

[00:00:05]

Wang: Okay. This is an interview with Roger Salisbury. The interview is taking place on August 6th, 2018 and the interviewers are Susan Wang and—

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Lesyna: Kristine Lesyna.

[00:00:19]

Wang: So we'll have you, Roger, introduce yourself.

[00:00:24]

Salisbury: Okay. My name is Roger Salisbury and we're here on the Verona, in the cabin, in Pillar Point Harbor, Half Moon Bay.

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Lesyna: In Half Moon Bay, California.

[00:00:42]

Salisbury: California, yep.

[00:00:44]

Wang: Great, thank you. So we just wanted to start off by learning more about you and your experience in fishing. So can you tell us just how you got into fishing?

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Salisbury: Well, when I graduated from school I graduated with a mechanical engineering degree right at a time when they had 5,000 unemployed engineers in the Bay Area because they had just stopped funding the Apollo space flights. So I couldn't find a job so since I liked to fish I started towing my little skiff around and I lived in my car for two years learning how to fish. And that's how I got started. I bought my first commercial license in 1971. Yeah. And well, I was happy to make \$10 in a day so I could put gas in my boat. I had a little 3.9 horsepower engine and I was good to go to the next day. And I just added a little bit every year until I wound up with this boat.

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Lesyna: And were you born in Half Moon Bay?

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Salisbury: Palo Alto.

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Lesyna: And you live in Half Moon Bay now?

[00:02:29]

Salisbury: Yeah.

[00:02:30]

Lesyna: And how long have you been here in Half Moon Bay, California?

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Salisbury: Well, let's see, I lived in my car in Princeton for two years starting in 1971, so that's 47 years.

[00:02:48]

Wang: Long time.

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Lesyna: Did you have family members that participated in the fisheries in the area, or? Okay.

[00:03:01]

Salisbury: No, no, no. My father was an airline pilot but he died in a plane crash when I was seven. And, well, I have family now because I have kids and exes, so. But I've been here continuously since 1971.

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Wang: Is any of your family in fishing as well?

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Salisbury: Nope. Nobody's been drawn to it. A couple of my kids would do it for a while and lose interest and go do something else.

[00:03:42]

Wang: 47 years. That's a long time.

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Salisbury: Yep.

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Lesyna: So can you tell us a little bit about your experience with the California Halibut trawl fishery, specifically?

[00:04:01]

Salisbury: Okay. I've been fishing Halibut, oh, gee, for 40-some years. I started out with the gillnets, fishing other things. One day I set and wound up with a bunch of small Halibut. So to do it right I got the bigger mesh trammel nets and did that for oh, half a dozen or so years until they made it illegal. And that's when I bought this boat. So to continue the Halibut fishery I drag for them now. And I guess I've had this boat for, let's see, since 1991. So there's 27 years with this one boat.

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Lesyna: And you did the gillnet fishery here?

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Salisbury: Yeah, out of Half Moon Bay.

[00:05:09]

Lesyna: Out of Half Moon Bay, okay. And how deep were you?

[00:05:15]

Salisbury: Oh, right up to the beach.

[00:05:17]

Lesyna: Oh wow, okay.

[00:05:18]

Salisbury: Right up to the breakers, usually inside of 13 fathoms. My favorite spot was 13 fathoms, which was probably, gee, not much more than a mile off the beach. And I'd set in sandy areas amongst the rocks. And my favorite place was a cliff that was, oh, two fathoms tall and as you go off the coast it'd drop down two fathoms. And along the top edge was a lot of sand and so I'd set my gillnets in the sand where the Halibut like to lay and ambush things coming over the edge. And I did really well doing that. And of course you can't, you know, drag in the rocks so I stay away from that kind of fishing.

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Lesyna: And you said you started out with gillnet and then you switched to trammel net?

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Salisbury: Yeah.

[00:06:26]

Lesyna: And how are those different?

