

Nancy Solomon: Now first, how did you get started in all this?

Bradley King: I started when I was twelve years old. I grew up in Gloucester.

NS: Did your parents?

BK: My father had a fishing boat for a great period.

NS: Who is your father?

BK: I'm junior. His name was Bradley King also. He had a boat he kept on [inaudible] similar to Tony so special.

NS: It was a dragger?

BK: Yes, or a similar boat and he sold fish off the boat. He was a Captain Sparky's just south of the [inaudible].

NS: I was going to say the upper end of Wood Cliff.

BK: There were no buildings there then that's where the boat was tied up.

NS: Is there a building there now?

BK: Yes, there's a building there now. The Property is Sparky's Fish Market.

NS: That is that first market that you see, I think on the left.

BK: Right, I used to help him sell fish off the boat. I used to go out with him on weekends.

NS: Did he...

BK: I would come after school and help out?

NS: Did he ever go work on the bay or strictly on the ocean?

BK: Mainly on the ocean, I guess. He did a lot of different things. He wasn't a full-time fisherman like I am, but he did have a ball for quite a while. Before that, when he was much younger, he used to be in the charter business.

NS: Was he born in Freeport?

BK: No, he was born in Hempstead.

NS: Had anybody prior to that time worked in the fishing business?

BK: My grandfather was one of the founders of the Freeport Boatman's Association.

NS: What was his name?

BK: Henry Ultsch.

NS: U-L-T-S-C-H. Is that how you spell his last name?

BK: It's U-L-T-S-C-H. It's German name. He was one in the [19]30s, possibly even the [19]20s.

NS: Was he born in Germany or where was he from?

BK: No, he was born here on the island.

NS: Your family goes back a long time on Long Island, it sounds like.

BK: Well, before that my family is actually from New Hampshire. I don't know how they ended up down here, but I had my great – let me figure this out now.

NS: [laughter]

BK: I guess my great-great-grandfather owned and was captain of a Gloucester Schooner, Out of Gloucester.

NS: In Massachusetts or...

BK: Gloucester, Massachusetts. They used to go out for like two, three-month wages. That would slow down the codfish. He used to go mac fishing and remember our conversation on Woodcliff there one day? While he was on a Mac fishing trip down at Virginia, he was seventy-two years old and that was one of his last trips. He worked until he was in his seventies.

NS: Did you ever meet him? No, He must have died in the eighteen hundreds.

BK: I don't know if it was the eighteen hundreds. He probably died in the [19]20s. That was somewhere in the [19]20s. His son had a fish market. Actually, through the generations [inaudible].

NS: It has been passed.

BK: Kind of being in my family.

NS: That is very unusual these days.

BK: But this sounds like a wild story. But my great-great-grandfather who had the schooner was fishing off the grand banks one season and – sounds pretty well, but the Prince of Wales was

on his way to this country or Canada was some kind of business and their boat sank and he picked up the survivors. He actually saved the Prince of Wales. He received like a sum of money from the Queen of England or the King of England, and this right here is one of the gifts I received. That's like made out of seashells. You can look at it a little closer.

NS: Yes, I will have to take a picture of this.

BK: That's a pretty old antique, so I don't know how much value, It's not really worth much, but that was like one of the gifts. [laughter] Before that, who knows?

NS: [laughter] That was your grandfather who?

BK: That was my great-great-grandfather.

NS: Your great-great-grandfather. Do you know his name?

BK: His name was Daniel Bradley King.

NS: It's pretty unusual, were there any other stories like that?

BK: That was my son's name by the way. We named him that.

NS: Were there any other stories about people in your family that you remember like that or remember hearing?

BK: I do not know. Not to do with the water.

NS: [laughter]

BK: But that's like the real story I know about. That is him as a captain, it's a story I guess because it was like an achievement saving the It was like a big deal in those days.

NS: Sure. It still is.

BK: I wish I knew more about him myself. I would like to look up some kind of history books in England, if I ever had the time and find out if anything is written down about that.

NS: You pretty much grew up around the water between, did you know your grandfather Ultsch?

