



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: 11/15/16

Martins, Virginia ~ Oral History Interview

Madeleine Hall-Arber

Martins, Virginia. Interview by Madeleine-Hall Arber. *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. November 15, 2016 .

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Background

Name of person interviewed: Virginia Martins [VM]

Facts about this person:

Age: 64

Sex: Female

Occupation: Co-owner of Bay Fuels Inc.

Residence: New Bedford

Ethnic background: Portuguese

Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber [MHA]

Transcriber: Amanda Peabody [AP]

Interview location: New Bedford

Date of interview: November 15, 2016

Key Words

Dragners, scallopers, fuel, netting, fishing supplies, water pollution, fuel prices, climate change, traditional and modern fishing methodologies, women in the fishing industry,

Abstract

In this interview, Virginia Martins discusses the challenges of being in the fishing industry, including the changes to the industry, the role of women in the fishing industry, and the role of climate change and technology in the fishing industry. She shares her personal work history and her experiences at Bay Fuels, Inc.

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[00:00] Tape intro; Introduction; co-owner of Bay Fuels Inc.; born in Leça da Palmeira in 1962, moved to USA 1970; Father and uncle fished; one of seven; worked at IMP age 18 until 1988; worked at Fishing Gear with now partner Al Salvador; description of what Bay Fuels store sells.

[6:02] Father was dragger; young draggers switched to scalloping due to more success; few draggers left, consequently netting material is no longer in high demand.

[10:28] Owners in the scalloping business; big companies versus small/individually owned companies; Ship Supply and Hercules.

[14:15] Being a female in fishing industry; being Portuguese in New Bedford and Canada; dangers of being out at sea; learning through observation

[19:15] Juxtaposition between then and now; rising fuel prices; fish market in the 70s and 80s; Management commentary; NFIB; debt due to requirement to build a barge with double hull.

[24:35] Locations of local barges; relationship with competitors; weather challenges; hiring workers for running the barge; license required to operate a barge.

[29:15] Work history with Star Royal, Luzo and Gear Locker; starting her heating service; challenges of finding a truck driver; training programs; monthly and yearly earnings for dragging; length of a dragging season; scallop prices; effects of tsunamis in Asia;

[35:20] Climate change; possible rising population of sharks and seals; mackerel; mother and two sisters worked at plants in 80s; manually cutting fish; changes in industry due to advancing technology.

[40:00] Diversity at plants; local festivals about the fishing industry, then and now; Blessing of the Fleet;

[44:25] Discussion about the overall lack of genuine interest in fisheries; traditional versus modern way of fishing.

[50:07] Overview of typical day; regular customers; relationship with her customers.

[55:20] Maximum of seven employees during winters; relationship with coworkers; discussion about being a salesperson in fishing industry.

[1:01:06] More about her work history; co-op closing; trying to create a co-op; starting the heating service; building the store at its current location.

[1:04:50] Continued discussion about starting up the store and heating service; comparison between Bay Fuels, Inc. and other local fuel companies; discussion about why more women aren't involved in the fishing industry; other women who work at the other fuel companies; mentions Pier 3, Ziggy's Fuel company, Dawson's, Solveig's, C.P Brodeur.

[1:10:10] How she met her husband; who will continue her business; retirement; selling boats but keeping the license; ways that people cheat/cut corners the fishing industry.

[1:21:15] Continued discussion about unfairness in fishing industry;

[1:24:55] General changes within the local fishing industry; pollution; government expenses.

[1:35:08] End of Audio.

[0:00]

Madeleine-Hall Arber: Okay, what I'm going to have you do is introduce yourself, just tell your name and what the name of the business is and I'm going to turn my phone off.

Virginia Martins: Good idea. [laughter] These might ring.

MHA: Oh yeah, well.

VM: I can't control that.

MHA: Well that's all right. So if you could just-- so I can make sure that the level is high enough.

VM: So my name is Virginia Martins. I own-- part owner of Bay Fuels, Inc. at 87 Conway Street in New Bedford, Mass.

MHA: Okay, great. I think that's probably going to be high enough.

VM: You think?

[Sound of equipment being rearranged]

MHA: [laughing] Don't break everything.

VM: --How about we do it like this...

MHA: Okay yeah, that's even better.

VM: Okay. Get out of here. [Indistinguishable]

MHA: Ah, that's better, yeah, good, excellent.

VM: All right. Want me to do it again?

MHA: Actually, no it's, it's fine-- I think that'll be great. And I'm not going to touch that

[More sounds of equipment being arranged]

VM: The problem here, I think, is this.

MHA: Okay great thank you. So thanks for agreeing to do this. I think it's really important to have a good depiction of the whole waterfront.

VM: Absolutely.

MHA: So, maybe you could tell me where you were born?

VM: I was born in northern Portugal from a city called Leça da Palmeira which is on the vicinity of Porto and I was born in 1962. And then I came to the US in 1970.

MHA: So I assume you came with your parents.

VM: I came with my parents, yes. My dad actually came before us. He came a few years before. He came a few years before and he-- my uncle, whom was his youngest brother called him over and then my dad started fishing and got established, got an apartment for all of us and then a few years later my mom came with her little six ducklings and had to leave one behind because he was already too old and European law says when you're 18 years old you have to go into the army so that broke her heart. But-- he ended up coming over a few years later and then she was-- we were all here. There's seven of us. Five girls, two boys. And my dad actually, when he came, he went into Newark, New Jersey, and was there for a while and then eventually moved to New Bedford, of course, where the fishing industry is. And he was a fisherman since he was a kid and fished until he retired at the age of 65. And-- I got pretty involved in it, very interested at a very young age. I was probably 18 years old when I started over at IMP at the time. And I learned everything about the industry as far as netting and my dad worked there for a little while too after he retired. And he used to build the nets and mend the nets and I ran the store there. Learned a lot as far as the industry, and met a lot of wonderful fishermen. I was there for a few years--I was there until 1988 and then I went over to Luzo Fishing Gear. Which a good friend of ours, and ex-partner of ours... took me over there-- he was starting that off and I actually went over and helped him with a lot of the fishing industry stuff and I was there for quite a few years too. And then-- we decided to start our own-- me and my partner Al Salvador-- who always worked with me from IMP to Luzo to partnership and we're still partners. We've been here now with-- would be Fuels, I think going on 19 years, 18, 19 years. And we supply the industry. We supply marine fuel and all the supplies that a fishing vessel requires from filters to lube to electrical to plumbing-- a little bit of everything-- netting, rope, paint... and... so far we've had our ups and downs with the waterfront, with the regulations and a lot of scary moments, but we made it through and here we are. We're doing okay. We just-- I've seen a lot of changes over the years. I saw I went through all the cycles of scalloping being bad and draggers doing good, and then vice versa, you know the draggers went down and the scallopers came back around and they're the support of our waterfront. The government also--

[6:02] MHA: Was your father a dragger?

VM: My dad was a dragger yeah. He always, he only did dragging... and I saw a lot of ...the old timers which was the best years-- is when they were around and everything was done in the waterfront from building nets to changing filters and oils and they'd come down early in the morning, take a break for lunch and be back in the afternoon and continue their work and now you don't see any of that. It's so different. Everything is made or they have shore engineers or they have whatever, they-- they hire people now. Back in the day, they did it all. A little different than what it is now. Better years there were, more fulfilling down the waterfront. It was busier. The movement was great. But-- you know, it's like everything else. Time changes, different things--

MHA: So was it more of a community do you think?

