oh boy!
- MYS: Oh no, he was 14 when he was born.

JF: He was 14 when you were born. Wow! So two separate childhoods almost for you in terms of—

MYS: But they got along very nicely. But he thinks so well of his brother. And when he was 17, he went in the service. He was 22 years in the service and, you know, sometimes I play my tapes, now that I can't see too well the TV, so I play my tape and I get this tape and it says 'Michael Row the Boat Ashore.' We sent it to him when he was overseas, and I sent these tapes and sing a song to his brother 'Michael Row the Boat Ashore.' And here he is rowing the boat, you know, the whaleboats. I'd look back and I'd said 'My goodness how life is!' Like—

JF: A circle, it goes around—

MYS: A vicious circle—

[32:26]

JF: Yeah, now what about the whaleboats?

MY: Oh I've been—I was very instrumental in getting the Whaling City Rowing Club together, and there was a time when I used to manage the Seaport Marina, and trying to create a lot of activities for the harbor. I got involved in the whaleboat races, having the fire department race against the police department, then we had a bunch of teams going out.

JF: Now were these dory boats or—

MY: Nope, they were actually I used to borrow the boats from Massachusetts Maritime Academy, they were monomoy, monomoy boats, and we had eleven or ten rowers and coxswain.

JF: What's a—is that a rowing scull?

MY: A monomoy is a lifeboat. It's a double-ended lifeboat, very, very heavy. The Coast Guard rows them a lot, and the Navy. So I used to borrow the boats down there and bring them in down here, and then we'd practice for month or, you know, or so, in the harbor with all the different guys. Then at Summer Fest, which I was pretty active, involved with Summer Fest. We would have our races, but then it started getting— First of all, I stated getting sick of going borrowing the whaleboats and years before that, because I'm a—I started out after I got out of high school, New Bedford Voc, I started working as a boat builder. And part of the things I was involved in, they were building the new whaleboats that Whaling City Rowing Club have now. We built those boats for, believe it or not, the Saudi Arabian Navy and so after we built the boats for Saudi Arabia, the molds just sitting up there at Edie and Duff, where I was working, and we got a bunch of guys who were really interested in rowing and I said 'Hey, let's see if we can get, have some boats built, so we could have our own boats', then we wouldn't have to keep borrowing the boats and have to worry about damaging them and everything else. And plus it was, just the logistics was tough. So we got a few guys who were really interested in doing it and before we knew it, we raised—We thought we were going to raise enough money for two boats, but we ended up raising enough money to buy three boats which were over 20,000 a piece and we saved the whole rowing club. After we had owned he boats, we actually turned them over to the Whaling City Rowing Club who just kept the whole thing going. So that's how I was involved in that.

JF: Wow, so you've away been busy. Now you were calling them whaleboats though?

MY: Whaleboats.

- JF: Did they have to do with whaling voyages somehow?
- MY: Yeah, well these are replica whaling boats, which were actually designed by the Beetle Boat Company, that actually designed the Beetle.
- JF: You mean Charlie and the Beetle Cat? That thing?
- MY: Yup,
- MYS: I didn't know that.
- MY: And those were designed and actually those boats were designed—I think they were built down at used to be Medeiros's Boatyard or where Billy Woods Walk is now. And they used to build those there, so that's sort of a replica of that. So it's more, when we used to call it whaleboat races and we had the monomoys, they weren't really whaleboats.
- JF: Right, but they were closer.
- MY: Yeah, because it was a double-ended and guys were rowing. Now the crews went down to six man boats because these boats were a lot more streamline and narrow and longer. Rowing the monomoys was like rowing a Volkswagens, it's so fat and bulky, so these were a lot more, a lot faster and a lot more fun to row. It was more connected with the sea.
- JF: Yeah so these whaleboats were the ones that, say from the whaling ship the guys would get on the boat and chase the whales to harpoon it kind of thing.
- MY: Yeah it was an exact replica of those ones, the same designs. Yeah, I've been involved in all this for quite a while.
- [36:30]
- MYS: Yeah, I just heard about him Beetle. I worked for Mr. Beetle, a Carl Beetle, that is named after the, the boats named after him, Beetle's boat.
- JF: Really? Oh, I didn't know it came from a man's name. What did you do?
- MYS: During the war, I lived on Scotts Street, and it was just around the corner. And he had a cabinetmaker, the end of Carney Street near Colt Road. And he needed some girls, and he asked my brother if he had any sisters home that he had a rush job this is what, like I said during the war time, that he needed some girls that he could depend on to do that [inaudible] to go to Providence.
- JF: Was this World War I or—
- MYS: Pardon?
- JF: World War I.
- MY: Yes.
- MYS: Yes—No.
- JF: No, it would have been World War II.
- MYS: No, no, my boy was 3 years old.
- JF: Okay, World War II then. Okay, okay.
- MYS: World War II. My Ronnie was 3. And so he came all excited, 'You got a job sis!' Why don't you go up because he used to pick up odds and ends from you know to put in my father's—for the winter.
- MY: Wood stove. He used to get scrap wood from the boat building.
- MYS: So Carl Beetle, he came very close to my brother, young brother, and because he was a good boy too. He'd help out there, clean up so he said, 'Get your sister down here and a few other friends. Not many. Get some, three or four, that's all I need.' So I