BK: Henry Ultsch. Yes, I knew him.

NS: What did he do?

BK: Like I said, he was in the charter boat business and he also had a boatyard on South Main Street. He built a few boats and he was mainly a boatman and waterman. He like to cater to

people as far as taking them out fishing. Years ago, like in the 1930s, he was a bird guide. He used to take people – he would come out from the city and he would take them out east and bring the pheasant shipping. He used to raise his own dogs and English springers manuals. He'd take them out with the dogs and you know, bring them to like fields where there would be pheasants and the

NS: The dogs could sniff the pheasants?

BK: Could shoot the pheasants and the dogs would retrieve them, It's like a day for the wealthy people of the times.

NS: But that mean, that was something that most bay men, I guess, did.

BK: Pardon me?

NS: Most bay men, it seems were duck hunters.

BK: Hunting, yes. I guess a lot of them. White's family was quite involved in the duck hunting and duck stools and duck BCOs and all that stuff.

NS: Is that something that anybody in your family did?

BK: What's that?

NS: Got into the decoy, working the cork decoy,

BK: If they did, it was all gone. A lot of that stuff, there no big deal in that years ago. I guess everybody in this area, there was no big deal. I heard of people the heat used to burn old decoys,

NS: [laughter]

BK: Years ago now, there were thousands of those antiques.

NS: What was your grandfather's name? Remind me of that?

BK: Henry Ultsch.

NS: When you were growing up what kinds of things did your father teach you to do as far as the fishing business?

BK: I guess, like how to run a boat and how to take care of a boat and different places to go fishing and the mending of nets and things like that.

NS: He taught you

BK: How to take care of the fishing gear.

NS: Was he helpful when you were first growing up and you

BK: Yes. Definitely, it gives you a foundation. Most of the stuff I actually picked up later it's more technical things I picked up later. You become more interested when you really have to go out and make a living doing it. Bringing your own money, that's when you get more seriously involved and that type of thing. But, like I said I have always worked, I used to dig clamping.

NS: Where did you go clamping?

BK: Right out here on the side of Hampstead the bay was open then?

NS: Yes, whereabouts on the bay did you go?

BK: All over.

NS: Freeport, Merrick?

BK: Not from all sides of Merrick. But of Freeport and Baldwin and Merrick, just all over.

NS: Were these hard clams that you were...

BK: Hard clams?

NS: I have not seen anybody go clamming. What is involved with it?

BK: Clamming.

NS: Yes. I know that people tread for clams.

BK: The warm weather, we used to go off aboard in the Shoalwater tread clamps and the colder weather, we use in the tongs or rakes. A rake you would pull through the bottom of a jerking motion and tongs. You ever seen the tongs? Two like big, long sticks and you work the head of the tongs together through the mud and you work a little piece of bottom, then you raise the tongs to see what's in the rake. This is still done out in the great South Bay now.

NS: When they opened, I guess [inaudible].

BK: It's open all the time. Like the eastern part of while. But that's how I mainly started.

NS: Was this, kind of like after school and on weekends you would do that?

BK: Yes.

NS: Did you have friends you would do that with?

BK: Yes, Met a lot of fellows.

NS: How were some of the people that you know you were friendly with when you...

BK: Bob Welly. Do you know him? He's one of the locals from Baldwin. I knew him when I was quite young. Met him down in the Bay. He also used to do quite a bit of gill netting in the ocean. Gill fish, Set lining. I used to have a small boat. I guess when I first got out of high school, a small thirty-foot, boat, we used to go out and set one cut fish. That was a lot of fun.

NS: Who were some of the people that helped you with it? That seems like a lot. Somebody has to get the clams and then you got to.

BK: I used to buy the bait. We had men that used to bait [inaudible].

NS: Who were some of them?

BK: Some are retired fishermen. Albert White from Baldwin. Herb White?

NS: Yes. I know Herb White.

BK: Herb White, he is a relative of Albert white. They used to bait lines for us, seeing that they were in the business and quite experienced. They had done it for over fifty years and they used to help us out, but give us a lot of pointers, information on how to do it. What are some of the things that you have to learn when you're bending those outlines?

