

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY ALLERDT
FOR
THE WORKING WATERFRONT FESTIVAL COMMUNITY DOCUMENTATION
PROJECT

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
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Abstract

Henry Allerdt recalls some of the worst weather he has been through, along with the various boats he has fished, Henry opines on regulations and the devastating effect they can have on the industry.

Demographic information

Sex: Male

Age: 69

Ethnicity: White

Occupation: Tugboat 2nd mate

Born: Brooklyn New York

Homeport: New Bedford

Key words

Role

Commercial fisherman (captain crew)

General Social and Cultural Characteristics

Social networks (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers)

Social and Cultural Characteristics of Fishing

Informal rules and regulations

Gear and Fishing Technology

Boats, ships, vessels

Business and Economics of Fishing and Other Maritime

Business and economic effects of regulation

Fisheries Management

Regulations

Mike Petillo: We'll start recording. Today is the 24th of September, [2011]. It is twelve noon and we are interviewing Henry Allerdt. Is that the right pronunciation?

Henry Allerdt: Very good.

MP: Excellent. My description of you says that you fished in New Bedford for a long time and you are currently a skipper on a tug boat.

HA: Well, second mate on a tugboat.

MP: Second mate

HA: I have gone skipper on a tug. But this big company is - according to how long you've been there and I haven't been there that long.

MP: So, basic introductory and biographical information. If you just want to give us your name, tell us when and where you were born, some of the information about your early years growing up, any sort of role models you had in or out of fishing, and any family background you want to give to set the stage for your life and career in the fishing industry.

HA: Well, I was born in Brooklyn, New York, 1943, and moved to Massachusetts, New Bedford area - actually Fairhaven when I was probably seven, almost eight years old. I went to school in Fairhaven, Fairhaven High School. Summers from the time I was fourteen until I got out of high school, I went fishing and fished with my dad mostly up until he retired. Then, worked around the fleet, learned a lot of different ways of doing things from different people. What else is there? My father was a fisherman back during the Depression.

MP: When you said you would go out with him fishing, would just go on a small boat together?

HA: A small dragger, sixty-five foot dragger. In the summers, it was usually me and him and one other crewman, and we went fluke fishing around Nantucket Sound and yellowtail fishing south of Martha's Vineyard. When I was in school, a lot of times just for extra money, we'd go out over a weekend just the two of us, and wind up taking Monday off from school because we were taking out fish. I had a few absent days because of that. You did what you had to do to make a living. It was back in the early '60s and it was hard making a living. That was back when the mills were still going in New Bedford and the only way to make a decent living was fishing.

MP: One of the questions here is, "Was this your choice?"

HA: I liked it. I liked going to sea. I couldn't picture myself doing anything else and this was in my blood. I tried doing other things. I took a year off one time worked as an auto mechanic and it just didn't cut it. I just couldn't stand being away from the water. I had

to be on the water. Even after I sold my fishing boat in 1996, and went and got my license, my AB [Able Seaman], and went right back into the marine industry, right back into Merchant Marine. I wound up working for a gentleman over on Martha's Vineyard, ran one of his tugboats for four years until I needed better benefits and got bored with it. So, I'm down working in New York on the tugs and barges.

MP: That's where you currently work, in New York.

HA: Yes. Well, we work in New York. The unit I'm on now, we go up and down the coast, Gulf of Mexico, and we get around.

MP: In the early days, when you decided that you were going to be a fisherman and work in the industry, what types of fishing were you doing?

HA: Mostly flounder, haddock, and codfish. When I first started you had all the lightships and everything up and down the coast, which was pretty neat. We had a lot of close calls. The old wooden boats, they leak like mad and came home a couple of times on the hand-pump, standing on deck for ten, twelve hours cranking on the hand pump, trying to make it back in. Well, I'm here, so I guess we did a good job.

MP: Maybe we'll come back to the close calls later. Can you tell us about the actual boats themselves? What are we talking about here, in terms of gear, size, the vessels themselves? Anything technical you want to talk about that you've worked on and your experiences in different kinds of boats?