- did, I got some of my close friends, and we went to work for him. Well, when we finished that job—
- MY: What were you doing, Mom?
- MYS: There was—He made a round circle like a round table and then on that table they had reel circles and key circles and they had the round disks that was cut off just to fit that circle. So as a conveyer went around and around, we had to fill it, we would go quick to fill them holes with them disks. And that was the cover of whatever they were going to put for tools or whatever to send away to Providence. So we were caught up one time with our work we, a group of the girls and I, we caught up with an order. So he said, ‘You girls are not going home, find something to do!’ So Mr. Carl Beetle was very, very, like a wrestler, very nice person and he says, ‘You find something to do!’ So one got a broom, another one got the—One time I went on the drill to make the holes and then I finished that job and he said, ‘Find something else!’ So I went up to this gentleman, he was puttying a boat, so I said, ‘Mr. Norman, I have to find something to do. Can I help you? Can you find me something to do?’ He said, ‘Can you putty a boat?’ I said, ‘Certainly can! I puttied windows with my Daddy.’ So here I am, puttying the boats. So when Michael started talking about boats, I said, ‘I’m way ahead of you. Your mother puttied boats. For Mr. Carl Beetle.’ Now I guess when he talked about it, it brought it back. He was the nicest, nicest boss. And I was there during the Normandy invasion. I’ll never forget that a day because we were all busy working, working on that table with the disks. All of a sudden he comes in, all excited, ‘Stop! Stop the machine!’ So we stopped the machine, he wanted to listen. There was no TV then, so we was close to the radio to listen to the invasion of the news and that I remember it was well as it was yesterday. And another time he made my girlfriend and I, after we got thought with our work, he’d always find something to do there, now this is a big cabinet and these were all men that one was building a boat, another was painting a boat, another was one of them big booms.
- MY: Making masts?
- MYS: Yes.
- JF: Oh, for the masts.
- MYS: So I went in—here I was, by that time, I must have been about 85 pounds. And all of a sudden, I went up to one of the men and said ‘Can I help?’ Now these are men with machine, sander machine, and I picked the sand machine. He didn’t really like that I was gonna—Somehow the phone rang, he went to pick it up. I went all across, from one end to the other! The other men caught me at the other end.
- MY: It was a belt sander.
- JF: Oh you mean the machine took you! Oh! A belt sander, yeah. Those are—Wow!
- MYS: I didn’t get hurt. They were right there watching.
- JF: They got a good laugh out that, did they?
- MYS: They got a good laugh. Now these were all three men who lived in [inaudible – name of town]. Mr. Gee was one of the bosses, Mr. Carl Beetle was the head one, then there was Mr. Gee, Mr. Norman, and I can’t forget the other one. I forget the other one. But these are all men that worked, lived in [inaudible – name of town]. You know where the money, big shots are. They were the nicest! Then Mr. Gee asked me and another girl to go upstairs, to trace a sail. I didn’t know what a sail was! I just