BK: Some of the things you have to learn?

NS: Like what were some of the pointers they would give?

BK: Just mainly keep the gear in good shape. It's all basic stuff, use good gear, new hooks, and use fresh bake.

NS: Do you always use clamps when you are going in set mining?

BK: Around here? Yes. Different parts of the coast. They use different I guess around here the fish are used to feeding out clamps that are in the bottom. Codfish are bottom feeders. They eat crabs. They eat mussels. Clams, they will eat fish also curing. Like off of Maine and Massachusetts, they use herring and mackerel for bait. They cut them up in chunks. I guess that's more prevalent up there. That's what the fish is used. That's what they use up there for bait.

NS: Would you ever use set lines for something other than curd?

BK: It's actually like a form of long lining, but you could call it long lining. We call it set lining, they set the entire fish, swordfish, tuna fish, which is quite popular today.

NS: Did you do that?

BK: I have never done that, no.

NS: When you use the set lines, you only went for codfish.

BK: Codfish? Right.

NS: What time of year would you do that?

BK: In the winter months. November, Decemberer, January, February, March, April.

NS: Why is that?

BK: That's the time the codfish migrate down on Long Island.

NS: Do they like cold water? Is that it?

BK: Well, actually they're looking for warmer water. They're from the north and they come down mainly to spawn off Long Island. They look for warmer water.

NS: Okay. But they do not like it too warm. I guess that is why they're not here in the summer. Okay. I was trying to understand that.

BK: Although there are some resident codfish in the deeper water on some of the rocks of Long Island in the summertime, they're resident, they stay there all year long. I guess they get old and they don't feel like traveling anymore.

NS: Do you go after those or?

BK: I don't, but some, some people do.

NS: Did you ever build your own boat?

BK: No, I never built my own boat.

NS: Okay. Where did you get your boats from then?

BK: I guess shopped around, like you would shop around for a car and according to budget and how good the piece of equipment was to decide what kind of boat I would buy.

NS: How old were you when you worked on your first Dragger?

BK: Well, like I said, I used to work on my father's Dragger. I guess I was thirteen, fourteen around twelve.

NS: What was the name of his?

BK: Nor, N-O-R.

NS: How long did he run the Dragger?

BK: He had it around five years.

NS: When was this?

BK: What years?

NS: Rough guess.

BK: I guess that would be somewhere around [19]67, [19]68, [19]69. Around those years.

NS: Had he run a dragger before that?

BK: Not before that, no. He was involved in, like I said, he was involved in the charter business for years before that. But he got involved in that for a short period of time.

NS: What was the name of this charter boat?

BK: He had boat years ago. The [inaudible] Is the name of the boat.

NS: Do you know why he named it that?

BK: I think that was the name of the boat. When he got it.

NS: How long did he run the charter boat for,

BK: I guess he was in that for quite a while, around maybe over ten years.

NS: How old were you? I am trying to get a sense of how old were you when he had the charter boat.

BK: I was just a small kid.

NS: He got the dragger boat. How old were you at that point?

BK: I guess I was eleven or twelve years old.

NS: How old are you now?

BK: I'm thirty-three.



NS: That was pretty much when you were really getting interested in the water, I would imagine.

NS: What kinds of things did you do on the Dragger boat?

BK: Take wheel watches to and from the fishing grounds. Help set and retrieve the gear, call the fish. I used to fish down and clean the fish. During the winter months caught a lot of codfish string. Way more than they do today.

NS: They weigh a lot today. They still weigh a lot. There just aren't that many.

BK: Right, there was a lot more codfish in those days.

NS: How many tones would you do in a typical day?

BK: He used to go all day fishing and let is say they make four or five tons a day.

NS: How many fish would he catch?

BK: Fishing can be a few hundred pounds to tons. It all depends on each day is different there are good days and bad days. You hit the big school, you'll get the mother [inaudible].

NS: Now, when you say he went day fishing, what time would he leave and what time would he come back?

BK: I guess leave anywhere from like 2:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m., and come back maybe 4:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m.