HA: Oh, yes. The early boats were all eastern rigs; the pilot house aft, fo'c'sle [forecastle] forward. When you got into rough weather, you always had a lot of times - I've been through three, four hurricanes over the years. You always have to have somebody in the pilothouse and somebody else on - the crew would be down in the focsle forward. If you had to get across the deck, you had to string a cable across the deck, so you had something to hang on to. It'd get pretty exciting at times. It was three hurricanes one fall. I don't know a '75 foot wooden boat, the old Brush - that was a pretty wild time. Every trip, I'd come in, I'd have my bag packed [and] I said, "I'm not going through another hurricane." Then, I'd get my paycheck, and I'd put my bag back on the boat. I did that three times in a row. We were out there to make a living and, at that particular time, that was the best living I could have. Everybody else was making half what we were making. It was a lot of money involved. It was all about the money at the time.

MP: You decided to stick with it and do the fishing.

HA: Stick with it because of the money, yes. It's kind of crazy to be out in hurricanes, but then you get your paycheck and, "Oh, that's not so bad." [laughter]

MP: Tell me about the different positions that you've held and working your way up, doing certain kinds of work. Can you describe for us the different positions that you've had, historically with boats, and what jobs you've done?

HA: Well, as a kid, I just was a deckhand with my father. He sold one boat, bought another one, and he got sick, so he had a hired captain for three or four trips until he got better. I think I was twenty-one years old and I didn't want to deal with the hired captain. So, at twenty-one, I took his boat out for the first time, made three or four trips. After that, I figured out that I could do anything on the boat. I used to engineer – of course I grew up on it and I could go engineer and take care of the machinery. I stayed away from cooking because once you got your reputation as being a cook on a boat, you couldn't leave that position. So, I stayed away from being a cook. I'd go engineer and so I wound up being on all different boats. When anybody needed anybody, I'd raise my hand and say, "I can do that. I can go mate. I can go engineer. I can deck. I can go captain." So, I pretty much did any position that was available." That helped me to get ahead in the industry, until I bought my own boat.

MP: What is a typical trip like? In the early days, what was a typical trip like? Is there such thing as a typical trip or are they all different? Can you talk us through the basics of what a normal day is like or going out on a trip?

HA: Well, I guess it's still the same way. You're in seventy-two hours. And that seventy-two hours that you're home, when I was usually the captain or owned the boat, I spent that time getting ready for the next trip, making the sure the machinery was good and changing the oil and doing all the maintenance on the boat. The day we come to go out, we usually left around eleven o'clock in the morning. One of the things that I did is I didn't allow any drinking on the boat. I had other captains tell me I'd never keep a crew, but I went zero tolerance. I wouldn't tolerate it. So, I always had sober guys. If they weren't sober, they didn't go with me. It was one of the things that I was a stickler about. Anyway, we'd leave the dock and do a little gear work on the way out. I never usually had big mortgages on my boats. I never could really pay that much attention to weather, so we went out in everything. [laughter] It was a hard northwest wind and no matter how hard it blew, we left figuring by the time we go down to George's Bank it would maybe die out. And it usually did. If it didn't, well then, we fished anyway, and fished seven or eight days, and on our way back again. I did that over and over for years. Pretty much repetition.

MP: How would you decide where to fish?

HA: I decided, yes. I kept logs of past years of where we'd been. I had logs of every boat I'd ever been on and where we had been at certain times of the year. At different times of the year, fish will spawn and you want to be in that area when they're gathering up in certain areas. They migrate and you had an idea where the migration routes were, so you followed the migration routes of the fish and you paid attention to the market price. If the market price was down, you didn't go for that species. You'd go for something else, something that had a better market value. Like any business, you try to

get the most for your product. Like, spring of the year, when the flounders and all the fish are spawning on the shoals and George's Bank, I'd go down and get fluke for the New York market. They were always a better price. You caught dollars not fish. It's always trying to calculate what would be the best way to go.

MP: You talked about a zero tolerance for alcohol on your ship. Was there any specific reason for that? Did you have a bad experience at any time?