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Salisbury: Well, my first gillnet was 2 7/8-and-3-inch mesh set like a cyclone fence. And I'd run it every day but leave it in the water all the time. And in my skiff I'd pick up one end, float over to the other side of the skiff and just pull myself down the net taking the fish out as I go. And that was for kingfish. So then I found some spots that instead of kingfish I was catching rock cod. But the rock cod were small because of the size of the mesh. So I got a little bit bigger mesh, 5 inch, and started making a living fishing rock cod, setting the nets in the rocks and stuff like that. And that worked out pretty good until one day I decided to set in a sandy area and I wound up with dozens and dozens of real tiny Halibut. So the right way to do that is get bigger mesh so the small Halibut can go through and I wound up catching nice 10-, 20-pound fish. And trammel nets are hard to get the fish out of because of the walls on each side and fish get really tangled up, so I went to a tied-down gillnet. It's still considered a trammel net but I was

able to untangle the fish really quick. And that was working really good and just for the fun of it I tried a bigger mesh. I think the minimum size mesh for fishing Halibut was 8 or 8 1/2 inches. Anyway, I went 1/2 inch bigger and not only did I catch bigger fish but I caught more of them because on other experiments the big Halibut were just bouncing off of the straight, like the gillnet, like a cyclone fence, they'd hit it and there was nothing to catch them so they'd bounce off. So being tied down—they were big bags—every fathom it was, the net was tied down to one half its height and the fish would go in and get bagged, catch a tooth, their tail would stick through a mesh and they'd pin themselves in this loose webbing. And then coming over the side of the boat all I had to do was pull on the meshes and they would spin. And I'd unhook a tooth or pull his tail through a mesh and keep spinning and it worked out so well that I went to salmon webbing, large mesh, and outdid everybody with larger mesh, catch more, bigger fish and making it so easy to do that I could go out and run, well, by that time it was a 600-fathom limit, I believe. I could go out and I'd be back in time before lunch. And so I remember one day thinking, "I could do this for the rest of my life." And it was right about that time they made it illegal. Okay, so that was in my skiff and in another 22-foot boat that I had before the Verona. And now I forgot the question.

[00:10:19]

Lesyna: So you almost happened upon Halibut accidentally. Like you started out with White Croaker and then you went to rockfish and then you found the Halibut and then you started targeting the Halibut and then once gillnets were banned in the area you started trawling and you chose Halibut?

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Salisbury: I was trawling everything. On rough days I'd stay close to shore, which is where the Halibut were. And if there were a lot of Halibut around I'd stick with it but if there weren't so many I'd go back offshore for sanddabs, Petrale, rock cod, things like that. Then of course when they, when the Federal government took over the, the—oh, what do they call it?—the bottom fishery, groundfish, okay, they took over the groundfish and required us to take an observer. So on this boat--which was a hundred years old by that time and I had been taking observers out--well, they decided they didn't want to go with me any more because of the age of the boat and I guess because, you know, danger, they were scared. And so without an observer I couldn't go in the Federal fishery. So now I'm strictly Halibut, the California fishery.

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Lesyna: And how often do you trawl for Halibut now?

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Salisbury: Oh, it's usually around, gee, 70 days a year I think. For the Federal fishery they require certain paperwork that I still have to do every year and so I have to tell them how many days. I think it's around 70. And when I'm not dragging Halibut I fish crab so that takes up a couple of months.

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Wang: So I, I'm not really familiar with fishing so could you just describe what a typical day is for you when you're out catching Halibut?

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Salisbury: Oh, okay, present day?

[00:12:55]

Wang: Yeah.

[00:12:55]

Salisbury: Okay. I get here just before sunrise and if the Halibut are close by it takes me about 45 minutes to get to the grounds, right out front, then I either tow up the coast or down. My favorite way is down. Once I get the net in the water—it takes about five or ten minutes—then I come in and I have a sweet roll and a cup of coffee and twiddle my thumbs for about three hours. And of course I'm busy the whole time, actually. I got to go between rocks, I got to watch the fathometer and see if there's something I don't want to catch, which, you know, a lot of stuff shows up on the meter. I wish it was all Halibut but it's usually jellyfish or sharks or something. Anyway, when I get to the end of the tow I'll pick it up. Takes me about a half hour to turn the net around—that's to dump the fish out on the deck and get the net back in the water—and I start towing again. And it takes me like a half hour to sort the fish and I keep running up here to check things then go back and sort some more fish and I go back and forth. So for like that hour I spend cleaning up the first tow. And then I tow for another couple hours after I'm done with that. Make another, oh, two- to four-hour tow and pick up again.