- began to get to know the things. So there was a pattern. He laid down the pattern and he said, 'I want you to trace all this perfect.' And he said it was perfect when we—so we were very happy. We took, all our—
- JF: And that was big, right? The sail was big?
- MYS: It was a big mast and paper. Then they put that pattern on the cloth, and he was happy with what we did, so I was glad. So that's in my memory. And then when this boy left Rhode Island, and then he got into boats when he was older, I thought, "Oh, gee, I've got something to tell him!"
- JF: So he hadn't known that before?
- MY: No.
- MYS: No, he hadn't. Now there's—
- JF: You'll have to, if you run into, do you know Charlie York?
- MY: Oh yeah.
- JF: Has she ever gotten to—
- MY: Charlie's been in my store, and I've talked to Charlie quite a bit. And he, as a matter of fact, Laura and Charlie wanted to get together with my mother and talk—
- JF: So good, so they—
- MYS: About Carl Beetle's?
- MY: Yeah, remember what I told you?
- MYS: Yes.
- JF: Charlie would love to hear that!
- MY: Charlie is Laura's husband, Ma.
- JF: Charlie is Laura's—
- MYS: Oh, it's Laura's husband.
- JF: But he had the business for a while.
- MY: He bought the Beetle Cat business out from the guys from [inaudible].
- JF: Yes, that sounds—
- [44:19]
- MYS: Oh he did come up to me. Because I was, you know, after my play was on the stage—I didn't know anything that, you know, they threw the petals on—Sylvia [last name], do you know her?
- JF: No.
- MYS: She's the one who acted my part.
- MY: Last year they interviewed my mother, at home, before the festival, we didn't even know about it, but they actually made a play of my mother's life called 'Widow of the Sea.'
- JF: Oh, my goodness!
- MY: And, we were both here last year, and I didn't even know it was going on, and they had actresses playing her and everything.
- MYS: Do you know Rebecca? Have you heard of Rebecca?
- JF: No.
- MYS: Patty Thomas came to interview me with her. Rebecca was taking my picture while I was talking to her. So now Patty invite me to come to the pier, don't forget to come to pier, we'd like to have you. But I didn't know what was going on, it was a surprise. Then Patty called me and said she couldn't make it, but look for Rebecca. She'd be looking for you. So I couldn't find her, she couldn't find me. All of a

sudden, my cousin of mine came with me, and we went to this tent. At this tent, we sat down, and we listened to some stories of wives that had lost their husbands, and had brought up three children, and not to class all the fishermen as drunkards, which was true. So they work very, very hard for you to eat some nice fish. And I was blessed the day you eat the fish. But then it was all over with other speakers, and I was getting, going out of tent. And who should be at the head of the tent? Rebecca! She says, 'I've been looking all over for you!' I said, 'Well we have too, but we gave up and came in to see what was going on in here.' Well I said, 'Well I'm ready to go. I'll see you later. I know you're busy.' She said, 'Oh, no you're not! You're next!' I said, 'I'm next? For what?' She said, 'Follow me!' So I followed her to the first row. And there was a camera, so I sat down with my cousin. And all of a sudden, [name], do you know him?

JF: No.

MYS: Alright. Now this is another friend I got to know. Small world. And he's involved in a lot of park theater shows and all of that and the museum. So anyway, he's on the stage saying, 'Maria Sylvia, born 1911, New Bedford, born 1911.' And I said, 'That's me!' Then he said, 'Bride in the 40's, '41 a mother, '42 a widow.' And all I hear was, 'Oohh!' Then they didn't know it was me, I was in the front row, and then tears start coming to my eyes. And then, Sylvia, she imitated me, and she looked so old they tell me, again my vision is a lot blurry, than when I was younger. So here I am. So my cousin said, you know, when she was telling the story about me receiving the roses, she threw the petals on the stage. Then I started really crying. Then after the show, then after that finished, another program came. After that finished, that was the end. Then [inaudible – name] came off the stage, come introduced himself to me. Then Sylvia [inaudible – name] came and visited and introduced herself to me also. But she had to leave, she couldn't go on, she had to leave to go to Boston, so I continued talking to [inaudible – name] and he said he was very impressed with the pictures he saw, my pictures. Part of the story that they decided to make the play. I thanked him so much. And then he wrote to me, sent me a nice letter, and I still read the letter he wrote to me, and come to find out that his mother goes to my club where I go dancing every Monday. [Inaudible], I want you to meet Mrs. Leary [spelling?]. I said, 'Is she here?' Yes, she's here somewhere. It's a small world.

JF: So, you still go dancing every Monday?

MYS: Yes, I try. If I have a ride, now I need a volunteer because my friend was very sick that used to take me, my girlfriend. Then Michael sometimes, he can't leave work to take me. So I have a niece who takes me a lot. But she now lives in New Hampshire so I've missed a few times. Last week, I had a ride from a girl that just lost her daughter. She couldn't stay with me, but she brought me and got me. And which I thought that was very nice. While I was there, they snapped pictures of us dancing. Senior Scope! So it's like I can't get away from the news.