HA: Oh, sure. You always had bad experiences with alcohol, guys not doing their job. Years ago, when I would run a boat for somebody and you're just starting up, you just took everybody you could off the dock. I had a guy go into the DTs [delirium tremens] and had to have him lifted off with a helicopter because I thought he was having an aneurysm. [laughter] He was flopping around on deck like a flounder. Then, he was out of it. So, I said, "Never again am I going to put up with that stuff." That's it. You come down sober or you don't go. I always had one or two guys waiting to take his place on the dock before I left, so that was the way I did it.

MP: Looking back at all your years fishing and especially this area, in terms of the different crew members you've had, the other guys out on the boat with you, where were they mostly from? Were they all locals? Looking at it from an immigration standpoint, a demographic standpoint, where are those people from? Has that changed over time, the people that you work with on the boat?

HA: When I first bought the old wooden boat in 1973, I hired a fellow and he was from Portugal. He wound up staying with me until the time I sold my boat, the last one. He was with me on three different boats. He was with me the longest. He was with me over twenty years. Most of the guys that I had stayed with me for seven, eight, nine years at a time, until they wanted a change. It's pretty much a transient thing, outside of that one fellow that stayed with me almost forever. But they come and go. And local guys. I had a few Portuguese guys work for me, couple of Norwegians, but all walks of life or from different areas. It's pretty much homogenized now down at the waterfront. [If] the guy did the job, I hired him. It didn't matter what ethnic origin he had.

MP: This is an open ended question. What makes a good fisherman?

HA: Just like anywhere else. Guy comes down on time, works to the best he can, works hard and sober. Usually a good family man makes a difference. The single guys you never know what's going to happen [laughter], but a married man who needs the job and is willing to come down and work hard, that's what I always looked for. A guy that gets along with the crew. You can have your one fellow in the crew, say your six men, and you got one guy that's argumentative, well you can't have him around for long no matter how hard he works because he's disruptive. So, usually somebody that gets along with everybody else, works hard, comes down on time, sober. That's the guy I always got for years.

MP: Do you have any children or family members in the industry currently?

HA: Yeah I have my two of my brother's boys. One fished with me for three or four trips, [but] didn't like it. He's a carpenter and he stayed at that. The other nephew worked as a mechanic for a guy over in Westport for a while and then tried fishing and fished for six months, then came with me. He was with me for a couple years and then left my boat, went on other boats to gain more experience. Now, for the last, I guess, eleven, twelve years, he's been captain of the *Moreau*. He is probably one of the best producers right now and he does very well. My family, my cousin Chris, has been doing excellent.

MP: Why have you stuck with it all these years would you say?

HA: It's all I know. It's all I know. Like I said, I tried being an auto mechanic. I was all right at it, but I didn't like the grease and the dirt, and I had to deal with people. I had to deal with customers and I didn't like lying to them, so I had to stay with fishing, where I could be honest and work hard. The harder I worked, the better I was at it.

MP: Do you have any opinion on the best years of the fishing industry, the golden years? Is there anything you can identify? Most importantly, why were those good years?

HA: Probably just before they implemented the two-hundred mile limit and after it for maybe five or six years. Then, we had a big building boom in the late '70s, where everybody built a new boat and then the government guaranteed loans. Some guys were building more boats than they could afford. But there was a few fleets built and then they got overfished because we had too many boats. The golden years probably were the mid-'70s to the mid '80s. And then it just went downhill after that. More and more regulations, too many boats. But [those were] the golden years for me, the mid-'70s to the mid-'80s. That's when I did the best.

MP: I think we definitely want to talk about regulations. What is the two hundred mile limit? What is the deal with that? Can you explain that?