And sometimes I'll make a third tow, especially if they're short ones. And if it's a longer tow I just make two. If there's lots of fish I stay out later. Make an extra tow. And come back in. I deliver to Morning Star Fisheries and they're, there waiting for me and I get rid of all my fish within 15 minutes. When I was younger I used to struggle to get rid of my fish but once I bought a commercial license I had people come and want all my fish. I didn't have to run around finding who wants this and who wants that. And the amazing thing is they paid me for it, so that's why I wound up a commercial fisherman. But I just like to fish so don't tell Dave Mallory this but I'd pay him to take all the fish off my boat as long as I could keep fishing every day and not have to run around delivering them.

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Wang: Do you fish alone or do you have someone here with you?

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Salisbury: I usually fish alone. First couple of years on this boat I had a deckhand, different deckhands. But they posed more of a danger than a safety issue, which people think it's dangerous to fish by yourself but it's actually the deckhands that are the problem. And I would get so bored with nothing to do. My favorite part is sorting the fish and without that it's hard to keep going. I just fall asleep at the wheel and come in awfully tired. But when I'm sorting fish and doing everything myself I've got the energy and I feel good, so that's the way I prefer to do it. And then in the last few years my daughter's baby daddy was struggling and so I gave him a job, that's Chris. He goes with me, especially in crab season. He likes the big money so that works out for both of us because at my age now my elbows and knees are, are gone. I used to crab by myself, too, and stacking gear all day long and sorting and stuff, too hard now so I take Chris and somebody else usually. I might even give my daughter a job unloading fish. She was interested in earning some extra money but since I have a full crew, two deckhands, I think maybe I'll just let her, for a percentage, come down to the boat when we're unloading and, you know, just share the wealth.

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Wang: How--So how has that changed from before? You said, you said currently how is your typical day. Is it very different from before?

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Salisbury: Well, I don't know. Fishing is fishing. I still had to get up early whether it was this boat or other boats and I usually fished by my—I always fished by myself with the other boats. Oh, except I had friends go with me because, you know, they need a job or something like that. We'd go out and have a good time and both make money and... It's basically the same.

[00:18:54]

Lesyna: Have your fishing tactics changed over time at all?

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Salisbury: Well, dragging is the biggest change I made—

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Lesyna: Oh, okay.

[00:19:06]

Salisbury: ...from gillnets.

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Lesyna: Within the trawl fishery have you changed your fishing tactics since you started?

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Salisbury: Oh, yeah, I slowed down. I got to have more fish around. I'm not going to knock myself out anymore. And the weather's got to be better for the same reason. I don't want to knock myself out. And I'll never be able to buy a home at the rate I'm going so what's the difference? As long as I have enough to pay rent.

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Wang: You're mentioning that you like to—You prefer going south versus north. Like are there certain spots that you go to or do you just go whatever looks good that day?

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Salisbury: Well, if the fish are shallow I go down below, and at Martin's Beach you can get in as far as 17 fathoms, so I'll go down there. And then the fish move up and down the coast,

too. Right now they're up on the banks but they'll be moving down this way. So I just got to wait, be patient, pretty soon I'll start towing north. Probably won't tow deep getting up there but I'll run up there and tow shallow.

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Lesyna: Have those fishing areas changed over time or have they been reliable based on the season?

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Salisbury: Pretty reliable, they have a certain pattern to them but there's a difference every year. Often I get two years with the same pattern. And I've just got to be really flexible and when I'm not catching fish in one spot don't give up. Go try another spot. But when I've tried all the spots, you know, within a 25-mile distance from the harbor and I'm still not getting anything that's when I slow down, like I am now. I'm just going out once a month.

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Lesyna: Have you changed your trawl net gear over your career?

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Salisbury: Just small changes. I used to make my nets so they caught the sanddabs and Petrale real well and right now I just concentrate on catching Halibut really well. So you can have bigger mesh. The footrope can be higher off the bottom. I put the, the footrope behind the fish line, behind the edge of the net on the bottom, so that small fish, they're stirred up by the footrope but they come up underneath the net and can't get in so they go their own way. The Halibut, the big Halibut, they will get disturbed but they're too big. When they come up they come up ahead of the net, the fish line at the bottom, and I catch them. So instead of catching lots of small fish I catch just the big ones. So that was a big improvement. Made my work a lot easier because there's a lot of small fish everywhere but if you don't want them, you know, why shovel them over? And let's see, oh, one big help was putting the jellyfish hole in the codend because sometimes I'd come up with 10,000 pounds of jellyfish and I'd have to cut my net and they'd be falling on my head, raining off of everything, in my eyes, on my lips, I've even taken mouthfuls of jellyfish. Tastes like hot chemicals. And to avoid that I put a hole that bursts open when I get a big load and all the jellyfish just keep going right through the