[50:26]

JF: No! That's great! Well you love life a lot, it sounds like for sure.

MYS: I enjoy life. I'm happy, but a lot has to tribute to the boys that never gave me no trouble. And all the time I brought them up and not—of course Michael, not Ronnie, had Daddy Yortson to help bring him up. Ronnie was in the service, and I, of course,

- with Michael always here with me because he was 22 years away in the service, in the Navy.
- JF: You were? No Ronnie was, yeah, but you've always been here.
- MYS: But he's always been close to me, has been. So it's always been Michael if I have to go to the doctor, if I'm in the hospital, it's Michael, Michael, Michael. But his brother is very happy not to worry. He gets in touch with him too. They get along nice.
- JF: If you have a few more minutes, Mike, I'd actually like to hear a little about what you're doing with—you're manager of West—
- MY: I manage a West Marine store right now. And it's kinda funny, it's a retail store, but how I ended up there is I, basically as I started to tell you, I started in the boat business. I always had the love for wanting to be around the water because kinda growing up down the South End and swimming and being down around the water. And having friends of mine whose parents were fishermen and lobstermen, I always out on the water a lot. So I was always trying to get my foot in the door in the boating industry but I went to New Bedford Voc to become a carpenter and after I got out of New Bedford Voc, there was really no avenues for me to get into the industry yet. But all through school I was working for a [inaudible] who owned a bunch of real estate so I managed a lot of his property. But then the kinda real estate boom went down and things started getting slow, so I ended going to work for a boat builder in Mattapoisett called Edie and Duff, which a couple of my friends that I grew up and went to school with ended up working there, and are still working there to this day.
- JF: You still work there also?
- [Movement of microphone]
- MY: No, friends of mine that I went to school with.
- JF: I'm just gonna clip this on you since you're—
- MY: So friends of mine who I grew up with in my neighborhood ended up going to work there, and that's how I ended up getting my foot in the door. And it was a semi-custom, fiberglass boat builder. It had a very good reputation, and I got my foot in the door, and just kinda proved myself with my carpenter skills, and ended up doing pretty good there. And then I ended up staying there for about 7 years. And then I kinda was getting a little itchy, and kinda I was trying to get away from, actually, the hazards of that trade which I realized were the fumes from fiberglass and the dust and everything. But I still wanted to stay in the boating business, so I actually ended up leaving there and went to work for a boatyard in Fall River called Captain O'Connells. And just worked there for a short time because as I was, actually trying to get into another place, I put an application in at Fairhaven Marine, which is over in Fairhaven, and that was a really great place to work at the time because there was the Teamsters Union and I was married. I got married at 20, and had a small boy. So I needed to bring home a pretty good paycheck. So I ended up just working for O'Connell for a short time, and it was kinda funny to, which is another kinda funny story. I felt kinda guilty for only working there a month and leaving them, so I knew one of the guys who I went to school with was looking for a job so I said, 'Hey, I could get you to replace myself over here at Joe O'Connells, good place to work, good guys.' So I brought him in and he went to work for them, and 30 years later he's still working for him.

MYS: Isn't that wonderful?

JF: Yeah, another circle right away.

MY: It's kinda funny. I always kinda—I've worked a lot of jobs, but I always kept good relationships with everybody I've always worked for. I always kinda left in good terms. But from there I ended up going to work for Fairhaven Marine which is probably one, at the time, one of the most exclusive yards on the east coast.

JF: So that's a boatyard also?

MY: It's a boatyard. Had a really good reputation. Worked on a lot of fine yachts, very customized work, but also at that time, was when I really got involved in doing a lot of commercial fishing work also because it was—When you're working in the boatyards on the northeast here, there's a circle of the way the business goes. Because, especially at that time, with so many fishing regulations, the fishermen were really trying to soak up all the good weather as possible so they wouldn't really start doing any maintenance work, a lot of hauling work, until the weather really got crummy and when it was real cold. But in the summer months, we would get commercial work when, up on the railways and things like that, that were only like more of emergency jobs. Something quick maintenance that they needed to be done. But they really didn't like hauling the boats out in good weather cause that was when—they're losing days and time to fish. So during the summer months, we would work on a lot of big yachts that would probably come up from the Caribbean or down south because the season down there is their off-season, and they did all their charter boat business during the winter. So they need to come up here to get good quality work, and they knew they could get good labor and good quality in the northeast here during the summer. And it was cooler to work. So we would do most of our repair work on these big yachts that have full crews and captains during the summer months so we'd get them all ready. And they would go south in the fall, and end that cycle. Then the fishing boats would start coming up because they getting ready for the winter, or it's already cold so the guys are hauling their boats to get their service done. So that was kinda how I broke into that. And I started working in the boatyards around here, if you say you're a carpenter, you're a carpenter, but something needs to be done, you need to dig a hole, you need to dig a hole. They needed you to be a painter, you were a painter.