HA: That started out when, I forget which, one of the countries started claiming that two hundred miles from their coast is their economic zone. So, the United States said, "Well we're going to do the same thing." They claimed out two hundred miles was their economic zone. But unfortunately, or fortunately for Canada, Canada wanted half of George's Bank. They couldn't decide, so it went to the Hague in France and the World Court decided where to put the line. We lost probably half our good fishing grounds to the Canadians. I thought we should have shared them because we had been sharing it for years. Us and the Canadians were fishing the same grounds for hundreds of years, and then all of sudden, we're made enemies just by drawing that line. It was sad because we got to know a lot of the Canadians. [We] used to talk to them on the radio offshore and now all of a sudden we're at odds with each other. We lost a lot of good grounds. The Canadians lost a lot of good ground on this side of the line. It was a sad thing that that was decided that way. It's, I guess, wiser people than us, but I thought it was a terrible

thing when that happened. We lost a lot of good fishing grounds to the Canadians and they lost a lot of good fishing grounds. We used to share with them.

MP: So what other regulations have come into play? How have they changed things for you? What is your opinion? What has worked? What has not worked?

HA: A lot of stuff has helped. The larger mesh size lets a lot of juvenile fish live. It was a good thing. Back in the 60s, early 70s, we self-imposed on ourselves how much yellowtail flounder we could bring in. We had a thing where we had about five-thousand per man on the boat. If you were seven men you'd bring in thirty-five-thousand pounds. If you were six men thirty-[thousand], and so on. It worked for a while. Then people started cheating for some reason. Well, not cheat; there was no law. It was just gentlemen's agreement, but not many gentlemen around. It just got that crazy. The whole thing got crazy. When I started, I just went out and caught fish. You just worked hard and now you had to be a bookkeeper instead. If you got in trouble you called the Coast Guard and now they're policemen. It's like getting pulled over on the side of the road every time you go up. You know you got to go fishing and you're getting stopped by the police. It's not a bad thing, safety inspections. We didn't mind that. We always had that. But this being looked at like a criminal, it gets to you after a while. It's one of the reasons I got out. It was enough. [I] couldn't make a living anymore. I make a better living now doing what I'm doing than when I was fishing. During the heyday I could make double what the guys in the Merchant Marine were making. [The] first house I bought, I bought with a year's wages. You can't do that anymore.

MP: Do you have any sense of the regulator side of things and how that's impacted communities as a whole or different families? Do you have any sense of the bigger picture of that?

HA: Well, as far as everybody just squeezing by, I don't know of anybody that's saving any money. Some of the scallop boats have been doing good. They got their stuff together, had a good lobby, and worked things out very well. But the draggers are all--outside of a couple of them--just barely squeaking by. I know quite a few fellows that just got out; they couldn't take it anymore. They're starving and the price of everything [has] gone through the roof. Your bottom line disappeared. Got to go. I don't know how they're going to make it from this point on. The fleet's old. You go down and look around there, all the boats are thirty years old or older. Nobody's built a new dragger. I think there's been one new dragger built in the last ten years. It doesn't compute to build a dragger today for what you can get out of it. You can't pay for it.

MP: When did you leave fishing? When did you move into your current--?

HA: December 20, 1996, I sold my boat. I was trying to decide what to do so I made a trip on a friend of mine's boat, the *Majestic*; made three, four trips on that, squid fishing. Then, got into the fishermen relocation fund; I took advantage of that and went and got my seaman's card, my Merchant Marine documents my captain's license, tankerman endorsement, and all that. [I] made one more trip in December, Christmas trip, because I

was getting kind of broke by then, [laughter] then was offered a captain's job on a tugboat on Martha's Vineyard, and did that for four years. But that's the last time I made a trip on a fishing boat, December of '97. Since then, Merchant Marine.

MP: What was the fishermen's relocation program? What is that?

HA: Where they had so many boats [that] had gone into the buyback program. I think they bought twenty-seven or twenty-eight boats that they bought back. If you figure five men average on those boats, six men average, something like that, that's what? A thousand guys. Isn't that right? No, a hundred. Probably a hundred and thirty or forty guys now are unemployed and no way to get a job. The rest of the boats are cutting' back on their crews. Where the scallop boats used to be anywhere from nine to eleven men, they cut back to seven. What are these guys going to do? All they know how to do is fish. So, they started up this thing where you got re-educated and to get into something else. Some guys went into truck driving. Some--like I did--went in the Merchant Marine and different things. One of my wife's nephews took a course in refrigeration and heating and got into that and. If you wanted to take care of--the opportunity was there to get into something else. They took it. I took it. What else? [laughter]

MP: I'd like to go back to the some of the close calls, if there's any stories you can share with us, especially with the hurricanes that one year where there were three or four hurricanes in one season. Anything you want to talk about that was just totally scary that you can really recall? Did you ever say, "I don't care how much money I'm making. This is not worth it?"