hole. And I can even keep on towing and the fish don't seem to see the hole. I have lost a few fish, you know, I see them on the water. They're swimming forward and because of the speed of the boat they're going backwards in the net and they're up high in the net where the hole is and their tail sticks through and they go out the hole backwards. But I've only seen that happen three or four times in the last 15 years. So—And I've had big catches in jellyfish areas where other people would have to pick up their nets and I just keep going and I wind up with a good catch, so that works.

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Lesyna: So you designed that yourself? That's unique to your gear?

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Salisbury: Yeah, I made a lot of different kinds but I found one that really works good so I've been using it for the last maybe 10 years. And what else? Oh, I took the floats off the net because I seem to catch more. One day I just decided to do it and wound up with good catches so I kept doing it. Then I got curious so I started adding floats to the net and every time I put two floats on I'd catch less and less fish. So all the floats came off and I don't use floats any more.

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Lesyna: Why do you think that is? Was it too high off the bottom?

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Salisbury: Maybe too high, yeah, or maybe too scary. Maybe the fish stay ahead of the floats instead of just ahead of the ground line on the bottom of the net. It's hard to say. I do have floats but they're way ahead of the net just to hold the bridle up. So I suspect the net is open but who knows? Trial and error, you fool around, I like to—Let's see, it's called—I learn by serendipity. That's accidental, okay? So in the fishing, since you can't even see what's going on anyway, you may as well just cause your own accidents. So I'll take a monkey wrench, throw it in the gears, see what happens, and sometimes there's a big noticeable difference. And if it's a good difference I keep going with it. If it's a disaster I will not do it again.

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Lesyna: Is there anything else that's unique about your gear in comparison to the rest of the

fleet?

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Salisbury: Well, the jellyfish hole and I think people have learned to put the footrope behind the fish line. I use the maximum size donuts on my footrope, that way crabs and small fish—Oh, and I put spacers between the donuts so fish, small fish can go through, crabs can go through, you know, without getting smashed. And it makes a nice, lightweight, easy to handle footrope. So other guys use smaller donuts, maybe wind up with more crabs and stuff than I do. So, you know, everybody's net's a little different but basically the same.

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Wang: Oh, we were wondering since you've been fishing for 40-some years now, what, what changes have you seen in the Halibut population that you've noticed?

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Salisbury: I catch more and more all the time, but probably because of my efforts not because there's more and more fish, although that could be true. And this year there aren't more fish. There's a slowdown. See, when we weren't getting a lot of small fish I expected a slowdown in my catch. But instead, I did well. Then, last year, a whole bunch of small fish arrived. You know, instead of one a day I was catching, oh, 20 or 30 a tow. But where'd they go? They're gone. We're having a slow year this year and that didn't happen before. Before when we had lots of fish like that then in the following years it got better and better and better and the fish got bigger and bigger. But I don't know where the fish are this year. Yeah, there's small fluctuations year to year but in general I'd say it's steady, very steady.

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Wang: Have you seen any other differences or changes in the marine environment over the time that you've been fishing?

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Salisbury: Yeah, the sea lions are more of a nuisance. They've learned how to rob the net, tear the heads off of nice Halibut, bite them through the mesh and I have to discard them. And it makes me want to buy a gun and shoot them, but I haven't done it yet. And then

there's a lot fewer fish, like sharks. Every year we get a whole bunch of sharks between three and four miles off of Montara where the water's a little deeper than most of the tow, and they just don't come around anymore. We get a few at the same time of year that we used to get lots. The big skates, very seldom. We get a lot of small skates but not the big ones. Let's see. There's been a surge in lingcod. We've got more lingcod in the last year or two. There's a lot less sanddabs and small fish. Well, that could be because I, I worked my net that way but I used to go out and get three boxes of sanddabs with my Halibut, but now five pounds at the most. So does that mean my net's working the way I want it to or does that mean the fish have disappeared? I don't know. Petrale, they've come in recently, much more than I've ever seen them so it's a big increase. Flounders came in like crazy for a couple of years a few years ago but they've gone away again. And that's probably because their population varied because my net hasn't changed that much to not get them but I'm not getting them now. But they could come back any time, too. And each species has a different blooming pattern. I think, in general, there's less fish though, so.