VM: Absolutely—

MHA: In the old days?

VM: Absolutely, a big community--

MHA: Because everybody knew each other and worked together--

VM: And places like me were always busy-- in and out they would always come in and out-- fixing, picking up. Now it's like everything is done in two hours and-- that's it. The waterfront is at a standstill.

MHA: how about young people? Do you see any young people coming in?

VM: Our young people-- and I'm going to speak for the draggers-- our good young people that knew a lot about dragging that were taught from their dads, who obviously were fishermen, moved on. When the dragging took a turn for the worse they got into the scalloping. They learned scalloping and left our draggers. And it's sad because we're hurting on that aspect, as far as draggers go, to find men that know how to mend the nets and know how to deal with stuff like that. There's not many left. We still have a few old timers that are on draggers but once they retire... I don't know what's going to happen. And this is basically why now everything is sent out to be made such as nettings, Reidar's will build the nets and he'll repair them, because there's really no one but the captain on some boats-- not all of them, that will still do that... and build a net. I mean I stopped selling netting because it wasn't worth it for me because no one's building them. They come in built already. So I kind of had to cut that part out of my business, the gear part because there really was no money in it anymore.

MHA: So where are they buying the, the nets?

VM: They go to Reidar's Manufacturing-- Reidar actually does a lot-- and Levin's over in Fairhaven, those are the two facilities that do well now with the netting. I mean we don't have many draggers left, I mean we have what we have. A lot of them are gone and a lot of them got sold. Carlos owns the majority of them. We may have, maybe six or seven that are still privately owned by one owner. But this sector thing is really taking a toll on them, on those private ones. It's hard. I mean they've got to buy fish to catch fish, which really doesn't make any sense but that's how it is. That's what the government has implanted around here and brought the little guy down. It's like Stop & Shop and Shaw's came in and knocked our little markets down and that's what's happening with our waterfront. As far as draggers go. Scalloping is strong. They do very well. The price. . .

[10:28] MHA: Are there any small owners in the scalloping industry or are most of them also fleet--

VM: No, there's small ones. There's your one-owners. I mean, you know, you have your big ones, which is, you've got Carlos, you've got Roy Enoksen, you've got Dan Eilertsen, you've got Lars, and you've got the, you got the blue boats over in Fairhaven now. But there are still a lot of one-owners that are doing phenomenal. They make the money, they make good money. They can keep going. Hopefully they don't get, these big guys don't knock those little guys out and wanting to consolidate their permits and-- which is a little rumor at the time. But whoever has a scalloper whether it's one dredge, two dredges, they're doing alright. Our draggers--

MHA: That must be good for you too because the-- since the trawlers, draggers aren't--

VM: Well, you know I-- I'm a little fortunate, because I have the majority of the draggers, because Carlos is one of my biggest customers and I fuel his vessels and I kind of have the majority of the draggers compared to anybody else that fuels and-- there's not that many left, aside from him. I mean I think he owns, probably, draggers, probably 23 himself. And there's probably another seven or eight left that are not his. So it's good-- you know, I'm thankful and it's good for me that I-- and this thing with the sector, in a way, works a little better. And I'm not going to-- I don't want to sound selfish, but for me-- because he does have a big sector, his boats are in his sector and they get to fish year round if, as long as the weather permits...where days at sea, they were given so many days and then everything shut down. Between scallopers and draggers, it's good and it's bad. It's bad for the one owner that doesn't have much sector or much fish. It's good for the bigger guy that can-- that has a big sector that can kind of-- fish year round. So, I'm okay, you know, it could be better. It could be busier. But it is what it is.

MHA: Are you supplying any of the scallopers as well?

VM: Well I do his scallopers, I do a few scallopers' boats, yes I supply filters, oils, aside from fuel. I do supply other things that they come in and buy. But yeah, I don't do the big stuff like the rings and the links because I'm not-- that's Ship Supply that, or Hercules over there, that can afford containers and big quantities and get better prices for that and I wouldn't have the room for it anyway. But everything else, yeah right, aside from the twine tops and the rings and links and shackles, I supply everything else yeah-- for those that are my customers.

MHA: So when you got started, did you have any push back from people because you were a woman?

[14:15] VM: Nope. I never did. I actually got the reverse. They loved dealing with me. I never had one of them give me a hard time, disrespect me, and I think what helped me, as far as my Portuguese community, my fishermen, my Portuguese heritage-- they loved dealing with me. They loved going into IMP and have me speak Portuguese to them because they were-- that was a Canadian company in America and I was the only Portuguese-speaking there at the time, so they did well by having me there. Because I kind of brought them there and they just liked dealing with me, and I loved dealing with them and even today I still get a lot of my customers and deal with a lot of my customers from old ones. And I never had a problem as being a woman, because they've known me from being here since I was a kid. I was 18 years old, I'm now 54 years old so I've been down there for quite a long time and I've gained their respect and I-- I've never-- I took care of them like they were part of my family, and I still do. I have the ultimate respect for them. I know what it is to-- I don't know what it is to be out there, but I know how dangerous and-- what they do for a living is, is very difficult, and you have to respect them for that because not everybody can do that-- leave their home and be gone and not knowing if you're going to ever come back. I lost a lot of good old fishermen friends out at sea. We just lost three last week, a week ago today. A little craft that went out just because they were done scalloping, and it was a beautiful day and him and his son and his nephew-- they went out for mackerel, and they never made it back and they still haven't found them. So... it's sad because we haven't heard anything. They haven't found anything. And... I lost so many... in the past... old timers, young kids. Seeing them before they left and then not seeing them again... it was... it's stuff that you live and keep forever in your heart. So, yeah... so I've seen quite a bit.

MHA: So what kind of skills or knowledge did you-- obviously you started young so you acquired it over time, but...

VM: I learned just by watching and by-- just hands on, and curiosity and... and that's just who I am. I can do things that they can do. I know what filters their boats need... sometimes better than they do, just by giving me the-- what kind of engine and the number of the engine on the boat and stuff like that. So, I learned a lot just by watching and hearing and--- my dad taught me a lot and-- because he did work with me for a little while over at IMP. I learned just by-- I learned to cut netting, I learned, you know different things just by watching. I go back there and just watch the two old guys do their thing and-- I'd unload trucks with a forklift, I learned how to operate a forklift, I'd load them and unload them. I'm not afraid. I just-- I'm married now and I have a daughter who's 24-years old. It was just a great experience and I won't give it up, until I have to give it up. I'll be down here for God knows how long. As long as the good Lord let, allows me to be here. I will be here. I don't have a retirement age. I don't want to retire. I love what I do. I wish it was better. I wish it was like it used to be. But unfortunately everything changes with time and--

MHA: Do you think it'll come back?