HA: Yes. Well, actually, the worst weather I ever saw, they were calling for a big northeaster and that wound up being the Perfect Storm [of 1991] that just hung out over Georges and Grand Banks. We heard it was coming, so I says, "Well, I'm not leaving. I'm going to wait until it's over." It just hung there for two days. What the heck is going on? Forty, fifty-foot seas, breaking all around us. I says, "Oh, well. We had a spare net on deck we took and put it down into the fish hold--all the checkerboards and everything--put those down, chained down the hatch, [and] closed up all the weather tight doors. This was a little seventy-foot steel stern trawler. Usually, what you do is you put your bow into the wind and go slowly into it. But when I'm going into it and the seas are breaking, they're higher than the mast, and took a couple of them right over the bow--green water right up over the wheelhouse window--I said, "Well this isn't going to work." So, I tried to time it so you see a couple smaller seas, turned the boat around and ran fair wind. We ran fair wind for like three quarters of a day until we got off Block Island off of Rhode Island and then it wasn't so bad because that storm, if you remember, it just hung out between Georges Bank and the Grand Banks. So, we hung out there for a day and then said, "Well, looks like it's dying out," but it didn't because it just hung there. That was pretty bad. I was the only one out there and I had the Coast Guard call us because, I guess, some of the wives at home got nervous. I had the Coast Guard call. "What are they calling me for? Are you guys all right?" "Sure we're fine. We're just riding it out." But it was pretty bad. It wasn't good. And everybody ran, but me-- [laughter] the smallest boat.

MP: What year was that again?

HA: Oh, boy. I don't even remember. That was in the mid-80s? [Editor's Notes: The Perfect Storm of 1991 formed on October 28, 1991 in the Atlantic Ocean and dissipated on November 2, 1991.] Somewhere in there. Don't remember now. Look up when the Perfect Storm was and that was when it was. That was bad. I guess Nantucket lost twenty yards of their land on the east side. Wasn't good. A ship went up on the beach on Cape Cod. I think the only other new boat I had was back in '77. There was the blizzard of '78. I didn't go through that one, but there [were] a couple other bad storms that I went through that winter. [I] had a big mortgage, [so] had to go. Always went. Hurricanes, big seas. They don't last too long. It's not like a nor'easter. Nor'easter lasts two or three days, but a hurricane's usually gone in twelve hours. So, it was scary for twelve hours and then it's over. Take some green water on deck, but usually if you're prepared for it, you take everything off the deck, put it below, [and] tie everything down. I think we took the doors off of the engine room one time. We had to get some pen boards out and nail up the engine room doors. I guess if you're lucky and paying attention, it's not so bad. If you're unprepared than it's a lot worse. Scarier in the wintertime when you ice up. You got iced up good. That can be pretty bad. I know one boat I was mate on, we were on the way home and we had a little bit of skim ice on it. We were right outside of Round Shoal Channel and we had about two, three inches of ice on everything, so we all got out, chopped all the ice down, and we're going down Nantucket Sound and the temperature dropped down to zero. By the time we come in, we had three feet of ice on everything. We were seven men. It was a boat called the *Pauline H*. It was about a ninety-five foot wooden boat. We had the whole crew come out and then we had ten or eleven lumpers come on the boat. It took us four hours to clear the boat up enough to take out fish. That was no fun, especially when it's zero [degrees] out. Lately we haven't seen them hard winters like we did then. Anything else, Mike?

MP: Do you have any advice for anybody wanting to get into the fishing industry nowadays?

