

Nancy Solomon: – doing this?

Danny Koch: I'm doing this all my life since I was a kid with my uncles, my father, grandfathers. I catch little fish like this with big shells on the bottom and the killeys goes [inaudible] find your best place.

NS: You are looking for horseshoe shells or just any kind?

DK: I'm kind of fishing on little white shells there.

NS: Yes, clam shells.

DK: You'll see the killeys and going to scoop on the clam shells. [inaudible]

NS: Where do you get your horseshoe crab from?

DK: I catch them on my dragger. I can pick them up and they will come across the mud. [inaudible].

NS: [laughter]

DK: You can get a load of [inaudible] of thee grass in the beach and stuff. As you see later on, it's a matter of high tide. You will see them all over the place. I've always picked up [inaudible]. My dog gets a lot of them. I get some, pick some too.

NS: [laughter] Yes.

DK: We got five the last time.

NS: Sorry.

DK: We get five and we get a hundred. We get a little better at it. [laughter]

NS: You said hundred is a good catch though, right?

DK: Yes.

NS: Have you ever put them out right at the edge of the bank?

DK: Yes.

NS: What happens if you do that?

DK: When you catch [inaudible]. You just keep [inaudible] like these creeks here. There are creeks like this that have holes in the [inaudible] got holes of water in certain spots out in the bay. That's what I have been catching for the last two weeks. But the tides are wrong. The

fishes are [inaudible] right now where everything is so late [inaudible] for a few more days. [inaudible] later. How you have to try to catch them this way. This is a hard one. The other way, you don't get out of the boat.

NS: [laughter]

DK: So, you got to get out of the boat to put traps.

NS: How many traps do you put out?

DK: I can put out about twenty-four to thirty every time we set up. I can set them up three times a day.

NS: I have to learn what were good places?

DK: Yes. It takes a long time to know where they are and where they go and hang out. [inaudible]

NS: You learn a lot of that from your dad and grandfather?

DK: Yes. A lot of my uncles were all in the bay and in the ocean fishing.

NS: How long has your family been out here?

DK: [inaudible] There was nothing here but grass and cocktails, clam shell not like what you have now.

NS: [laughter]

DK: I can't believe it.

NS: Do you know when the first Koches came here?

DK: Early nineteen hundreds.

NS: Do you know where they originally came from?

DK: Some of them are from New Jersey.

NS: I mean, before the United States?

DK: Most of us born in United States. [laughter]

NS: How can you tell?

DK: [inaudible] stuff like that. [inaudible] I think this is a good place to go to. I go down here

plenty of times. It's still good to try again. [inaudible]

NS: Do you make your own traps?

DK: Yes.

NS: Ever have trouble finding them again?

DK: Not too often.

NS: Did somebody ever take them?

DK: Once in a while.

NS: This is pretty much where you always been putting your traps?

DK: I placed all over the whole bay. This place is great to stay [inaudible].

NS: How long do you usually leave the traps out for? A couple of days?

DK: A few hours.

NS: Really? That is pretty fast.

DK: Yes.

NS: Looking for shells?

DK: [inaudible]

NS: Sure. [laughter] I got my boots on. You usually do this alone?

DK: Yes.

NS: Do you ever go out on your dragger alone?

DK: No.

NS: Must be nice for a change of pace?

DK: Definitely. When I come back, [inaudible] right through the top of the water.

NS: What are the kinds of things you do when you are not out on the dragger?

DK: I worked on a [inaudible] motion picture movie.

NS: Oh, yes.

DK: Making motion picture movies [inaudible] stuff like that.

NS: So, just like working on a boat?

DK: Well, [inaudible] I don't want to be on [inaudible]. [laughter]

NS: Have you ever worked in an office?

DK: Not me.

NS: How come?

DK: I can't stay in an office for hours.

NS: [laughter] Have you ever tried it?

DK: No. But I have seen enough people in an office that they don't want to be anymore.

NS: You have been fishing pretty much all your life?

DK: Yes. I was [inaudible] any other place.

NS: What kind of trap is that considered?

DK: Killey trap.

NS: I know. Is it like a single funnel or...

DK: Yes, single funnel trap.

NS: Why do you use the single funnel?

DK: I think we made the double funnel ones. It did not work. I don't know. I think single ones work the best. [inaudible] plenty of time to change something that works good.

NS: The way you make those are pretty much the way your grandfather made them?

DK: Yes. It's all a little [inaudible] commercial like that, I don't.

NS: What about some of those store-made ones? Are they any good?

DK: See them? That's what you should see when [inaudible].

NS: How come?

DK: [inaudible] double check.

NS: What is it made out of?

DK: What's that?

NS: The pot?

DK: Just a couple of pieces [inaudible] few woods and wire.

NS: What kind of wood?

DK: Just regular.

NS: Any kinds of wood works better than other?

DK: [inaudible] in the water that long. Usually, the wire [inaudible].

NS: You have to make a new batch every year?

DK: [inaudible]

NS: Did you know that boat that we are on?

DK: Yes. I drove a bunch of them.

NS: How old were you when you first made your own boat?

DK: I'm about sixteen, seventeen. I drove a bunch of them that look just like that.

NS: I know.

DK: The one that we pass, the black one, going in. I made that one. The other one down the creek, Joey has made that one. The other one over on Freeport that looks like marks a little higher [inaudible], I built about a half of that.

NS: Wow, that is a lot of boats.

DK: Not really.

NS: Are they all Garveys?

DK: Yes. All twenty-footer, sixteen-footer, seventeen-footer, nineteen-footer, all of these sizes.

NS: What happened?

DK: This is a little sixteen.