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Wang: Why do you think that is?

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Salisbury: Well, my pet theory is that we're pulling fish out of the ocean but not putting anything back, except I don't know enough about it. I'm wondering if putting our own sewage back in the ocean untreated would be a big help.

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Wang: Untreated?

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Salisbury: Yeah.

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Wang: Why?

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Salisbury: Providing nutrients for the plankton and, well, the whole food chain, so. I don't know

what happens. They grow bacteria in the sewage treatment plants but does that bacteria feed the ecosystem like raw sewage would? I don't know but I keep looking for clues. So that's my biggest idea. It's—They used to think it's phosphates from soap in the Bay and then coming out into the ocean, radioactive canisters at the Farallones, there is a—I don't know if you guys are old enough to remember that but I used to sell a lot of fish in Berkeley, filets of cabezon, when it was I was long-lining, and they advertised them as clean, non-radioactive fish from Half Moon Bay. That was during the big news festival or news deal they had over there, finding canisters of radioactive material at the Farallones.

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Lesyna: What year was that?

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Salisbury: Gee, that would have to be, oh, late '70s. And let's see, there's also the—Gee, there's other things too. Oh, global warming is supposed to produce warmer water, which—I don't know, can't think of anything else. But everybody has a different idea. Mine is the sewage.

[00:34:11]

Lesyna: So you think the Halibut population has remained steady but there are cyclical events. And have you been able to tie good fishing to any sort of event that you're seeing going on in the ocean at that time?

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Salisbury: Hmm, no. Maybe cold water hurts the fishing. Drives the Halibut closer to the beach, which is what's happening now. My first good years of Halibut fishing I noticed the water temperatures had risen. I think 56° was warm when I started fishing. Now 60° is warm. Otherwise, there haven't been any other events. Even the domoic acid in the plankton bloom we had here a few years ago didn't bother the Halibut. Didn't keep us from fishing. We did good. So about the only thing I suspect is temperature effects but maybe not on the population, maybe just on my catch, because I'm not allowed to go inside three miles. There are shallow spots up on the banks in the city so there's a lot of Halibut there now I hear. Maybe it's warmer there. Maybe they like that spot but I don't know what the temperature is so I can't say for sure what affects them.

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Lesyna: Does your Halibut catch differ in the southern areas off of Half Moon Bay versus when you're up out of San Francisco off the bars?

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Salisbury: The Halibut don't differ and my catch—I'll go wherever they are and they move around so no, I can't say there's any difference.

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Lesyna: So you don't see smaller fish in one area versus another?

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Salisbury: Oh, smaller fish in shallower water, and San Francisco does have the shallower water. Also, down below off of San Gregorio I will target one fathom or a few fathoms and it's usually always outside the small fish. So I'm usually fishing outside of everybody else because I like the big ones. And—But say in 40 fathoms you're getting big fish and in 35 fathoms you're getting small fish and it's usually like that. But I don't know what it would be like in at 10 fathoms. The fish—Is it linear? Do the fish disappear in 10 fathoms? Maybe, I don't know.

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Lesyna: Do you think the weather ever impacts your catch rates when you're trawling for Halibut?

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Salisbury: Let's see. I've had real good catches in real rough weather and flat, calm weather, but in a day when the wind is calm in the morning sometimes I'll do better when the wind comes up or sometimes I don't. The current, when the current's coming down I like to go up and vice versa. My theory on that is that I'm going at a certain speed and the fish are swimming so fast ahead of the net, if they are going against the current and me too then they are going to want to stay low to the bottom where they know the current is slowest, so I'm at the bottom, yay for me. When I'm going with the current the fish know the fastest current is up high so they rise above the net and my net will go under them and boo-hoo for me. So my best tows are going against the current and that usually