JF: Did you ever do metal work too?

MY: I did a lot of welding and metal work, but also what would happen too a lot of times, when things would start getting, a lot of times, especially in the early days when I was working for Fairhaven Shipyard, or Fairhaven Marine, it would start getting slow after the holidays, I would always go out and work on my own. I'd always try to keep busy, so one of the jobs that I ended up really learning my steel work and metal work cause I went to work for Director Shipyard in Newport, at the time we were building Coast Guard cutters for the 41-foot, no 110-foot Coast Guard cutters for the Coast Guard. SO I, with my carpenter skills, and I'm a pretty accurate carpenter, it rolled right into my metal working and actually went in to work for Bob Director over there in the winter. But I realized I really didn't want to work in a shipyard like that under those conditions, and as soon as my job was available over at Fairhaven Shipyard—I'm calling it Fairhaven Shipyard because that's what it is not, in the old days it was Fairhaven Marine. I went back to work for Fairhaven Marine, knowing a

little bit more than when I left. And I did that a lot to broaden my knowledge of the business. And I would have been still at Fairhaven Marine but what happened was, I think at the time, I think I was working there about 9 years, and the yard went up for sale, and the new owner bought it, and we were a Teamster yard at that time, the new owner was supposedly supposed to inherit the contract for all the workers, but they kinda worked a back door deal to bust the union and get rid of a lot of guys who were just under, I feel, under the tenure of 10 years. And what he said was he didn't buy the business, he bought the real estate, so they bust—they were able to get rid of the union, and at that time, it was a big hit cause the money was really good, plus the security of having your health and welfare and everything, so we ended up going to court against them. I think there were about 10 or 12 of us, and it went to arbitration, and it took a while, and we ended up winning the case after, I think it was about 2 years and they had to give us a small settlement. I think we all got a settlement of about thirty thousand dollars to spilt amongst 10 of us, and we were sent on our way. So at that time, in the meantime, I was always working on my own and I actually ended up buying into a business in Fairhaven, which was called Seven Seas Marine, and at that time, I was doing my repair work, cause I always did repair work on the side, fiberglass and carpentry and painting, so I had a pretty good reputation. And that was already a boatyard that was running by a gentleman called Jim Kane [spelling?] and he had, he was just running a storage yard, and had a little store, and he kinda took me under his wing a little bit, and he and I got together pretty good, got along pretty well, and I started taking over the repairs, and I ended up eventually buying the business out from under him. But I was actually at the point of he owned the real estate, and he was trying to sell the real estate, and I just bought the business, and I was trying to buy the real estate, and at that time real estate was pretty cheap. I think it was 3 acres of property there and I think he was asking about a hundred ten thousand, and I was trying to pull all kind of strings to put the real estate together, in the mean time the real estate boom started going all crazy, we couldn't keep up it, I think that was in the nineties. Someone ended up buying the property out from underneath me, so at that time it was kinda up in the air, and David Kelley from D.N. Kelley Shipyard was looking for somebody to take over his foreman position over at D.N. Kelley's and knew of my reputation so I went over to talk to David Kelley and went to work for D.N. Kelley for probably about 4 or 5 years. And I was actually running the railways for our men and a lot of the carpentry jobs over there and a lot of the big shipfitting jobs of rebuilding the H.M.S. Rose and the Shenandoah, a lot of big wooden schooners, because I really enjoyed doing plank in and a lot of heavy shipwright work, it was kinda my forte.

JF: Is planking the decks?

MY: Planking is the hulls, replacing the hull planking. So we did a lot of restoration of a lot of really old, classic schooners. So I was really involved in that quite a bit. And I ended up having, one winter, I was working in one of sheds, and I ended up having an accident there where somebody moved a ladder on me, and I ended up slipping and falling and tearing my ligaments on my knee. So that put out of work on workman's comp for a while. While I was out of work, I had a Gore-Tex ligament put in, the first guy in Massachusetts, I think, probably the first guy to have an artificial ligament put in.