[19:15] VM: I don't see it. I think it's-- whatever it is, it is and I hope it doesn't get any worse. I hope they just leave these men alone and let them work. I mean what else can they do? I think the ones that can survive it and get through it, are going to be okay and I think dragging-- it'll never go away for those that are going to be-- for those that can hold onto it, and get through the bad, which I think they've been through the bad already. I don't think it can get any worse than this. And they did it with fuel prices skyrocketing at almost four dollars a gallon and these poor men coming in and making barely anything. Some of them made nothing at all, because they'd come in and whatever they made, because of the price of fuel and everything, was so high that, some of them would walk-- go home with \$150-- \$300 after being out at sea for ten, twelve days or seven days. It was sad and you know what? They survived it. We all made-- we got through it. And that went on for a little while and now, I see it getting, I see the draggers getting better for those that are in it. It's a little better as far as the price of fish, less quantities I think gives them a better chance of doing better because by bringing in tons of pounds of certain fish and all of them coming in at the same time, doesn't do good for them. But that's something-- the fish prices, for as long as I remember-- I don't understand why that market doesn't have a market. The prices are just... crazy. I mean, there's times that the price was still-- they're giving these men the poor pricing that they gave them in the '70s and in the '80s. And prices just don't seem to get better. They're a little better now, maybe because of the quality of the fish or not as much quantity of the fish. I mean granted we do have to regulate, there's got to be... we do have to protect our species and we... but not the way they did it. I mean they just came in and made it so complicated for these men that don't even understand, what is going on. I mean they literally had to ask people to translate and to explain it to them and... it was, it was pretty confusing for them for a little while. But hopefully--

MHA: Have you ever gotten involved in management comments or anything like that?

VM: No.

MHA: How about-- are there any... industry associations for your business that you belong to?

VM: You've got the NFIB, they come around and they try to help small businesses out in Washington. They did change a few things and help us into a lot of little ways. But no there's really nothing, I mean-- and here's an example; we were mandated to build new barges. Anybody that owned a fuel business such as myself, there's literally four of us in the area, and-- we were mandated to build new barges-- double haul, twin screw tugs, and if we didn't, it was either do or die. So that put us-- me-- as a small business owner, it put me back, just put me back another 15-20 years because what am I going to do? Not build it? And be out of business-- and I worked so hard to get here and so... it was very stressful. There was no help for us. The government didn't give us any grants, no, nothing. They didn't offer anything. It's go out, get a loan, and build your barge. And that's what we had to do, me and my partner, we literally had to, you know, go out and go to a bank and put ourselves in debt for almost \$1,000,000 in an industry that's basically controlled and regulated by the government. And we just-- we took the chance. And we're here, we have it, we built it. And... only God knows what-- we're just going to keep plugging away and do what we got to do, to pay the barge.

MHA: So where are your barge-- do you have one barge more?

[24:35] VM: One barge, every company has a barge, me, Sea Fuels, Luzo and Warrior Fuel, we're the four fuel companies in the area and I dock mine right at Leonard's Wharf. Sea Fuels docks at his place down on pier 3. Warrior's is over at the North Terminal, and Luzo is on Homer's Wharf too on the other side. But that's something that the lovely government had us also do because of what had happened with the big oil rigs. So the lead, it trickles down the line and the little guy always gets the bad end of the deal. But we did it. We're here. We survived it. Just continue the business and just pray that it stays around for a while and-- so we're able to pay for these monstrous bill that they just put us in.

MHA: So how about the other-- your competitors-- do you guys get along okay?

VM: Yeah we all get along, we try to help each other out when we need help from one another. We don't step on anybody's toes, there's enough for everybody. If you do get a new boat or two, it's because they weren't happy where they were and not because I went to chase them. I wouldn't do that and I wouldn't want anybody to do it to me. So, everybody has their own little thing going on and we do, if I don't have it, they'll go next door. If they don't have it they'll go over there. Our ship supplies-- I buy some things from Hercules, I'll buy some things from Ship Supply and vice versa. So we help each other out in our little community here instead of going outside of it. We try to keep our stuff here and help each other out here. Yeah, we do, we get along pretty good. For the most part there's no-- everybody does their thing and--

MHA: How about the weather? Does that challenge you?

VM: The weather? Well... it's challenging for the draggers in the winter. Scallopers normally by now, the majority of them are done for the season. So... you may have some that are doing research trips that still go out but for the most part, the scallopers are done and the draggers can fish year round, weather permitting. Last year was a great year. There was really no bad weather. As long as there's no wind, I mean, the rain doesn't stop them, and the snow doesn't stop them, it's the coldness and the wind that will keep them home, but other than that... it's been okay. You know, it's good. I enjoy what I do. It's been better--

MHA: Do you have any problem getting workers for the barges?

VM: No, my partner runs the barge and I hire-- Bobby Bowers is one of my employees that runs it with him, because you would have to be licensed and certified and-- you can't just put anybody on there. So, he takes care of that end of the business.

MHA: What kind of license do you need?

VM: It's a Tanker Man's-- 350. A Tanker Man's license, you got to have that, Coast Guard approved and it's pretty intense. You got to know what you're doing. And I run the facility here. I also do home heating.

MHA: I noticed the sign out there--

VM: Yeah, I also do home heating in the winter and the reason I did that is to... because the industry slows down a little bit, as far as-- and this kind of gives me that little extra cash flow throughout the winter—

MHA: Makes sense, yeah.

VM: To maintain my rents and my overhead and insurances and-- so it helps out. I have a couple of trucks and that's what I do. I do it year-round but in the winter obviously more than in the summer.

MHA: So does IMP do that and-- or-- or is it something you started--

[29:15] VM: No, I actually started-- I worked over at Star Royal somewhere in between leaving Luzo and I worked over at the Gear Locker for a little while and then my ex-partner-- because it was three of us, which was my mentor and the man that gave me the opportunity to be where I am today, but then he retired and we bought him out-- he opened up a home heating when they left the waterfront. He decided he was going to do home heating and-- so I worked for him for a little while before we opened this here. So I kind of learned the home heating part of the business and I knew what to do and how to go about it. So I did that.

MHA: Did you have any trouble getting truck drivers?

VM: That's a little problem, yeah. I mean, I got John he's been with me for a while. I had Frank, who is a great guy but then he went over to work for Sprague where I pick up the fuel, because they gave him all kinds of benefits that I can't afford to give him and I don't hold anybody back. Everybody's entitled to go on with their lives. But yeah, I actually, I'm in need of a driver and it's pretty sad that you put ads in the paper and nobody has HazMet they'll have a CDL but no HazMet, no experience. And there's so many kids around that should go for that type for license. It's not hard. And they could find pretty decent jobs, driving.

MHA: It's interesting because, years ago, as you probably recall. I'll wait.

[Sound of something printing]

VM: You shouldn't have printed that because it's going into the recorder

BOTH: [laughing]

MHA: Can't stop business.

VM: I know, but I would have printed them after.

MHA: Anyway, I know that years ago there were some training programs when they had the real downturn in the dragging and--

VM: And they did and a lot of kids actually benefited from that. Some of them went for those trainings, went and learned computers and got themselves really good jobs outside of the industry, because they offered those grants that helped them when the dragging went a little sour there for a while.

MHA: I remember trucking was one of the vocational things that they were training people to do.

VM: There was a lot of stuff that they offered to them and some of them took advantage of it. And some of them didn't. And some of them stuck around and like I told you some of them got off the dragging part of it and went into the scalloping part of it. I mean you have kids that are in their 20s and they're making a fortune. A fortune. So they don't want to go back to dragging. Why would you trade a \$15,000 check for a \$2,000 or \$3,000 check with the same amount of days? They probably work a little harder on the scalloper, which you do, but they only work maybe six months or maybe four months out of the year and their year is complete. And they're making over \$100,000, \$150,000.