holds pretty steady. Not all the time. So weather, that's part of the weather is the ocean current. See, southerlies and northwesterlies—Oh, when the current comes off the beach, coming from the shallows, I always do better. When we get a current from the west, a west current, that's the worst current. And, well, otherwise—Oh, when there's a big swell I don't do as good because I don't know why but I figure it's because the net's jerking around a lot. I don't know how that affects the fish but I don't do as good in a big swell, unless it's a fresh big swell with a long period stirring up the ocean way deep. It causes the fish to come from shallow water to deeper water to get away from that. I'll also catch lingcod and rock cod at that time. They get away from the rocks to keep from getting beat up, so they can wash back and forth in the sand without getting hurt. Well, the Halibut don't like that rough bottom either so if the—In fact at this, this year I don't expect to do very well until we do get a large swell from Alaska. That'll force the fish outside three miles and that's when I'll do good. So, you know, that's, that's part of the weather. But wind-wise, it can be choppy and, and stuff and as long as it's not a big swell I do okay. But I'm usually going with the wind if I'm out fishing in the wind.

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Lesyna: Have you noticed any shifts in market demand for Halibut over the years?

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Salisbury: Well, the price has gone way up. Used to get, oh, in the gillnet days I used to get around \$1 a pound. Then when I started dragging it was \$2.50 a pound and stayed at \$2.50 for, like, 15 years. Now it's up to \$5 but that's down from \$6 we got a few months ago, so from \$1 to \$6 a pound in 35 years. Sand Soles used to be \$1 a pound when I started dragging. They're still \$1 a pound. So, well, I lost track of my question.

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Lesyna: So Halibut are more popular than Sand Sole?

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Salisbury: Yeah.

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Lesyna: Is that because they taste better?

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Salisbury: Gee, I don't know. Sand Sole is something they filet and because there's not very many filleters anymore the demand for Sand Sole has gone down. Flounders too, they've gone up a little bit. They used to be \$0.35 a pound, now they're \$1 a pound. They're not a good filetable fish, bony and not much meat on them. Sand Soles are real nice to filet but there's just no fileters around because of the rock cod. They keep us from catching rock cod. I have to throw my rock cod back. There's a law that says I can't catch a rock cod, so the fileters are out of business. And besides, that's mostly a federal fish. Used to—Well, one time I had 6,100 pounds of rock cod in an hour and a half. See, now those fish, they support a fileter. Fileters are gone. Nobody wants to filet five, ten pounds of Sand Sole. Nobody even knows what a Sand Sole is anymore when they go in to shop at the retail markets. Lack of fish causes an increase in the—Well, causes a bigger decrease in the demand. When--You know, they teach you supply and demand. Well, in fishing industry if the supply drops below a certain level people lose interest and then it becomes worthless no matter how few you catch, so. But yeah, Halibut's always a favorite. That's why I have targeted them years and years.

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Wang: So we'll kind of, kind of switch gears to your thoughts on the future of the fishery. So what are--What do you see as your future role in this fishery?

[00:45:07]

Salisbury: Well, my future role is limited because of my age. If I'm as lucky as my good friend Nat, I'll go for another 20, 25 years. But I've—I met retirement age four, four years ago, but I'll keep going. The fishery as a whole, once I give up my permit there'll be a younger guy with more energy. Kyle, he's got the energy. He's out there night and day sometimes, like I used to be. I'm slowing down. And I don't see the stock decreasing unless—and here's a very uneducated guess—that the decline in the Halibut stocks below us shows me a sort of a dead zone that I see expanding up to Half Moon Bay eventually. We talked about this. And it's just a wild idea that the Halibut industry in this area will diminish as it increases above us, Bodega Bay, Fort Bragg. But it's a wild guess and I'm uneducated so there's just a slight possibility of that happening. Otherwise, because we have to stay outside three miles, the fish have all the opportunity to breed and grow big and prosper and feed us a little bit outside of three miles for a long, long time hopefully.

[00:47:10]

Wang: So why do you, why do you think that that dead zone is going to move up the coast towards here?

[00:47:19]

Salisbury: Oh, let's see, gee. If there, if there is even a dead zone.

[00:47:28]

Wang: Well, why do you think there's a dead zone?

[00:47:29]

Salisbury: Yeah, that's a better question. Let's see. Is it something I heard? Oh, a lot of southern boats came up here and said they weren't doing any good down there. Yeah, it's from other fisherman trying to follow the Halibut and winding up here, yeah, several boats.

[00:47:51]

Lesyna: All the way from southern California?

[00:47:54]

Salisbury: Yeah, yeah, below Morro Bay at least. I could come up with a few names if we weren't being tape-recorded.