JF: Yeah, I've never heard of it.

MY: Yeah, it's worked out pretty good for me. So when I was out of work for quite a while, I had a lot of time to think and my thought was, 'You know, hey, do I really want to go with a bad knee, work on doing this heavy construction cause it was really, really a lot of [inaudible] work, doing heavy planking and being in the dampness. So I had an opportunity come up to manage a new marina that was opening up at the Seaport Inn, which was something new for me to do. But I just kinda rolled with the punches and took that thing by the horns and I went to work running the Seaport Marina. And I actually ran that for 7 years and running the marina was kinda—I maintained—did all the maintenance on it, and kept it going, and I actually got involved in a lot of the activities in the hotel too. Running the marina, once I had the marina full, I was kinda bored a bit, so I was trying to find things to bring more business into the hotel so I think came, using my people skills, kinda became a local promoter of trying to create activities. So I started putting together fishing tournaments, which I ran a fishing tournament out of there for 7 years, which kinda grew to a pretty good size, about 200 guys fishing in September, and we donated all the fish to the Hunger Commission. We got a lot of publicity out of that. And then I also ran some benefits for the Cancer Society, which I brought in, what we call, all the [inaudible] Cancer Society Regatta which I ran that for about 5 years with a committee of people. Also like I said, ran the tugboats—whaleboat races. Then one of that I always got interested in, had a couple of friends who were in the tugboats, was always telling me about tugboat musters, so then I started organizing tugboat musters to kinda create some of the activities in the harbor to combine with Summer Fest.

JF: So is that like a firemen's muster, but, you know, showing off their occupational skills—

MY: Yeah, what I would do is just send out emails, or letters, to all local tugboat guys and companies cause you could never get a commitment from them to show up on a certain date so we'd invite all these tugboats into the harbor for Summer Fest. And once they get here they'd have contests to see how's the toughest, they'd have pushing contests, and they have line throwing contests, and the best dressed, the oldest, one that came the furthest, and we'd have little plaques made up for them. It was a great event. It was another activity that we needed to have in New Bedford here because—but somehow, I don't know why, I felt that I started becoming the social director of the harbor. And it was kinda good because I had the time to do it and I have the connections, I made a lot of friends over the years, and I have a way of just kinda pulling everybody together to get it done. But somehow after 7 years over at the Seaport and the owner's of the Seaport were kinda breaking up their partnership and I felt kinda up in the air. I was working a boat show to try to promote the harbor and business for the hotel, and I met some of the guys from West Marine, and didn't know much about the company, and the guys were telling me what a cool place it was to work and they were gonna be building a store in New Bedford. And I didn't even realize it but the day I got back from the boat show, they were actually having a job fair in the hotel, so I just happened to talk to them and I put together a quick resume, and they ended up hiring me as assistant manager when the store opened. So I actually, when I first started working there, was actually still running the marina, and

working in the store. And it just kinda grew together, and about a year later, they offered me the management, to manage the store.

[68:34]

JF: And where is the store?

MY: The store right now is over on Popes Island, right on Route 6, but West Marine kinda has a neat story to the area because the owner of West Marine, his father was the owner and founder of New England Ropes, and New England Ropes was always right on Popes Island where my store is now. And the founder's son, his name is Randy Repass, went to California, to school and to hang out and go surfing, and he realized that they needed, there was a shortage of rope and connections out there, so he started selling rope out of his garage, and that's really the way the whole company started. And then he realizing there was a need for boating supplies out there, then he started putting together his connections, and he started selling boating supplies. And he realized as he was a boater himself, a lot of the other marine stores that were around there, weren't giving people the kind of service that he thought they should have, so he kinda came up with the idea of having a no hassle guarantee for all his sales, and would never be, would always be, could always price match them, or beat anybody's prices. I probably get hit for not knowing this, but I think the company is in its 25 year now, and we have close to 375 stores. We're like almost three quarters, almost, I think we're close to a billion dollars in sales coming up.

JF: So the stores are all over the country?