MHA: What do they do the rest of the year?

VM: They do absolutely nothing. Some of them go on vacation. Some of them get another little part time job. Some of them will go on another boat that still has days and make a little bit more. A lot of the kids work more than one boat. They'll finish that one boat and then they'll go on another one. And then there's some that just enjoy it. And some of them that blow it and end up with nothing. There's plenty of them here, too. And it's sad because it's a lot of money for some kids. They shouldn't make that much at those ages because they don't know what to do with it.

MHA: Should we put in trusts or something for them?

VM: Yeah, but-- it's, I mean you've got scallops going for \$18, \$19, \$20 a pound. Demand, I guess-- I don't know what drives that price up for such a piece of meat but it's... ever since I think-- when that happened-- that tsunami happened over in Japan, in Asia, it kind of-- that was the best thing that hap-- I mean it's sad to say, but it was the best thing that happened to our industry. Because now we had to fill in those voids and those demands and they couldn't do it. But they're back in business. They're going to be coming back around, so hopefully it won't jeopardize our market in the long run. So I don't know.

MHA: How about climate change? Is anybody worried about that with acidification?

VM: Well, they've talked about it, I think-- the scallops not being so good because of the waters being so warm... fish same thing. I think it does have a little bit to do-- you know... it does damage our fish. Certain fish like cod, it's good to get in colder waters and just different type of species, I would imagine. I just know what I hear, sometimes, them talking about it. But it does affect it.

MHA: What I heard is that they're worried in the long run about the shells. That the shells might not be as hard.

[35:20] VM: It could happen. Absolutely, it could because, I think that, like anything, I think the colder the water-- it's like us putting a piece of meat, leaving it out of the fridge or putting it in the fridge. It's going to do so much better in the fridge. Same thing with the species. It's... the colder I think, the better. It is... I mean granted in the summer times, all the waters warm up a little bit but as soon as the fall and the winter-- it doesn't seem to be getting as cold as it used to. The waters are just... still kind of very warm. It does affect the species and whatever they're catching. The fish, the quality is not there.

MHA: Has anybody talked about seeing different kinds of fish that they wouldn't normally expect?

VM: No, I don't think I've ever, nope. I mean, a lot of seals... tons of seals that we never used to see before... sharks, more and more that we didn't see so much of before. So I don't know what's driving the seals. I mean they're hungry, they're feeding, there's tons of whiting and mackerel and then, of course, the sharks will follow wherever the seal goes because that's their feed. But no, I don't think they see anything different, aside from that, that I know of. I don't see them talking about it.

MHA: How about any of your siblings, did any of them go into the fishing industry?

VM: I was the only one, out of seven. My father had two sons. They wanted nothing to do with it. And the other four girls-- granted I shouldn't say that... my mother and two of my-- three of my sisters did work in the fishing industry in the plants in the '80s. Which this was a huge--

MHA: Cutting fish?

VM: Cutting and packing and it was a big Portuguese community of women just working in these plants and, so, yes. They were part of it. My mom worked until the day she died and she died young, she died at the age of 60 from stomach cancer, but she loved it. She loved getting up and going to work and doing what she did. My sisters enjoyed it, too. And then of course like everything else, that died out. The cutting and the packing and the machine-- the machine started coming in because years ago you'd have-- you'd go into these plants like Pilgrims, Sea View and all these places, they manually filleted the fish. Then, all of a sudden, these machines started coming in that took away the manpower, and started filleting and skinning. So that put a lot of people out of work.

[Side conversation—Sorry to interrupt, Virginia. I think I need to take that with me to fix the hard drive, it's going to take a long time. Best if I let it run overnight. VM: You need to replace it . . .]

MHA: But you know it's interesting because we're trying to get businesses on the waterfront and to me that's just part of the business.

VM: That's part of the business, there you go. It is. My little computer out there, she got tired, I think.

MHA: [chuckling] We all do.

VM: Yeah, she needs to get replaced. But yeah, so, it's--

MHA: But there are some places that do the hand-cutting right?

VM: Very few. You've got Pier Fish still does a little bit of it. You got that... I think... Modern Fish still does a little bit of it.

MHA: Bergie's, I think.

VM: Bergie's still does a bit of it, yup. But nothing like it used to be.

[40:00] MHA: --And not enough to bring people--

VM: --Because now you see, I saw... you had all Portuguese-- basically all women running these plants and now, it's... we're in a new, a whole new type of people. Now you have your Spanish, your Mexicans, your Guatemalans. They basically took it over. But they're more, I think, for packing and getting things, not like they used to do back in the day, like my mom would, with giant scissors and grabbing whale cods and cutting their fins. That's how they did it. And then they'd pass it on to the cutters and then the cutters would put them on the tables and fillet them, by hand. It's a lot of work. And that's what Carlos did for many, many years. That's how he started and he was a fish cutter, he was actually a great fish cutter. And look at him, he went from learning the business too, and then selling the fish and look where he is today. So there was a few smart people down here that you know-- the draggers, most of them in the 80s and 90s were owned by Portuguese... majority of them. I mean, I think we came in after the Norwegians, and you know, that were here. So, it just keeps changing. Things change and that was another change. And now I don't know--

MHA: One thing I was curious about-- in the day when there were a lot of Portuguese trawlers and, in the working waterfront--

VM: There was a lot of them... there was quite a few.

MHA: But there didn't seem like there were any festivals that really focused on the fishing industry. There were a couple of religious festivals.

VM: Well, we used to have the Blessing of the Fleet. And that was big at one time. Because every dragger got involved. They would-- their wives-- I mean, we'd go down there, decorate all the vessels, the food, it was beautiful. And that went on for a little while, for a few years. And then it just started dying out, and then you'd get three or four or five vessels and then of course then we'd-- majority of them retired, sold their boats and... there wasn't that many draggers left and those that were, didn't find any interest in it anymore so-- until it all completely went away. I think Provincetown still does a little one down there, which is pretty festive compared to us here. We turned ours into the Waterfront Festival. That's what we did, but back in the day, it was the Blessing of the Fleet. And it was pretty exciting to see and just everybody get together out-- outside the doors and... boat to boat, just the music and the dancing and the eating. It was so great. It was beautiful. And then that died out. We lost that. And we ended up with the Waterfront Festival. Which really isn't too-- I don't... it is and it isn't... but I go down there and it's like, okay. This really doesn't show me much about the industry. Yeah, you get a few booths that you've got the guys chucking the scallops, you've got Carlos in the tent, still filleting which is great. But I

don't find it-- that festivity... it's not exciting. It's just like... go and tour, and just another festival or whatever. It's not, it's so different.

MHA: And that's because?

[44:25] VM: That's because no one is... we lost the people that were interested and I think, loved the industry and did it for the industry and loved what they did. I find that people today don't really enjoy what they do anymore. They just do it because that's just a job and another, that's their way of living. Where years ago, our fishermen had pride. This is my boat, and they'd paint it. It always looked beautiful. The time came to bless it, they went to bless it and... today I don't see that love anymore. I don't see-- there's no love on that waterfront as far as I'm concerned. I just see the painters and the welders and that's all I see down there. I don't see the men on deck, and doing their netting and changing this and-- that's gone. Completely gone. I know because I sell the product, and they have shore engineers, they have shore electricians. Nobody does anything on the boats anymore for themselves, everybody has-- like Carlos has his people to do-- who'll change a light bulb, who'll switch a battery cable. Where years ago, a boat had an engineer that took care of the engine. They had the net guys upstairs doing the nets on deck and the captain is there, overlooking everything. They don't have any of that now. The scallopers have, when they're doing their gear work, doing whatever to get ready to go out. But it's still not the same. Not at all. Not even close to what it used to be. I don't know if you remember. Were you around here?