[00:48:05]

Wang: It was just in the past year or like the past few years?

[00:48:09]

Salisbury: Oh, no, not recently. This was like, oh, five and, five to ten years ago. And that's when I caught on to the fact that, you know, there's not much going on and I thought maybe global warming, caused warm water—It's 70° down there I heard. I thought maybe that had something to do with it and maybe that's moving up as we have global warming. But that--I'm just listening to TV and trying to piece things together without really studying it, so wild guess.

[00:48:58]

Lesyna: So you think there's now fewer fish south but there's more fish in the northern areas where they didn't used to be?

[00:49:07]

Salisbury: I, I'm looking for evidence that that's true and I'm working on that theory, yeah. But I don't have very much information.

[00:49:18]

Wang: So how do you see yourself passing on your experience and knowledge to, to others who might come into this fishery or just in general are interested in fishing?

[00:49:33]

Salisbury: Well, I wish one of my kids would take over because there's a lot of little details, you know? That—But, like Kyle, if he asked me a question I'll answer him, so. Tom just came by last week, wanted to know how I worked the jellyfish hole because he wants to do it because he's fishing up on the banks and he said one of the boats—Well, the way he put it was blew out their codend with jellyfish or blew out the net with jellyfish. And with my setup, I don't even have to struggle with jellyfish anymore, you know? I used to have to cut the net and use the double and single winch to get it on the boat and then the net would be ripping and it would be a huge mess. I never so-called "blew out" a net before, but I wish I did so I wouldn't have to bring up those jellyfish. So now I have a controlled blow out. I get lost. I forgot the question.

[00:50:52]

Wang: Just how you will pass on your knowledge and experience, like—

[00:50:56]

Salisbury: Okay, I told Tom something because he was curious. That's how, word of mouth. And every time I hear of somebody having trouble I'll think about it and maybe make a suggestion and then—But to me it was all trial and error. I didn't learn too much from other people. Experience, and Kyle will get the experience.

[00:51:27]

Lesyna: Are the large amounts of jellyfish, is that a new problem that you're dealing with, or it's—

[00:51:33]

Salisbury: No, they, they have their cycle. We'll have them for a few years and then they disappear. One year not too long ago we were getting jellyfish up above every day making a mess out of things and we were having southerly current every day. This was going on for months while we were fishing up there. One day the current came from the north and it killed every jellyfish. After a few days we had—and it was all of a sudden. After a few days there was no jellyfish and then people started seeing them on the beach and we were pulling up dead jellyfish in the net, you know, which aren't too much of a problem, not a whole bunch. And then we haven't had any jellyfish since then. I guess it's been like two or three years. And now we're just getting the jellyfish back again. They're making a comeback. So again, I forgot the question.

[00:52:42]

Lesyna: Do you have any other concerns for the future of the fishery?

[00:52:49]

Salisbury: Oh, because I have to throw so many fish back. If they keep making it illegal to do stuff, that's the only reason the fishery would end. I don't know. Could they make catching Halibut illegal? Maybe when stocks decline. Of course if stocks declined in southern California and they haven't shut them down—But they shut the gillnets down because of birds. Well, we don't get many birds in a, in a dragnet so we're safe from that until they say that one bird is too many instead of hundreds. Yeah, I don't know what would stop the Halibut trawl fishery. It looks good.

[00:53:52]

Lesyna: It looks healthy?

[00:53:54]

Salisbury: Yeah.

[00:53:59]

Wang: How about your—What would you like to see in the future for this fishery?

[00:54:05]

Salisbury: Let us bring in bycatch so I don't have to throw flounders back when I have too many flounders. I can bring in up to 300 pounds of the whole variety of, of the, the federal drag fish. That's the biggest change I'd like to see. Oh, and to make it legal to shoot these big sea lions that are teaching all the little sea lions the trade. That's a waste. If we got rid of the ones that know what they're doing, they'd stop teaching the little ones who gather all around them and learn that trade from, from a few. And it'd be nice to bring in fish that we're throwing back now, that's all.

[00:55:13]

Wang: So like the sea lion problem, how, when did that start, what time period?