MY: Yeah, we have stores all over the country. And the company is, which I enjoy working for them for, it's the culture that they have. They want people to be treated better than they expected to be treated. And we have a no hassle guarantee, so that works out good. And they really respect the environment and do a lot of community activities. Last year, we donated about nine hundred thousand dollars back into communities around the country. And our biggest, the closest thing to our heart now is working with saving the oceans, making sure people are responsibly fishing and so—it's good to work for a company that has a lot of those in its goals.

JF: Now West Marine is it for commercial fishing only, or does it serve recreational?

MY: West Marine is commercial and recreational. We have a wholesale division of West Marine which is called Port Supply. That's basically where a lot of our commercial, whole sale pricing comes from. And so we're able to reach out there and really not only, which I really think if more stores were like this around that we shop at it would be a happier planet, because it gives you the confidence that when you buy something, especially like the commercial guys, if they're buying a piece of electronics and they're working with it every day, and they have a problem with it, we'll take care of it, we'll back it and support them, give them another one that they can get out fishing with, and really stand behind it. Where you know, and we can do that, because we're big and it's hard for a small store, a private guy, to give that kind of backing a lot of times. That's what made the company.

JF: It sounds like it's big but it's also, each store is pretty connected to the local community.

MY: Exactly. We're really encouraged to be involved in the community, and go out there, and make sure people realize. And it's a lot of things—when we first came into the area, and a lot of the boatyards and the other companies and the smaller stores, and

they think it's like WalMart coming in and all the money is being sent out. I've really had to educate a lot of the guys, but these are all people I've worked for and friends, and made them understand that hey, listen, I put 23 to 30 people to work during the summer, they're all local, and we're a company that puts money right back into the communities, and we really encourage sending local boatyard's business, so we're in a position to really help them out also. So I'm not only just managing the store, I'm like I'm the liaison between the customers who come in and ask where can I get this done, and I says, 'Well, you know, I can go to D.N. Kelley's and this boat hauled and have it all gripped.' So I'm really able to send them business also, and they've been able to, and they've realized that, and it's really helped our business grow. So it's, all the time I spent on the waterfront, making friends and connections, and whether they're fishermen or yachts I've worked on or whatever, I'm on the other end now that I'm able to help them out. So it's kinda different.

[74:26]

MYS: You worked for Christopher Reeve, no?

MY: Christopher Reeve. We've worked on a lot of famous people's boats we've got come in. So my mother gets a kick out of that.

JF: Did you ever meet the people or just the boats?

MY: Oh yeah.

JF: Like who?

MYS: I used to ask him. I said, 'Why don't you ask him. I've heard he's such a nice person. Ask for an autograph for your son because he has a son Matthew, and you have a son Matthew.' But he said, 'Oh Mom, I couldn't do that.'

JF: They probably got his autograph on the bill!

MYS: But you see why I'm so proud of my children? And he did it all on his own. Nobody to help him!

JF: No, he was persistent and, but you know what? It sounds like the way you raised him to be involved carried over.

MYS: I wanted him always to busy! Always!

JF: I guess he is!

MY: I'm a busy guy!

MYS: And you know, his father, he went to LaSalle, his daddy. Very, very intelligent. He always had a book on the side of the end table. In each room, whether it was the living room or the other spare room or guest room. And they say when you grew up, and you say, 'I'm bored. I have nothing to do.' He said, 'Sonny, here's a book for you. If you're not into this one, get another one.' Always a book aside of him, now he's got some books of mine because of where I am, I can't have too much stuff. And I said, 'Michael, this is for you because this is what your father would like you to be surrounded by books. Sooner or later, when you have time, you'll look at it, and you'll enjoy it.' A lot of history.

[76:29]

JF: I only have—well I have two more questions. One is I'm wondering if we can just go over the spellings of some of the names for the tape. So what was your name when you were born? Mary or Maria?

MYS: Well at school, I went all through school with Mary. When I got married to Sylvia, they said your name is Maria. So it got me very confused. I didn't like it but I didn't