HA: Well, I'd like to see more young guys at it. From what I understand, I was told a couple days ago, that the average age now is fifty-one, which is pretty sad. Nobody's breaking in at it. It's a good living. It's an honest living. It can be exciting at times, that's for sure. It's tough to get into now. I guess if somebody wants to get into it, they go down to the docks and just keep asking and have somebody take them out. Give it a shot, I guess. That part's still the same. I broke in a lot of guys over the years that just wanted to go try it. If they want to try, like I say, it's a good honest living; get down there--get down [to] the docks and start asking around, try to get somebody to take you out. You're either going to like it or you're going to hate it. That's all I can say about that.

MP: What do you think the reasons are that younger people aren't as attracted to it anymore?

HA: That's a good question. I don't know. Work's too hard. I mean that's the thing that I saw years ago, too, that some guys got out and they'd say you're crazy working like that, I don't want to do it, and other guys who loved it. But I don't think the monetary rewards are as great as they were before. The scallop boats, they have the restriction on seven men. We used to take out what they called a "shacker" and you just paid them very little to come out and he was usually in addition to the regular crew and now that's not allowed because you can't take more than seven men. If you take out somebody that's inexperienced, he can't cut out the scallops and he can't hold his own, so nobody's breaking anybody in because you're not allowed to bring an extra person out. So, it would be nice if we could do that again and have a training program. But there are no training programs anymore. I don't know. I don't know what the answer is. Industry needs to work with the regulators to allow this, to allow people to break in. You know it's pretty sad when the average age is fifty-one years old. I was just talking to one of the directors or co-directors of the--what do you call it?

MP: The festival?

HA: The festival, yes. They had trouble keeping insurance because they had a fleet-wide insurance program and they had to change carriers because everybody was so old it wasn't profitable any more. So, they had to scramble look around for new insurers because of the age of guys. Yes, it's not like it used to be, that's for sure.

MP: Do you see this event, this kind of festival, as possibly exposing people, especially younger people to something they may not even be familiar with even in their own communities here?

HA: I hope so. Although, it's so many people in it I can't see how you couldn't be exposed to it. Because this is what supports this area, is the fishing industry. I think it helps maybe enlighten people from outside the industry to maybe loosen up on some of the restrictions that we have here, so that we can get more viable and more energetic in what we do. Because I know I lost my energy fifteen years ago.

MP: I come here as someone who didn't grow up in a fishing community or near a working waterfront. So, being able to come up and literally see it firsthand--be on the docks, the piers, and see the people actually working and getting up on a stage or even a microphone and talking about it, I think it's a great way for me to, all of sudden, picture myself back in the 70's here. I think this festival is really great in that aspect because it's very educational; it shows you firsthand people from the community getting up and demonstrating and talking about the things. So, I think it's a really invaluable way to preserve the culture and document. That's what we're trying to do now with some of these interviews, is to kind of preserve the people that have lived through certain times--this is how it was here, this is how it changed. I think it's a great opportunity. Is there anything else that you feel like maybe you want to comment on or talk about, given everything that you've done over the years? Anything that has changed or stayed the same? Is there anything else that you'd want to add?

HA: Well, this is what makes this area, this harbor, is the fishing industry. You know when I look around and you hear about [how] they want to put a casino in here, well that's not going to add anything. It's going to take away from the waterfront. This is an industry that supports the whole area. It's a harbor of refuge. There's been things they want to bring in and make marinas and make it a yacht harbor, and that doesn't bring anything. It's bringing non-commercial things down to the waterfront. I mean, it's nice to have a restaurant on the waterfront, but it doesn't do anything for the industry. It takes away from places to do repairs. Places need the waterfront to promote the fishing industry. That's all we have here. There's nothing else left anymore. There's no more textile mills; they're all gone. There's nothing. Industry had moved out. The only industry left is the fishing industry and bringing non-producing things to the waterfront is not a good thing. Even this hotel that we're sitting in is right down on the working waterfront and it's not doing anything for it. It's more or less an attraction for tourists, which I guess is good for the city in a sense. We're a hundred yards from the water. It's not promoting the industry. What else can you think of Mike?

MP: Well, I am sure we could talk for a long time.

HA: We can go on and on about this.

MP: We still have some time.

