



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview May 7, 2017

Sam, Pablo ~ Oral History Interview

Corinn Williams

Sam, Pablo Interview by Corinn Williams *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. May 7, 2017 .

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New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center
38 Bethel Street
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Background

Name of the person interviewed: Pablo Sam

Facts about the person:

Age: 45

Sex: Male

Occupation: Fish cutting machine mechanic

Residence (Town Where lives) New Bedford

Ethnic Background (if known) Quiche, Guatemala

Interviewer: Corinn Williams

Transcriber: Joselyn Feliciano

Interview location: Community Economic Development Center, New Bedford, MA

Date of Interview: May 7, 2017

Key Words: Immigration, Seafood, Fillets, Machine operator, Mechanic, Family, Guatemala, New Bedford, MA

Abstract:

Pablo Sam immigrated to New Bedford, MA from Guatemala in 2004 and works at Bergie's Seafood Inc. He started as a fish cutter and over the last couple of years has become a machine operator and a mechanic for 50 percent of the machines at his location. Pablo enjoys his work and plans on becoming a more efficient mechanic for the company.

[2:15] Life in Guatemala, poor economy in Guatemala, jobs are difficult and temporary, decision to migrate to the U.S.

[5:23] First job was many years ago at Bob's Tire, next job at Bergie's seafood (8+ years). Machine operator filleting fish, gaining mechanical skills for all fillet machinery, trained by a senior mechanic at Bergie's dedicated work for personal life goals

[10:11] The process of cutting and filleting fish by hand, fast paced hand cutting- 300 fish an hour, the process of fillet and scaling fish machines, importance of precision when filleting fish

[15:13] New machinery is able to debone and fillet fishes, job enjoyment, problem solving skills are essential for mechanic work

[19:40] Weekly oil change and checkup, tune up for all machines before the week begins every Sunday, weekly checks are crucial to maintain a working machine. Shifts begin at 7:00 AM and end when productivity dies down, normally in the evening at five. Productivity goes up and down depending on the boats and time of year. Summer time is ok. Experience improves career.

[24:37] Employees are a great mixture of many different ethnic groups, most workers speak Spanish, family, struggles of the economy in Guatemala.

[29:57] Personal sacrifices for family, safety is important to avoid injuries. Machine operation can cause serious injury if not careful, Machines handles large 15-20 lbs. knives, company is growing and increasing productivity and improving factory technology, hours have increased over the years from 20-30 hours a week eight years ago to 50-60 hours a week now.

[37:06] Machine mechanic work is time consuming, learning mechanic work is more than reading, mechanic work is situational and about problem solving.

[42:07] End of Interview