- know any better, so I started signing my name Maria, which made it very complicated because my Social Security is Mary. And also my, when my parents came, they didn't know how to speak English so they said Maria, that's the Portuguese, but it's the same thing just in Portuguese. Same name, but I got two bills, one for Maria, and one for Mary, I said I didn't like that.
- JF: Sounds like some bills my husband and I have gotten. What was your last name when you were born?
- MY: Ferreira.
- MYS: Ferreira. F-E-R-R-E-I-R-A.
- JF: Okay. And then you married, what was your first husband's name?
- MY: Manuel Cruz.
- JF: And how do you spell Cruz?
- MYS: C-R-U-Z.
- JF: Okay. Then your second husband?
- MYS: James Yorston.
- JF: Yorston?
- MY: Y-O-R-S-T-O-N.
- JF: Okay, great. I'm trying to think if there's anyone else in there? I think that those are the names that I wanted to make sure we had spelling.
- MYS: Then I was all by myself. I had no daughters, and I felt so tired. He had just get married, and this boy Sylvia, he was connected with the family so he saw. He worked in the mill with me, and I didn't even like him. I just said, 'Oh, he's too quiet for me!' But he knew my upbringing, and he became widowed and asked me. And I was should I, shouldn't I. And then I asked the boys, and the boys said I think you deserve happiness mom. And that's how I went.
- JF: And his name was?
- MYS: Albert Sylvia. He was awfully nice. He had no children.
- JF: Albert. Is that S-I-L?
- MY: S-Y-L.
- JF: S-Y-L-V-I-A. So he inherited two wonderful boys.
- MYS: Well, he was married when I married Sylvia. He never had a step-father until after. Ronnie did by Yorston. He was a pop he never knew. But he was a good boy to him too.
- JF: That's great.
- MYS: But he had someone to make sure he did his homework. Make sure he was at a certain time but Michael didn't have nobody from 10 years old to when he got married. It was just him and I. But I made sure he had his friends. They all came to the house. [Audio inaudible as CD 1 ends.]
- [79:57]
[End of Audio]
[CD 1 of 2]
- [Start of Audio]
[CD 2 of 2]
[00:00]
- MYS: Albert Sylvia. He was awfully nice. He had no children.

JF: Albert S-I-L?

MY: S-Y-L.

JF: S-Y-L-V-I-A. So he inherited two wonderful boys.

MYS: Well he was married when I married Sylvia. He never had a step-father until after. Ronnie did by Yorston. He was a pop he never knew. But he was a good boy to him too.

JF: That's great.

MYS: But he had someone to make he did his homework. Make sure he was at a certain time but Michael didn't have nobody from 10 years old to when he got married. It was just him and I. But I made sure he had his friends. They all came to the house. After, you know, I'd say, 'Well, make sure you get in with good friends, and they're all invited to the house anytime.' And when he went out with his friends, I made sure I knew where he was and who he was with. Sometimes he'd be playing ball, and I'd take a ride, take my mother for a ride. He'd say, 'Mom, you keep coming by there.' He'd said, 'The boys are gonna make fun of me.' And I said, 'Michael, I got to go shopping, and Grandma wanted to go see you.' I try, I try.

[01:33]

JF: Seems like you did well. My only other question that I'm asking everybody to end the interviews is, what would you want visitors to this festival to understand about the fishing industry or the New Bedford waterfront in general. Is there anything in particular?

MYS: Oh, I would want—

MY: What would you want people coming to the festival—

JF: What would you want the visitors to understand?

MYS: I think they should. They should come to understand. I've been saying that all along this week. I've been saying to the nurses I'm with and friends I've met. I said, 'You don't know what you're missing!' And you get to know what life is all about and you'll thank many, many times for the fish you sit down to eat. And I said they work very hard and all the volunteers that work. If I had my eyesight, at my age, I'd still be volunteering which I did a lot.

JF: Well you're volunteering right now. We appreciate that.

MYS: I don't know how well I did but you made it very easy.

JF: Oh, why thank you.

MYS: I don't know if I rattled too much.

JF: Nope, nobody can rattle too much for me. I love hearing—You know, I think Walt Whitman said it or something, every man, to use that language, is my superior cause I can learn from them. You're experience is not mine, so when you tell me yours, I've learned.

MYS: Thank you. Thank you.

JF: Do you want to close with any thoughts on what festival visitors should take away from this?

MY: Well, I just think, I think it's a great time to, for visitors to educate themselves on the sacrifices that commercial fishermen do for all of us to eat fish. And also want the trickledown economics does to the whole community not just what—

JF: Not just the catch.

MY: Not just the catch. I mean they affect people all the way from the bank tellers to the car dealerships or whatever. We're all reaping the profits from the guys who are bringing in the fish.

JF: Well thank you so much.

MY: Thank you!

MYS: Thank you very much.

JF: That was a little longer than the half an hour.

MY: I knew it was gonna be.

[04:05]

[End of Audio]

[CD 2 of 2]