NS: Those are long days.

BK: Yes. Fishing is not, t's even day.

NS: It is not an eight-hour day.

BK: Fourteen-Fifteen-hour day, if not long eighteen-hour day job.

NS: Now did he have somebody who helped him on the book?

BK: Yes.

NS: Besides you?

BK: I was a help, but I wasn't part of the regular crew. Him and another fellow used to another fellow that worked with him.

NS: What was his name, do you remember?

BK: His first name was Alex.

NS: Did you take over that boat from your father at any point or?

BK: No, my father got rid of it before I was out of high school. He kind of got out of the business – it was his health had gone and he got rid of the boat.

NS: You started working full-time when you got out of high school in the business. What was the first job you had?

BK: I used to work on a boat out of Baldwin called The Gamut. Which we used to stay at five

NS: Was that on Melbourne Creek?

BK: Yes, we used to stay out for like mainly five or six days at a time.

NS: Major boat here.

BK: We worked around the clock; kind of a serious fishing and I learned a lot. The owner of that boat was Dick [inaudible].

NS: He is very well known.

BK: I know Dick [inaudible]. He's passed away now. He taught me a lot about fishing.

NS: How did you meet him? Is he somebody your father knew?

BK: My father knew him, yes. I had met him when I was younger, you know, and he had a reputation for being a good fisherman. Like I said when I got out of high school at one point there I went with him and fished with him for a couple of years. Later on, years later when I got my own boat, he had gotten rid of his boat. He went fishing with me.

NS: The two of you were very close, I imagine?

BK: Yes, I guess so.

NS: What was your job on his boat?

BK: I was like the mate first mate, I guess. Steer the boat and take little watches. On a small boat when you only have two or three or four men to share a lot of jobs.

NS: How big a boat was it?

BK: It was a sixty-foot boat.

NS: Then it is?

BK: I was cook. I didn't do all the cooking, but I did some cooking. Icing of the fish and general maintenance on the nets and any of the gear related to the fishing.

NS: Would you go very far offshore when you were working on that foot?

BK: We used to fish, the [inaudible] end of the Hudson Canyon.

NS: About how many miles is it to the Hudson Canyon?

BK: Seventy-five, eighty miles

NS: [laughter] I imagine you saw a lot of the boats from other countries as well here, fishing,

BK: Seeing foreign boats. We still see them today, even though they stopped foreign fishing. A few of them are allowed in the country here under certain permits for certain species of fish. But years ago, they could come in and before the two-hundred-mile limit, they could come in and take anything they wanted. Did you ever read the book, Distant Waters?

NS: No.

BK: You should read that book. You will be interested in fishing, read that book and it'll tell you more about fishing than as far as big boats and foreign fishing. They'll tell you more about it than anybody can ever tell you.

NS: Somebody once told me there were a lot of Russian ships.

BK: They have the largest guess they have the largest fishing fleet in the world. I don't know if they still do, but they did.

NS: Did you see a lot of Russian boats?

BK: :I have seen Russian boats, but I've seen mostly a variety. Spanish, Portuguese, west German, a few Russian lot of Japanese. I guess I've mostly seen Japanese fishing boats.

NS: From what you noticed, did they fish differently than the way you guys did?

BK: Well, they mostly fished the audit roll, which is the doors and then you've seen on the patches, but Right. Only it's a much bigger scale and quite sophisticated. They have the latest electronic equipment and they have a much better system of finding the fish. They use many boats to find the fish. They work together it's all I got, keep it a secret. We just had a big tell day, they worked amongst each other. It's a little bit different, but they also have a tremendous amount of power huge boats, a lot of power and big nets, and they will catch the fish. If there they fish around, it's no problem [inaudible].

NS: When you would go out four or five days at a time. I imagine you would probably get to telling stories, that kind of stuff, just to keep yourself amused anyway. [laughter] I do not know. Am I right?

BK: Yes. Well, I guess there's plenty of storytelling, but people think like, "What are you doing all that time?" There's a lot to do. You're busy all the time, just like any other job and the time goes by and before you know it, it's time to come out.