MHA: Not so much-- I started getting interested in industry when I was a student and I spent a summer in Provincetown going out on the boats out there. And it was very similar.

VM: We have a-- we still have a pretty nice Portuguese community there. Which I think still kind of-- those old timers that are still there, are still like the old school. They still operate the old school way. Our guys here don't-- you have maybe four or five that still do. But for the most part we got a lot new people running these boats now that are from Maine because they got shut down. So we're getting a lot of people from there down here, running our boats, working on our boats from Rhode Island, Port Judith and-- because we're running out of men for draggers. Nobody wants to go dragging. Our people don't want to do it. These kids don't want to do it. There's no money in it. They want big money, they want scalloping. That's what they want.

MHA: And if they can't get a job scalloping then what do they do?

VM: Well they'll try. A lot of them will go out and do and... but they don't last. They don't last. One, a lot of them don't know how to mend netting and these captains, the ones-- some of-- that we still have left of our Portuguese captains, and we still do have-- Carlos still has a few good ones... they find themselves doing everything. From engine room to netting and-- because they really don't have-- these kids don't have the knowledge. They don't--

MHA: And they don't have the interest to learn?

VM: They don't have the interest to learn.

MHA: They need your curiosity. [Chuckling]

VM: Yeah, I-- they don't. I used to tell my father, I said, something went wrong. I should've been a boy. Because I would have been out there. Most definitely. Not that I can't as a women, but it's harder of course, you know. And he's like yeah.

MHA: And when you started, it would have been very unusual.

VM: It would have been very unusual, exactly.

MHA: Especially as a Portuguese.

VM: And that wasn't allowed. But, I got to--

MHA: Maybe as a scalloper, I mean, not a-- on a lobster boat.

VM: Right, something small.

MHA: Only went out for a few hours.

VM: I actually have a couple of good friends that are women that they did that and they did very well, they did very well with it. But... it was okay. I got to learn the other side of it. And I love it a lot.

MHA: Clearly important, too.

VM: It made me-- this business, it can be tough. You're dealing with a tough crowd a lot of the times but I'm that humble and patient and... person that I just-- I don't let anything bother me. I don't let people affect my day. I come in, I do my job... I treat everyone like I would want to be treated, from my employees to my customers. I need everyone that walks in through that door, and I respect them, as long as they respect us. And that's just how it is.

[50:07] MHA: What is a typical day like?

VM: Well our typical day-- our busiest part of the day is from maybe 7am 'til... I'd say around noon, one o'clock. After that it's just-- we come in, customers come in... if I have orders to be dropped off at the boat, we get them filled. I have-- my husband who works here, he'll deliver them and people walk in, they need this they need that. I help them out. I'm in here-- I mean, I'd rather be out there because I'm a people person. But a lot of times, I just go back and forth and my partner's on the barge. He's fueling the boats. He calls them in. We call him to the settlement office. In the afternoon I go out, make my runs. I go to the settlement offices, pick up my checks and for the day's work and... and then you see, from two o'clock to four it's pretty quiet. In the winter it'll get a little noisier because it's cold, people-- the home heating kicks in and it's pretty busy all day long. Sometimes the drivers don't come in until four, five, six o'clock at night. But other than that, that's your day. They come in, I chit chat with them. A lot of them will tell me how their weekend went. A lot of them will tell me what's bothering them and they complain about their captain or they complain about the crew member or-- and I just listen and I try to give them the best advice that I can. I love them all. I respect them all. And that's just...

MHA: Do crewmembers ever come in or you mostly deal with the...

VM: Every day. They come and buy boots. They come in and buy gloves. They come in and buy knives. They come in and pick up the supplies for-- some of them-- for the boats. You don't really deal with the captains. Very rarely. It's mostly who's in charge of the engine room and all their personal gear. That's about it. [Phone call] Yeah so that's our typical day. But when the home heating kicks in-- they're a little tougher... some of the people, tough to deal with. Some of them can be a little nasty as far as, I want my fuel today, or they just give us a hard time. Not all of them but-- especially elderly, they're tough.

MHA: [laughter]

VM: They want it and they want it and that's it- there's no if's or but's about it. But I have the patience to deal with them. Maria... she gets upset sometimes a little. She lets it get to her, I tell her don't let it get to you. Just be calm, just use total-- use reverse psychology on them and they'll love you to death. That's something my ex-partner taught me. Just be humble and... there's no need to get upset and no need to-- a lot of times you wish you could just tell them like it is but you don't. I mean what's the point of it. I'm just a people person. I've dealt with them for so many years that, they don't bother me. They don't bother-- and they all, not for nothing, but they all love me. My customers, they do. They like dealing with me, they like talking to me, they'd rather deal with me than the boys. They'll ask for me-- is Virginia there? And they're like, "no, but I'm here."

MHA: [chuckling]

VM: Well, I want to talk to her. Because I-- they don't just come in and buy and, it's not like your, okay I'm here, cash out and see you later. I make a little conversation with them. I ask them how they are and how's things and how do they make out and they like that. It makes their day and why not. Right? Why not? You have one shot at life and, why be so negative, and, with people and, if they're upset then that's okay too. Just... try to make them feel better. Calm them down. Try to talk to them. They get really fresh or they don't want it then, hey, there's nothing you can do and it is what it is. But me and my partner, we do very well with our, with our people. We're people per--

[55:20] MHA: How many employees do you have?

VM: We are one... two... three... one, two, three, four, five, six. Seven in the winter with the extra truck driver. So we're small. We're family, you know.

MHA: And most of them have been with you for a while, I gather.

VM: Yes. Since day one. Yeah.

MHA: That's great.

VM: It is. And I, like I said, Carlos is one of my biggest customers. He's... he can be difficult at times, but I'm thankful and... I appreciate everything he does for me, in every part of helping me with my business. He is a big-- not just to me but to this whole community. He gives people a lot. And he is the majority as far as draggers go. We need him. We need him, he needs us but we need him too. And he does-- I mean, he helps out quite a bit of people here. And he employs quite a few people. I've never had any problems with him, he's always been good to me. Sometimes it gets a little loud and I just tell him, "okay, Carlos, alright," or he gets upset over something. But he's the type of guy that-- he just-- he's very expressive. He

likes to just express himself and-- but he's harmless. He's-- he does have a good heart. If you need something from him, he's there for you. And a lot of people don't know, or don't understand him, or of course you have the ones that don't like him because he's become this... little guy, Portuguese, little man that came into this country as a young boy and learned the business and he was smart and invested and... off he went. He didn't inherit it from anybody. Nobody gave him anything. That was all his hard work. Such as myself. Nobody gave me anything. I learned. I got involved. I took the chance. I'm doing okay and... I'm happy. But some people just don't understand that. It's-- it is what it is.

MHA: What's the hardest part of your job?