HA: It's all opinions.

MP: The more people we talk to and document, the more opinions we'll have and somewhere in there is the right way to do things.

HA: Somewhere in there is the truth.

MP: Yes, possibly. Just thinking more about the regulatory side of things, have you had any experience in working with anybody who makes these regulations? Have you ever lobbied yourself? Have you ever had any interest or desire to go and work on some of these commissions because they must have people sit on these boards and have actual fishermen there to testify saying, "Well, this is going to help us and this is going to hurt us?"

HA: Oh, yes.

MP: Do these people make decisions in a vacuum?

HA: It's true they do that. I haven't been on it personally, because when I was fishing that's all I had time for.

MP: Sure.

HA: I was just too busy making' a living. Before I bought my first boat, '73, I was on the research boat out of Woods Hole. I worked for them for like five months. These scientists would get these--I don't know what do they call it--grants to do research. At that time, I was twenty-seven years old and I'd been fishing already for a long time. I had a lot of questions for them and I'd ask a lot of pointed questions as to what their research was accomplishing and what it was doing. Then I'd get called up to the captain's [laughter] state room and told to keep my mouth shut, not to ask these guys questions, but I was interested in it. You know, "What are you guys doing?" It was a lot of foolishness. That's why I got a bad taste in my mouth for the NOAA research is because it's a lot of bad science, a lot of baloney that they came up with. You didn't see much good coming out of what they did. There was a big flap here a few years ago where when they told--they had a stern trawler rig. Your cables have to be absolutely even for the nets to work and they were off eighty to ninety feet. You weren't going to catch anything and this is what they were basing their research on. They were basing it on that there wasn't any fish out there. Well, there wasn't any fish out there because the net was closed up. Being five months on there, I saw a lot of bad science. But [according to NOAA], I didn't know anything because I didn't have a PhD. That's the sad part. Fishermen gave as much input as they could, but a lot of it was just disregarded, and it's sad. That's what a lot of your regulations are based on. One of the biggest problems I see right now is the grey seal population. It's in the tens of thousands. They eat fish, tremendous amounts of fish. Before they had all these derbies for sharks. Sharks ate a lot of grey seals and kept the population down. Up until, I think it was 1950 or '51, Massachusetts had a bounty for grey seals. You brought in a nose [and] you got five bucks. That was discontinued back in the '50s, so we've had about sixty years of the grey seal population going through the roof, at a time when the fish stocks were down. It was about five years ago I worked for a guy on the Vineyard. We went into Nantucket and we're going down through the channel. I'm looking at the breakwater. I said, "Who the hell raised the breakwater? Wait a minute. Let me get the binoculars out." I'm looking at the rocks and it was loaded with grey seals. I'm estimating, "Let's see. That's about a hundred yards" and I know how long the breakwater was. I says, "That's between twenty five hundred and three thousand seals on the breakwater going up to Nantucket." They all eat fish. They're all fat. [laughter] What do you do? You can't put a bounty on them because you'll have PETA and everybody else on you. Monomoy Island right now is loaded with them probably; must be twenty, thirty thousand seals on Monomoy Island up the Cape. It's an overpopulation that has no natural enemies and they eat fish. But that's nature I guess. It has nothing to do with economics. I was down to see my nephew on the (Moreau?) here a couple months ago and got a couple haddock off him to take home for a meal. As I was filleting them up and just throwing the heads over the side, the grey seals were eating the heads as fast as I could throw them over. So, we got grey seals in the harbor and I have never seen those. Fifteen years ago there wasn't any in here. There's all kinds of things to mess up the ecology. Anything else, Mike?

MP: I think I'm good. Is there anything else you think we should talk

HA: Anything else on your agenda?

MP: I didn't ask everything, but I was trying to have a good chat. I think I'm good. It was about a forty-five minute discussion.

HA: Is it?

MP: Yes, it went by quick. [laughter]

HA: I could bullshit here all afternoon if you want.

MP: Well, if there was more time we could certainly do that. But I'm going to stop it for now.

46:56

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Transcribed by Laura Orleans
Reviewed by Molly Graham