NS: Now you would go out for four or five days. The time on those boats.

BK: Yes.

NS: Was there ever any communication with other boats or to shore during that time?

BK: Like [inaudible] you mean?

NS: Yes.

BK: Dick was not a big believer in talking on the radio. There wasn't much communication, not on his boat. Pretty much we did our own thing.

NS: How many other people worked on the boat?

BK: Myself Dick and another fellow, three men.

NS: I assume there were bunk quarters and everything.

BK: Yes. Actually, there were facilities for four or five men. You needed that.

NS: Doable anyway. When you stopped working with Dick on his boat, what happened next? [laughter]

BK: I do not know. I've always have worked on a lot of different boats. All different size boats.

NS: In Freeport and Baldwin.

BK: Mainly, out of Freeport, I guess we fished out of Freeport with his boat. No, he was from Baldwin and all. But we packed the fish out on Wood Cliff Canal at the Freeport Fish packing, which is no longer there anymore.

NS: That was, I guess Bruce Larsson ran that?

BK: No, it was a few different people had it. They tow the building down.

NS: I remember Tony telling me about that, and do not know how that all worked.

BK: I've also worked on sea clamp boats.

NS: Like George Street Boat.

BK: I worked on a couple boats in Freeport. Now the Endeavor and the Enterprise, they're seventy foot.

NS: The enterprise I have seen.

BK: Yes. I have worked on that boat and I've also worked on the endeavor. They go out in the ocean and catch...

NS: Skimmer clams.

BK: Skimmer clams for food, and also for vape.

NS: I guess they sell them to like the grass rods, they use the skimmer clams for.

BK: Well, they sell mainly to clam processors.

NS: Like Doxy sea Clam.

BK: Yes. Similar to that. Although Doxy has his own book. He does his own processing. Sold to a processor, claims a process, either ground up and frozen or possibly canned or something like that.

NS: Was there any major difference in the people who were running the draggers and the people who were running the clam boats that you noticed

BK: [laughter] not really they're all watermen. They do different things people are about the same just like anything else. People are the same no matter where you go, but screw balls work on the water, I guess.

NS: Why do you say that?

BK: There's a lot of characters, let's put it that way.

NS: Who are some of the characters that you remember or know? I know Tony is quite a character.

BK: [laughter] [inaudible] thing.

NS: This is not going to anybody.

BK: Everybody rewards a character. But like I said, Dick Abbott, he was a real character.

NS: What made him such a character?

BK: He was like an actor.

NS: Did he tell stories?

BK: Told a lot of stories.

NS: Do you remember any?

BK: He was quite an intelligent man and but he was very funny like I said, he was kind of an actor. He got carried away with things.

NS: Do you remember like one time, something he was telling you about or it was just?

BK: Not really, not offhand.

NS: What about your father? Did he have any stories that you remember him telling you that things had happened to him?

BK: In relation to the water, you mean? I guess there were a few stories. I do not really remember off hand but I will think about it.

NS: I was just wondering when you were growing up, if you remember anything that –  
[inaudible]

BK: Nothing I can remember. Before I thought about it, there probably be a lot of stories and nothing off hand that's set court.

NS: What was the scariest thing that happened to you? I imagine is boat sinking probably the scariest thing that happened to you.

BK: Well, It was never really that frightening when it happened.

NS: What exactly happened? I know you have gone through this with other people.

BK: We had some compartments on the boat that flooded.

NS: Was there a leak or how did it flood?

BK: I do not know. Possibly, the hull became damaged sometime during the fishing trip. We did not realize exactly what happened and some of the compartments flooded and we pumped the compartments, but we never drained all the water and it was very terrible weather conditions.

NS: When this happened. Was there a storm going on at the time?

BK: Yes, it was like kind of a winter storm. Very cold an influx of cold after

NS: This happened the second week in January,

BK: January fifth.

NS: I remember it was the beginning of the month.