VM: The hardest part is... just praying every day that... you have a good day and business is still good and... and that it remains that way to pay your bills and just... make life easier. But as far as anything hard here to do... there's really nothing hard about it. It really isn't. You come in. You open your store. You're here. You help everybody the best you can and at four o'clock I go home.

MHA: What's your favorite part?

VM: My favorite part? I enjoy a little bit of everything to do with it. I enjoy... doing what I do here behind the desk. My favorite part is being out on the floor, and dealing one-on-one with my customers. I enjoy that. I really do. I like going out there and... they get pretty impressed, I mean, I'll climb the stairs in the back to the tippity top and get you your supplies. I know a lot of women would say I'm not climbing that, I'm not getting that, I'm not going to do that. And they get a kick out of it. And I enjoy doing that. I enjoy going to the warehouse and doing stuff like that. I enjoy being on the counter and taking care of them and talking to them. I'm a good sales person. I mean, if I keep them there long enough-- they come in for a pair of gloves, by the end the time, by the end of the day, they've got jacket, boots, knives-- you know. I've added quite a few items. That I'm pretty good at. But that's my favorite part. I like that one-on-one. I like it when it's busy in the store. And I see people coming in and I mean, sometimes I'll take care of two or three customers at a time with no problem. And some people get so edgy, oh my God-- no... and that's where the respect comes in. They respect me. I tell them, hold on, and hold on a few minutes until I finish this. No problem.

[Telephone]

[1:01:06] MHA: Have you ever worked in a company that was unionized?

VM: No. Nope. Always been like this. IMP was probably the biggest company I worked for because, they opened up in '82 here in our area and they were Canadian. It was a Canadian company, which I still think the ones that bought them out are still Canadian. But that was probably-- Luzo was something small when we started it and then-- what happened over there was-- it was me, my partner and my ex-partner and another gentleman that kind of built a little store, and for our people and started carrying little things like this and... it was great. We didn't do fuel at the time it was just gear and then the co-op closed. And... Tony-- who was my ex-partner, decided, he said, you know what? Since the co-op closed why don't we do something here at... and to try to create a co-op. Get some of our guys' boat owners, become members. They each put in so much and we can do what the co-op did. We'll get a barge, we'll start fueling boats and-- so his intentions were great. And it started off pretty good. They had like... I think 15 if not more members to start. But then, as time went on we had more chiefs than Indians. And it made it difficult for Tony to the point that he didn't want to deal with it. So he told the guys, "listen, you guys keep it. Just buy

me out. Buy my share,” and that’s when we started Star Royal, the home heating. And then I left. My partner left. Then the other guy left, then whoever was there stayed and did what they, where they are today, which they did good. They’re doing well. But that’s what happened there. And in the meantime, Tony left and I went over to the Gear Locker for a little while. He says, “I’m going to, I’ll come back for you. Just give me a little time I’m going to start something new,” and that’s when he started the home heating. And then me and Al went back to him. Al drove truck, I helped them in the office for a little while and then we says, “well-- I miss the waterfront, I don't think I can do this home heating thing. I miss being down in that strip-- we were up on Rockdale Avenue-- I said, “I need to go back over there. This is not for me, this is not what I like to do, sit behind a desk and answer phones all day.” And he didn't like driving truck, so Tony says, “okay you know what, let's look around there and see if there's a little vacant spot. And if there is, we'll start all over again, like we did at Luzo.” I said “okay. Yeah, yeah, I'll look.” So we did! We drove down here and “voila,” this was here. It had been empty for three years. Because the last thing that was here was the auction. This used to be where the auction was.”

MHA: Oh wow. I didn't realize that.

[1:04:50] VM: Yeah. They used to have the auction here. You know, all phones and they'd come in with the boards and that's how they did it, back in the day. And then that went away, and the place had been closed down for three years and Mr. Fitzsimmons who was the old man that owned-- he said sure, you kids want... I said, “yeah yeah give us the, you know-- we really would want to rent it from you. We don't really have much to start but you know, if you can make it reasonable enough that we can afford it, we'd come in here.” Didn't even have that warehouse. He did that later on for us. So we basically only had this and that little back room. We had nothing. We had the phone. I put a few bags of rags on the floor, a couple of pails of oil, and that's how we begun. But because we knew companies and, from what I did over there, and at Luzo, we knew who to call and what to have and eventually, slowly we got there. And then we had the barge and we started telling people, listen we're over there-- a lot of-- they were so happy to see us back, that they came right over to us and said absolutely, absolutely and-- here I am. And then in 2006 or 2007 is when I started the home heating. Just to kind of, you know, and then we went through all those crazy stages of the government taking this and doing that and planting this, and it was so crazy. But, yeah. That's how we did it. I've been here since 1998.

MHA: You mentioned that you're one of the few women that owns business--

VM: Like this.

MHA: Down at the waterfront.

VM: Like this. Yeah, no one else does.

MHA: No other fuel people?

VM: They're not women they're men. You have Warrior fuel who sells filters and lube but he doesn't have a walk in store like I do. You have Luzo that's basically what I do here but it's a co-op. It's owned by a few men. You have Sea Fuels. He just does fuel and lube. He doesn't have a walk-in. Ship Supply, well, Harriet owns it now, but that used to be her uncle’s and stuff. But, no.

MHA: Why do you think there aren't more women on the waterfront?

VM: I don't know. I don't think they find an interest in it.

MHA: That's astounding to me.

VM: Isn't it? I mean it's such an interesting... I tell people all the time. How could you not be interested? I mean, I love going downtown, I love walking around there and looking across the street and seeing all those boats and I mean, I grew up over here. I used to play down here as a kid. This was all field. It was nothing here, but there was still an industry already. Pier 3 was there and-- I remember that. I always found a love for it. And always wanted to be a part of it. I mean I got out of high school I didn't want to go to college. I didn't go to college. I went from high school to this. And I loved every minute of it. I got where I got, not because I went to college. I got where I got because of my ambition and my interest and my love and everything I have for the industry. Nobody gave-- it wasn't a hand-me-down. It was-- I started it from scratch. From my knowledge of learning in other places and the opportunity that my ex-partner gave me and got into it and it gave me everything that I have in life today. And I'm very grateful and thankful for it. and God knows, you know, I just... take one day at a time and why there's not more women involved in it? I don't know. A lot of these fishermen have great daughters that-- talented-- but we have some--

MHA: Well, Carlos has Stephanie.

VM: He's got Isabella there that, she's becoming very knowledgeable and knows the industry. We put her there. We gave her that job, when we were still there. I mean you have Edie over there at Edie and Marie. She's a smart woman. But she's more settlements and deals with Ziggy's Fuel Company-- does the books for him. I mean we do have great women in the industry. You have Edie, you have Anne over at Dawson's, you've got Marjorie over at Solveig's, There's a few women. I mean you've got... what's her name over at C.P Brodeur.

[1:10:10] MHA: Cindy.

VM: Cindy, she's a smart girl. She knows her stuff. John has over at Hercules now, he's got a couple of pretty smart girls over there. But as far as owning it, aside from settlement offices, I'm the only woman that owns a business that I do. I mean I do have a partner, he's a male, but I run it. He runs the barge and gives the fuel and-- but yeah. I am it. I keep—

MHA: Do you have any young people?

VM: I tell people I should be a minority, I'm a minority down here.

