



# NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview, May 26, 2017

## Tsoy, Elias ~ Oral History Interview

Corinn Williams

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Interview with Elias Tsoy , May 26, 2017.

## **Background**

**Name of Person Interviewed:** Elias Tzoy [ET]

### **Facts about this Person:**

Age 31

Sex Male

Occupation Boat Painter

Residence New Bedford

Ethnic Background Guatemalan

**Interviewer:** Corinn Williams [CW]

**Transcriber:** Pricilla Gamboa [PG]

**Interview location:** New Bedford

**Date of Interview:** May 26, 2017

### **Key Words**

New Bedford, Fairhaven, Newport, ships, paint, oxidize, Guatemalan, metal, fiberglass, rust, work schedule, work teams

### **Abstract**

Elias Tsoy discusses his work in the fishing industry as a ship painter, including a typical work day and common boat painting projects; his background in other jobs and his emigration from Guatemala.

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[00:00] Introductions; Tsoy from Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, Guatemala, grew up working in a corn farm from the age of twelve to seventeen years old. One of six children, only one from his family that lives in America. At seventeen years old he decided to come to America.

[05:15] When he first arrived to America, he arrived in Providence, Rhode Island and commuted to New Bedford for four years to work at a scallop company. Talks about differences between the United States and Guatemala. Describes first jobs in America such as industrial cleaning and working a jewelry store, his first job in fishing industry was packaging the product. Worked for three years at the same company, was named Employee of the year at Mar-Lees Seafood.

[10:54] Differences between being a regular employee and being an assistant manager. Diversity of other employees that worked there. He left the company and started working in landscaping. A friend referred him to the painting job he now has, he had no previous painting experience. He learned the skill and now has been working there for around three years.

[16:36] How the company he works for operates. When a boat owner requests that boat to be painted, the boss calls a crew to help paint the boat. If boat needs to be painted inside and outside it requires four to five persons. If a boat is painted on the inside the process takes from three to four weeks. Difference between the fishing ship made of metal and non-fishing fiberglass boats. Tsoy mainly works on metal fishing boats. When the metal starts to rust, the owner of the ship hires them to do the job. They start by taking the oxidized metal of the ship with air guns, following that they grind the metal to leave a smooth surface, after they clean the boat or area they will be painting, finally they start to paint the boat with a primer so the ship will not rust quickly. They then follow with other layers of paint. It is hard labor and time consuming.

[26:12] Often boats need to be repainted; different variables that cause the boat to rust. Job is not always year round. He starts to explain how they also paint the inside of the boats during cold or rainy days. He works during the winter on the inside of boats. Explains how his company allows him to work year round.

[31:01] Company paints boats in many areas including New Bedford, Fairhaven and Newport. Hardest part of his job in his opinion is the smell of the paint. Smells are very strong even though they wear masks. It is a very messy job. Employees have to wear as safety equipment.

[36:28] Most interesting thing about his job is the painting. Explains how at first he was nervous about painting around windows and now it is a skill he has mastered. Talks about the differences between painting indoors like a house and painting a boat outside. Normal workday is on Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00pm. During summertime he also works Saturdays, during winters they do not work Saturdays. He says he always has work, the business is always busy. Explains that the crew he works with are mostly Guatemalan but also has Dominicans working with him.

[42:18] Talks about how he only knows one other family that is from the same region as him. Explains about how the different colonies in Guatemala are raised differently; he is from the city and many other Guatemalans in the New Bedford are from indigenous areas. Shares that he learned English over the years that he has been here in America. He understands more English than he can speak. He now has his own family here, a seven year old daughter from a previous marriage and a newborn boy from his current marriage. Explains how he now feels more comfortable in America and has no desire to return to Guatemala.

[49:15] Talks about his wishes for his children in the future and his future in the fishing industry.

[51:19] End of Recording