BK: It was very bad weather. We had winds over fifty sixty knots and five degrees temperature. Between that and the boat made a lot of ice. When the weather gets that cold it's like a dangerous situation really. Any of the spray that the boat turn to ice. We fought to try and keep the boat afloat. But we had to vent on the boat.

NS: There was you and who else was on the boat?

BK: Two other crew members?

NS: What were their names? Are their names still here?

BK: Jack Gunn and Jimmy Sullivan. We contacted the Coast guard.

NS: When did you find out that the leak was flooding that badly because you had been out there for a few days?

BK: Probably about four days at the time.

NS: When did you find out it was flooding?

BK: Well, we head it, it was Tuesday morning there of the fifth, I think it was a Tuesday. We were about halfway home and we noticed that the storm was a little bit further than normal. It didn't really look too bad, but about did seem quite right I said, well, we better check the compartments out, check the fish and all. There was water in the fish hole that was dry. There was water in the store compartments and we started pumping them out. Water just kept gaining and we never could. Eventually, the compartments were completely flooded and there was water over all the access hatches. The whole stern deck was underwater and we were like this for four or five hours before we actually got off it, just got worse and worse and worse. The ice built up and when the sun went down, that's when the boat really made ice, the temperature really dropped.

NS: You had been out since when? Sunday?

BK: No, we were out, like I said around Friday. Started fishing on Friday, Thursday night we left. We got off the boat. It looked like an iceberg. Just incredible but we contacted the Coast Guard a few hours before we had actually abandoned the boat.

NS: What time was this? What time of day?

BK: That the boat went down around 11:00 p.m. Dispatched a helicopter from Cape Lake, New Jersey, and they flew over the boat and they were on the scene for about an hour before we actually got off the boat.

NS: How did it feel when you were out there?

BK: When we got off the boat?

NS: Were you scared when this was all happening? It sounds terrifying.

BK: You don't really think about it that way. You just say, what can I do in this situation? What's the best thing to do to keep the boat at float? If we have to get off, what do we have to do? What about the crew? Make sure that I try not to say anything to make those guys panic. They would say, "Oh my God, it was sinking," or anything like that.

NS: Were they scared?

BK: They were very cool, calm, and collective. Very professional about the whole thing. I was glad of that because you have somebody on the boat, the panics that can make them very bad situation. They kept their heads on the whole time I did and there was no problem at all.

NS: You still had the radio communication? How far offshore were you?

BK: We were about forty miles offshore when it happened. She started to list over to the starboard, and after a while it became quite a bad list. She was going down to the stern, quite rapidly like every five or ten minutes that we looked at her, she would be down a few inches further. I was afraid she might actually roll over and finally I said, "Well, it's time to get off the boat." We got in our survival suits. We have these survival suits that keep the whole body warm and shelter from the elements. We fledged the raft and we went in the raft and pushed away from the boat. The helicopter came down and pulled us out.

NS: How long were you in the raft for?

BK: About a half an hour, I guess.

NS: How long did it take for the helicopter to get out to get here?

BK: They were over us before we got off the boat. We were in radio contact with them.

NS: When did you call them for help?

BK: Like I said, we were in touch with the Coast Guard a few hours before it actually went down.

NS: Around 8:00?



BK: I think it was even before, a little before that.

NS: They came right out?

BK: No, they didn't come right they. It took them a while before they could actually find a helicopter. To come and get us. They did not send any boats out, so most of the boats were too small. They would not send them in those weather conditions. It was kind of weird feeling, that was a little strange. We were going out to work and they wouldn't even send the boat out. The conditions were too bad for us to come out I did not really care for that. But they finally did send a big cutter out of thick Sandy Hook, which did not arrive on the scene until we were all gone. They were already up and gone in the helicopter. I think they arrived on the scene about an hour after we got off the boat, the boat was still a float, but it was just barely a float. Then soon after that, she went down. You do not want to be on a boat when it's in the process of going down, because somebody could get tangled up and then go down with it. It was quite an experience.

NS: It sounds very scary.

BK: I was glad to get off at the time. Like I said, I'm glad nobody,

NS: How about now? Does it scare you when you think about it now?