MHA: [laughing]

VM: And you'd think going for this barge, I would qualify as a minority. Nope. Nope, nothing. I says, but I am a minority down here. I'm the sole woman.

MHA: So...

VM: And I know everybody down here. I can't go anywhere where that I don't run into somebody my husband is like you should run for mayor, because we can't go anywhere, because you know everyone. And it's true. But I love it. I'm a people person. I love people. I like dealing with people. He's the opposite. If he could hide in the cubby in there, he would.

MHA: That's interesting. Opposites attract, huh?

VM: Total opposite of me. Complete opposite. My partner. He's... a people person, but not as much as I am. I'm more talkative I'm more, you know. But he's pretty good too. He does well.

MHA: So how did you and your husband get together?

VM: Oh, high school.

MHA: High school?

VM: Yeah, that was high school stuff. Started there, and then we were friends, we hung out, and then it just became more than friends I guess. I got married in '89. And I have a 24-year old daughter. And she's a great girl.

MHA: Is she interested--

VM: Nope! Absolutely not.

MHA: [laughter]

VM: And Al has two kids. His son actually he graduated from Mass Maritime and he is working for a company out-- I think it was either the west coast or down south... with tugs and stuff. But as far as our kids being involved, sometimes his son will come in and help, if one of the guys take a day off-- vacation or whatever-- but as far as the girls, no. Mine's got her thing going. She's still in school, she has her own dance studio in Fall River and she works at-- she does little waitressing out in Jerry Remy's in Fall River, so she's a busy girl. And I don't think I'd want her-- it's not what it used to be. She'd be bored here. Because it's just really-- I mean look, you've been here all this time-- you see the afternoons. It's completely quiet. Completely quiet. The morning, yeah, from seven till, you know, ten-thirty, eleven o'clock it's pretty good but after that it's-- we basically stay around because of the home heating. And, you know, Carlos and his boats... the guys are always in and out, getting parts and what not. And that's basically it.

MHA: So, I know it's a long time yet before you're going to start thinking about retirement but, do you anticipate that you'll be mentoring somebody to take your place eventually?

VM: Nope, I'm going to be like Joan Feener. You know Mrs. Feener over at Marine Enterprise? You should go talk to her. She's been down here for many, many years and I tell her all the time Joan when are you going to retire she says, "never. Never." I says, but "you know, you're already getting up there in age, you're 87 years old" and she's sharp as a whip.

MHA: Wow, that's great.

[1:14:41] VM: She goes, I'll never retire because retiring is like dying. And I'm not ready for that she says. I've got plenty of time to retire when I go six feet under, she says. She's got the same girls there that have been with her for over thirty- something years. And, granted Joan doesn't really do settlements anymore but she still handles all the stevedoring and all that other stuff. She's there every single day. So I'm going to be like Joan. Even Marge over at Solvieg's. Margery's up there you know. She's probably what... in her 60s? Maybe late 60s, early 70s. She's got no plans of retiring either. So I'm going to be like them. Edie is 64 years old, she's still doing her thing over there. She's got no plans on retiring. So we'll all retire together.

BOTH: [laughter]

MHA: You'll have a big party.

VM: I'm the youngest down here, so we'll have a party. But no, I don't foresee, I don't plan... I don't want to retire. I'm happy doing what I do. I like to get up every day and—retire, for what? So I can be home bored? And I mean there's only so much you can clean, then you don't see anyone. And I'm not going to retire a millionaire, that's for sure. Maybe if I did, maybe I'd think twice about it but... but retire? You know, as long as I have my health and I can do it, I'll do it until forever. Unless my daughter plans on giving me a lot of grandkids and I have to stay home and take care of them, which I do not want to do that. Absolutely not. No, I have no plans on retiring. I'm just going to keep it going until I can't go no more. That's my plan. And uh... people say, "oh retire," yeah, hey, you know fishermen retire and they should because they worked very hard and when you reach a certain age you can't do that no more. It's just not appropriate. But me? I mean what so hard about-- in here, I take care of the customers, if I can't get it I'll tell them to get it and they do and that's it. And Joan is the same way.

MHA: So... this is... has been fascinating. It's, I really-- I really enjoy talking to you. Is there anything that I have not asked that you think I should have, about your business about yourself, about your family, about the waterfront?

VM: No I think you basically covered everything. I mean, you know, the industry... I just hope that it gets a little better. I think it will once they get it to where they want it. And they're almost there. It's knocking off some of these boats which they have. The part that they shouldn't have allowed was-- and I'm-- some people may say it's wrong, some may say it's right... once you sell out or once you give up your-- you don't use it, you should lose it. Not get out of it and yet make money off of it and you know, it's not fair because that license can go to someone else. But a lot of these guys... sold their boats but kept their permits and then they lease them out and they're making money and I don't think it's fair to the ones that are in it. They have to buy from them, sell them the permit then. Give them that opportunity. But no, you guys want to make all ends. You're not in it anymore but yet you want to make the money off of it, when that poor guy could probably use your permit to add on to his because he doesn't have enough quota. But yet he's got to pay you to buy your fish or whatever you have on your permit, in order for him to go to work. That's one of the things I don't like about it, that's happening. I also don't like the fact that a lot of these scallopers make the money that they do and when they're done... they go and collect. I think anyone that makes over \$100,000 or \$150,000 a year shouldn't be allowed to collect [unemployment insurance]. You, I think you have, you've made quite a great year and you're taking away from those that really do need it. That's something they shouldn't allow, the government shouldn't allow. The things they should look at and monitor they don't. But they'll target the poor guy that's still out there. They'll tell him, you

know what, you can't catch any more cod you're done. Not one... you get caught with one cod, I'm going to put you out of business. Which is not right. You know, there's a lot of little things that they do that are just not fair, and not right, that I don't agree with. And I see it happening and they'll argue, oh yeah? Why not? Why shouldn't we collect? You know, you're self-employed number one, half of you don't even pay taxes. You still owe the government a ton of money and yet you go and collect after you just made \$150,000 in a matter of six months. And the little dragger guy goes to go down to unemployment, he gets a little measly \$200, \$300 a week while you're getting \$800, \$900 a week. Because they're going by your earnings. What the hell's wrong with this government? Don't they see that? Listen buddy, you've met your bracket. You're not qualified to collect unemployment. Well, I didn't tell you to buy a \$2,000,000 house.

MHA: [laughter]

[1:21:15] VM: Or \$100,000 vehicle, you know? That, I don't like. I don't agree with that and I tell them. I tell them right to their faces. And the thing of the permits. You don't use it? You should lose it. It's how it is. No, they get to keep them. Make a little money off, they'll scrap the boat. But yet they get to keep the permits and lease them to these poor souls that are trying to still hang on. But they got to pay them so much a pound more than what they getting on the board. A lot of times they're paying them \$1.70 and they're only getting seventy cents on the board, which is wrong. That shouldn't be allowed. You don't have it? You don't have it. But if they don't do that... they're out of business. They got no quota to fish so they're stuck between a rock and a hard place. They have to buy quota. They have to lease. And whatever the species may be, if they cut off cod, forget it. No more cod. So now you're just fishing for haddock, yellowtail if you can, flounder or monk or whatever. If you don't have that quota, if you don't have that on your permit, then you can't fish it. You have to lease it from somebody else. And it costs them a lot of money. You're talking thousands of dollars. So, I don't know what this government-- let's see what this president is going to do. You know Obama is very-- he's very, he's signed all kinds of crazy, stupid things because he's an environmentalist or whatever he may be. You know what, we're all environmentalists, we don't like anybody to take advantage of anything, but I mean look at the humane side of it, you know. The ocean is there to fish. God gave man, you know, the waters to fish. Yeah, don't abuse it. Have regulations. They have them right. Not the way this NOAA. Just not a fan of NOAA, all the federal, or whoever is implanting all these rules and regulations. I mean, they've put people out of business. They've, people have lost their livelihood. We had a fisherman and... I'll use him as an example, a man that had everything. He had two boats at one time, beautiful home, great fisherman... a little bit of a big mouth, loved to brag. He lost everything over-- because he over caught lobsters. When I tell you he lost everything, he lost everything. He lost his boats, He lost his home. He went to jail. He paid fines like no tomorrow, to the point that ended up with nothing. Because of a bug.