[00:55:20]

Salisbury: Oh it's, gee, it's been like that ever since I can remember, worse and worse though. There were a few that did it and now there's some that—Well, they've destroyed my net. I used to go fishing for two days and they would tear my net apart so bad. Every time, I'd suture it, kind of run a thread through the holes and my net would be all out of shape. Then I'd have—After two days of that I'd have to take a whole day off to mend my net. But that big one is gone. I haven't seen him. But there are some others that are getting big who learned from him and we're going to have problems with them. But I use larger mesh, larger twine, stronger twine on my nets now so unless they bite the fish--which they sometimes do--through the mesh, they're not going to tear the mesh. They just damage the fish but I still get the fish. And so, well, lost again.

[00:56:35]

Lesyna: Are you still able to market those fish that the sea lions take a bite of?

[00:56:40]

Salisbury: If they're not too bad I get half price but a lot of them I just throw over the side, big 20-pound fish has his belly ripped out and stuff like that. And then they bite the heads on all the little fish and so all the little fish that I would normally throw back alive, I throw them back without their heads.

[00:57:08]

Lesyna: Do you think about other gear modifications that might help you avoid that?

[00:57:17]

Salisbury: Well, using the small mesh that I use, at least the legal-sized Halibut don't get their heads bit off so I'm not wasting them. They don't get it through far enough to get stuck. But it's the smaller fish that get their head—And a sea lion will pull them through and the meshes will actually cut through the body of the fish, they're pulling so hard. And a guy could go to bigger mesh but then you get—where the small ones could get through, but then you get all your nice fish, all their heads getting bitten off. And you can cover up the net, but you can't—there's a law that says you can't cover it all the way around, which shouldn't apply to that style of net anymore. But if I use the small mesh net I'm legal. So instead of going to save the small fish, I go not to get a ticket.

[00:58:28]

Wang: Why can't—Is it because people don't like to see a fish without its head that you can't sell those, or?

[00:58:38]

Salisbury: Well, right now it's just the small fish—

[00:58:44]

Wang: Oh, okay.

[00:58:45]

Salisbury: ...get their heads pulled off, so I can't sell them anyway. And then I've had observers, I'm telling them this, "You know, we've got to get rid of these sea lions because they're biting the heads off the fish," and I'll take a live fish, a live small fish that's hasn't had its head pulled off and I'll throw it in the water and a sea lion will come and get it and the observer said, "Well, they're going to get killed anyway." So it's just a crapshoot, you know, every living organism for itself.

[00:59:21]

Lesyna: Have you ever encountered any competition with like foreign fisheries that are importing their fish to the same area?

[00:59:33]

Salisbury: Yeah, right now the prices of Halibut is \$5 a pound instead of \$6. Buyers saying we're getting fish coming from Mexico and Halibut coming from Alaska. So that's why our price fell. There's a direct result of competition.

[00:59:55]

Lesyna: So there's California Halibut coming from Mexico and then Pacific Halibut coming from Alaska and the consumer, do they, do they tell the difference between the Pacific and the California?

[01:00:09]

Salisbury: Well, there is a difference. I like the Alaskan Halibut much better, the Pacific Halibut. And they call the Halibut coming from Mexico, they call them flukes. I don't know if that's because they're undersized, real small fish and they're trying to hide the fact that it's just a Halibut or what. I don't know what's going on. But I've heard that they were called flukes. I haven't seen them in the stores called that. But, you know, the eastern Halibut is a fluke. They call them flukes. It's not a Halibut. Or I don't know if they have Halibut back there or not but I know they have flukes that look like Halibut.

[01:00:54]

Lesyna: Do you experience any competition with the East Coast flatfish?

[01:00:59]

Salisbury: Nope, not from there, no. Not that I know of. Fresh fish, you know, coming across the whole United States, a little difficult I guess. It causes--The added cost of transportation, limits that maybe.

[01:01:26]

Wang: Oh, so we, we've been going for about an hour now. We just wanted to see if there's anything else you, you just want to share about your career, about yourself?

[01:01:39]

Salisbury: Oh, no, I just want to wish all the future Halibut trawlers good luck. That's about it.

[01:01:48]

Wang: Okay, well, thank you so much for your time. It's been really interesting and especially, gosh, all your observations and just how much you've learned by doing over the years. It's really interesting. Thank you.

[01:02:03]

Salisbury: Okay, well, you're welcome.

[01:02:04]

Lesyna: Thank you.

[End of interview 01:02:06]