BK: Not at all. I do not have it happen again, don't get me wrong. Basically, I'm glad nobody got hurt. If somebody had gotten hurt, seriously hurt or somebody drowned in the process that would have really upset me. You know? Boats can always be replaced. It's material things, but if one of the crew members were killed, I don't think I can take that would really upset me.

NS: Had you been in any serious storms before this one that you?

BK: Yes. We have been in quite a few blows over the years?

NS: Do you remember anyone particularly?

BK: No. You don't really when you fish offshore on the wintertime and you are out four, five, six, seven days at a time, it's inevitable. You going to run up the storms and it is part of the job. It's not that you take it for granted. But when we come in, we don't say, "It was really bad," or "It's just part of the job." You come in and take the fish out and you forget about it. You go home and rest for a few days or take off a few days and come back down the boat and get the boat ready and go back again. It's just a never-ending cycle the weather isn't something that, concerns you all the time when you fish offshore like that.

NS: You would go out regardless of what the forecast sounds like.

BK: Unless you knew there was a hurricane coming.

BK: We would always listen to the forecast. That was going to be very bad weather, we would

not go out of it. But Sometimes when you are offshore [inaudible] you're not an hour away from home, you could be twenty hours steam away from home. Sometimes it may not pay to go home because by time you do get home, the weather was going to be nice again. You would go home in the bad weather.

NS: It is going to clear up.

BK: That is how that works. The whole trip we were at, that trip was very, Gail wins up every day. Gail Force wins every day. [laughter]

NS: You do what you have to do.

BK: Sounds crazy, but that's what we do. It' part of it.

NS: How old were you when you first started going duck hunting?

BK: I was twelve years old when I first went Calm and took me.

NS: Was he your father at that point?

BK: A friend of the family's

NS: He was friends with my father.

NS: Did your father die young?

BK: Yes. My father died when I was nineteen.

NS: How old was he?

BK: Fifty-one.

NS: You do not mind my asking, how did he die?

BK: He had a heart attack.

NS: He was very young for a heart attack.

BK: Not really, but he abused himself [inaudible] A lot of partying and smoking and drinking and he was overweight, that's what happens. Have done quite a bit of duck hunting through the years. A lot of fun.

NS: Did you ever cover your own decoy?

BK: A little bit. I played with it a little bit. I never really got too involved in it though.

NS: How would you make them?

BK: Generally, you start with a block of wood and you have what they call a pattern. Which gives you like a rough shape of a bird.

NS: The bottom board kind of you

BK: Like a side profile of the body. You draw the pattern on the block of wood, you put it on a ban and you cut it out, like a rough wood file.

NS: A rasp?

BK: Rasp wood files we used also and you shape the body and the tail and just get the way it should be and understand it. We also have patterns for the heads to take another block of wood. Okay. Draw a pattern for a head on the block of wood and cut it out on the bandsaw and do the same thing. Eventually, put the peg the head on the body and more sanding. Then you can either paint or wash. I never got, like I said, too involved in it.

NS: What did you do?

BK: Have made a few.

NS: Did you paint them or varnish them?

BK: I think I varnished them. Okay.

NS: You did not use cork because I know some people would.

BK: Usually these were more for show. Sometimes they use cork is very quick and they paint the cork later.

NS: Do you have any of them here?

BK: I have a lot of them.

NS: Can I see some of them? How about another time? If I could come by and?

BK: I have said I got a load of them. Got all kinds of people.

NS: I got my camera.

BK: I must have a hundred, they're in the loft and in the garage. I pull out my truck, then pull up my wife's car out.

NS: How about another day if I came by?

BK: I will do it if you want me to, but...

NS: Yes. I do, I really want to see them, but it is a little bit late and it sounds very involving, getting the car out and getting everything down from the shelf. But would you ever make decors that you would use in hunting?

BK: No. I have done a little hunting with [inaudible] and I have helped him a few times. But he's very good at it. Like I say, an amateur at it. He is a fanatical duck hunter, fanatical and a very good duck hunter. He knows where to go. He watches where the birds go.

NS: What is his name ?

BK: Jim [inaudible].