MHA: Are you worried about Carlos?

[1:24:55] VM: No, I'm not worried about him at all. Carlos is, he's a smart guy. He... I mean, granted he's a little crazy. But no. I think he's going to be all right. He'll spend a little money. But I think he'll come out of it. He'll be fine. He's Carlos-- people got to know, Carlos, he loves these challenges. He's just... he thrives... if the man stops, he'll die. He really will. He'll say, "I'm going to sell everything, I'm out of this thing," I say, "Carlos, you stop, you'll die. That's like taking a pack of cigarettes away from you. You take your pack of cigarettes, you don't get no cigarettes, you're not going to do well. You're going to die." And he-- no I'm not worried about him.

MHA: I have one last question and that is-- because we're doing this museum and we're part of-- what we hope is that we'll-- a new exhibit will be based on our interviews with –

VM: Right, right.

MHA: All the waterfront businesses. So if you wanted to have a portion of the exhibit talking about your business, what would you like to emphasize?

VM: [laughter] I don't know. Just the change in the industry. How much it's changed over the years and me seeing all the changes and all the cycles. I really don't... have a choice as to what I would prefer to talk about because there's a little bit of everything that involves the industry that I'm interested in whether it's the dragging part, the scalloping part, or just my customers, or just dealing one-on-one with them. I do so much throughout the day. I'm all over the place. I'm all over downtown, I'll go to Dawson's and spend time with them. I'll go to Fairhaven and spend time with Marge. So I... everything interests me in the waterfront. To have that little portion, don't ever take my love away from this industry. No government could ever take that away from me, in my heart, and how I feel about it. I go down this waterfront. It upsets me when I don't see things fixed from, you know, the piers and not having the right vicinities there for what they need. I mean, I talk a lot with the harbormaster. He's a young kid. He's not from around here. He's not familiar with a lot of the things and everybody's been giving up a little bit of advice on all ends, and one advice I gave him was they get worried as to what happens to the filters that these men take off the boats, what do they do with them? And the oil? And I look at him and I says, "what do you think they do with them? The city has no place to put them. They don't bring them back to me, because I don't have the capacity of disposing of them. So what do you think happens to them?" And the DP I think it was the DPA that was there and, how do you, you know, asking us-- how do you get rid of your oil. I says, "well you have my manifests, I call Western Oil, we change oil on these vessels but we put them into drums and then I get them picked up. What do you think these guys do with their little buckets and their little filters full oil? Because you don't have anything in a port this size, which is a shame, that you don't have anywhere for them to put their-- so he goes in the water. That's where it goes." And he's looking at me like, what? Well, where do you see them? I says, "do you see them on the boats? Do you see garbage barrels down by the waterfront with them in it?" "Well, sometimes they leave little buckets." I says, "well, they're telling you something. You're lucky they leave those little buckets with them in there and you guys pick them up. They're telling you, you need to pick it up or we're going to throw them in the water. So what do you think when they go out there? Because they've got nowhere to put it, so that's something you guys should focus on instead of just having a garbage plant or a garbage disposal. How about a filter disposal? That's what you need" and he's looking at me, you know, "you... brought something... a good point up," I says, "yeah. Yeah and it's a very important one because they don't care. They're out there, they're going to throw them out."

[1:30:21] MHA: If they don't have any alternatives, what are they going to do?

VM: I can't take them back.

MHA: That's a really, really important, yeah.

VM: So they're like looking at me like... huh, yeah. Just like they did with the bilge back then. How do you think they disposed of the bilge? They'd get out there and, see you later. You guys finally came up with an idea, oh, we're going to pump out your bilge for free for the first year and then, you know. I says,

that's a great idea. Says, it doesn't take much to put some kind of small place down there like you did for the garbage, for the filters and the oil and then have Western Oil pick them up. You'd have a nice clean harbor. Just go dive under there and see how many cans you're going to find from paint, filters, you name it. I says, you don't even have a place for them to put their plastics. They'll stuff them all, and then you got the guy at the dumps opening up bags and making sure they don't have filters in there and oil... trying to sneak them in there. So now you've got to inspect all the bags before they--

MHA: Do they take old gear? Old nets and things?

VM: Well, small. Nothing big. I mean, that's just couple of dumpsters over there. They basically take their garbage from the boats. But some of them will sneak stuff in there, filters or whatever they can, oil pads and... I mean he's not going to look at every bag. But that's something they need, for the environment. I mean you guys are cleaning this harbor, spending thousands, millions of dollars cleaning it, for what? They're just throwing them back in there. They paint down there, all these boats are painting. You think all those cans are staying on board and paint brushes and rollers and all that crap? A lot of it is in that water. Because you have no way of disposing them. So... supposedly, they're supposed to be looking into that.

MHA: Good.

VM: Let's see.

MHA: Yeah. See how long it takes. [Laughter]

VM: I'll believe it when I see it. I says, this cement pier-- I says, it's a shame, it's a port this size and we drive down that cement pier and you can almost see the water, because it's all busted up. We just finally put decent lighting and cameras. How many years did that take? But they're fixing Rudy T and whatever they're doing over there, but never mind the waterfront. And that bothers me. I get upset. I get very upset when I see stuff like that. And I tell them all the time because I go down there. I'll hang out at the HDC and, and talk to them and to the harbor master and to the police that's over there, I says, "look over here, look you've got a brand new fire boat, you've got a brand new police boat, you got, you guys got all the money for all this stuff, right? That fire boat is really going to put out a big fire on a boat, really? How much does that cost us? You got money for all of this but you got no money to fix our piers. All driving around in brand new trucks, new cars, and new everything, but no money to fix our piers." Right?

MHA: That's the problem in a lot of--

VM: You go to Provincetown they got a beautiful pier... they built down there... with all these vessels here-- we don't need-- I mean those poor guys are tying up to busted wood along the side and the cleats are, you know, all rotted out, and it's a shame. It's a shame. I had to fight the city to get my barge over this side because I used to dock in Fairhaven because they had no room for me over here. I says, my business is in New Bedford and you guys can't even find me a spot to put my barge. Me and, and a couple of the other people. I have to pay a private sector over in Fairhaven, thousands of dollars a month because you can't find me a spot. I says, "well I want a spot on that side." And I fought them and it took, it took a few years but I got it. Yup. I let them have it, when I go to meetings and stuff.

MHA: Well I hate to end this but I got to get up-- back up for the other person.

[1:35:08] End of Audio