NS: Jimbo. I have to catch up with it.

BK: Excellent gatherer and hunter. He is the person to go with if you go duck hunting. He was one of my partners in duck hunting.

NS: Now, when you would go out with Wink, would you use his gunning bolts or did you have your own gunning bolts?

BK: I had my own gunning bolts, but we use a low Garvey.

NS: With the raid [inaudible] and everything.

BK: We used to take that. It is a little more comfortable in the duck boat.

NS: Did you have a duck boat as well?

BK: Yes, I had a couple of duck boats

NS: Have heard all kinds of horrors about people going out duck hunting, I'm sure you have yours. What was the worst weather when you went duck hunting?

BK: The worst thing that can happen is you go out to a place, a real cold day. You don't have any sandwiches with you and maybe not enough to drink and rig out in a spot and the birds never fly there.

NS: For some reason, the birds are spooked. They will not fly into your stool and the tide goes out and you are stuck there. That is about the worst thing.

NS: Did that happen to you?

BK: Yes, many times.

NS: [laughter]

BK: I will not let it happen to me again, but that happens.

NS: What would happen when the tide go out? Because you would be stuck there until the time...

BK: A lot of times Where you are, there is water, but to get out of the small bay that you're in the inlet is dry so you are stuck in it. If you want to get out, it involves just walking through the mud and pushing the boat and pulling the boat.

NS: How long would that take, to get back into it?

BK: Not even worth it. You are better off sitting there waiting for the...

NS: How long would you be waiting there for the...

BK: Probably to six hours

NS: You would be sitting there freezing. What would you do to keep warm? You could not just sit there.

BK: Walk around on the meadows. I do not know. You can always dress for the situation. It's not like you would freeze, you get a little cold.

NS: Be stranded out there.

BK: Boring that is boring.

NS: Yes. I Imagine that.

BK: Rearrange the decoys and hope that something will fly in and who knows? Maybe it will start to snow and you would not see anything. If it snows, you will not get any birds. Visibility gets real bad. The birds will not see the decors..

NS: Because one of the expressions I heard is the worst the weather, the better duck hunting.

BK: Usually, yes.

NS: Except for snow.

BK: Like I said, if snow is really hard and the visibility goes down to nothing, then even the birds themselves cannot your decors..

NS: What kinds of ducks would you mainly shoot?

BK: Mainly black duck.

NS: Black Duck. Is that only on this part of Long Island that you would see those?

BK: This is about the best area, I guess around here.

NS: Would you see them any other places?

BK: I see them in the Great South Bay and anywhere on Long Island really.

NS: But mostly on Long Island. You would not see them in other parts of the coast, would you?

BK: Yes.

NS: Would like that?

BK: They catch also, I think Black Ducks are in many other countries. Where they come down from Canada and it is different parts of the country, you will see Blackbird.

NS: Would you go out to Wings Bay House when you were duck hunting?

BK: Yes, we have been there a few times. Jimbo used to in the Bay House for a period of time before the [inaudible] moved him out of it. He leased it, he did not really own it. He took over the lease and I guess he lost his lease and they burned it there. [laughter] We used to stay there quite often.

NS: What would you do with the duck, would you cook them?

BK: Yes. We ate all of them.

NS: What would you do with it?

BK: We used to gut the duck and clean it and take its feathers off. I like roast black duck myself, but we also used to breast a lot of them and cook the breast in a frying pan with wine and mushrooms and garlic and onions and stuff like that.

NS: Sounds like you really enjoy eating a lot of that stuff.

BK: I love it. We used to bring ducks also to Dick Abbott's house. Where he would make big duck dinners and we would have like ten or twelve people all over having a big feast, wild rice and potatoes and green onions and all the other things that go with it. He also used to bring Wink's father quite a few ducks. He was also a duck hunter and very good hunter.

NS: That is Leon?

BK: He would also make ducks for us. I enjoyed it.

NS: Do you still go duck hunting?

BK: I have not been in the last few years, but maybe I will go this season. I keep up my license, but the last couple years I have not gone.

[end of transcript]