NS: It seems like everyone I have met has built a Garvey.

DK: You can build Garvey. You can build nice Garveys.

NS: What is the difference?

DK: I don't know. The way they drive and they ride.

NS: Is just like a little curve that considered a good Garvey?

DK: Yes, a lot of curves on that.

NS: How come?

DK: Because they ride higher, they ride drier. They carry more clams and not wet. They don't bounce when they go across the water. They drive nice and straight. [inaudible] build on the boat. Rachel?

Female Speaker: Well, I only saw you build one. That was the *Little John*. That was semi-operation to handle those straight [inaudible].

DK: But the hatch? You don't see me build the hatch?

FS: I don't think so.

NS: The hut?

DK: The hatch [inaudible]. He got a twenty-foot that was made by him.

NS: Wow. How come you make them so big?

DK: My cousin had a twenty-foot.

NS: That one?

DK: No, I said about a twenty-four foot that one on the side with the bow. I made that one twice as high as that.

NS: How come?

DK: Because when you lower them down and pull clams, you need something in front of this raft. You need something to bust in front of the weight of the boat. The weight is real right in front of the boat and they sink it.

NS: Have you seen guys that have been sunk in their Garveys?

DK: Yes, when it sunk. I sank a few boats myself catching on its weight. [laughter]

NS: You just got to be careful on how ambitious you're going to get. What do you make them out of?

DK: Plywood, oak, and fiberglass.

NS: Did you know what these make them out of?

DK: Yes, cedar, pine. We didn't have plywood back then.

NS: Have you ever tried making one out of it?

DK: Yes, I made one. They don't last like this. But did last forever with the plywood and the fiberglass. They're tough that made abuse durability. The pine boats, they don't have the same [inaudible].

NS: Have you built a gunning boat?

DK: No.

NS: How come?

DK: [inaudible]. I can make one of that. Make one a couple of days.

NS: How long does it take to build a Garvey?

DK: A couple of weeks.

NS: When you build, do you have a sketch or anything and you just...

DK: [inaudible]

NS: Are the ribs also made out of plywood?

DK: No.

NS: The top floor?

DK: More plywood with oak pines go around the plywood.

NS: I meant the top part of the...

DK: It was all fiberglass around. You could take the wood out of the boat [inaudible] fiberglass them. I fiberglass them inside and out. It can last forever.

NS: Did you ever see people get stuck out there?

DK: All the time.

NS: Do you help each other when they...

DK: Baymen do, yes. [inaudible] you see those guys broke down. You just let them drip. If you see one of your own type of guys out there, you will pick them up so most of them. When I see you broke down, I just keep your wave to you, "Bye." That's what I do to them now. See you later.

NS: [laughter] I guess we got to really know the tides.

DK: I know. A lot of people around the bay too. But I'm the only one of those cutting around with you. I've shopped from where we were today. I've took that stick and showed my boat all the way home from there like a couple of times.

NS: When the tides still up?

DK: No, because of motorboat now on the middle of the bay.

NS: Oh, gosh. How many other people are catching killeys?

DK: At least fifty.

NS: No, I mean around here?

DK: There are twenty guys around me.

NS: When you first started, how much would you catch?

DK: So, it depends if somebody was there before you or not. But you can always go catch fifty quarts on the trap.

NS: These days about how much do you catch?

DK: I'm still catching about fifty but sometimes you can catch a hundred a lot of times. You can catch all you want but it gets spent out now.

NS: Are the sports fishermen also catching killeys or is it still mostly baymen?

DK: Yes, part-time. There are a lot of guys like that, part-time, and have always [inaudible].



NS: Did they sell them or...

DK: Yes, it's vital. They maybe selling them for [inaudible]. Then they maybe selling them for \$2.

NS: Who do you sell your killeys for?

DK: To a different people, (Causeway Bait and Tackle?) and some other guys.

NS: These guys you've known for a long time?

DK: Yes. I also sell clams and stuff.

NS: What are the kinds of things do you catch in the bay?

DK: Clams, we catch crabs, mussels, oysters, a few of them.

NS: Really?

DK: Killeys, crabs, eels.

NS: Are these green crabs?

DK: Green crabs and blue-claw crabs.

NS: Can we get nabbed by a blue-claw crab?

DK: [inaudible] lobsters too. [laughter]

FS: Tell her about horsefoot, Dan?

DK: What?

FS: Tell her about horsefoot?

NS: What happened?

DK: We'll probably say something later when we go back down at the boat.

Male Speaker: You know horseshoe crabs that are back in [inaudible] at the beach?

NS: Yes, when they're mating. [laughter]

FS: You go out catch them all. But usually when it's really hot, you go and get soaking wet, you chase them down.

NS: [laughter]

[talking simultaneously]

NS: I know. I saw it prior [inaudible] that. But what a way to go. [laughter]

FS: There were smiles on their faces.

NS: Not when they actually pull them apart. [laughter] Do you remember like one time when it grabbed to hold to you, it wouldn't let go?

DK: Yes, if I caught both claws.

NS: Really? Is that hard to do?

DK: You don't panic without yelling. I got to snap it off and pull it off.

NS: [laughter]

FS: I got bit twice yesterday.

MS: You got to shake it off and you jump around or it will cut your finger off.

NS: Yes. [laughter]

LK: It does. It'll really try to tear off your finger. They ripped it off.

DK: If you could just take a claw off [inaudible].

LK: The little squiggly crabs, that little spider ones, [inaudible] quick and they got a good bite on you.

DK: I got bitten by a crab yesterday [inaudible] with my hand. The hairy one grabbed the side of the finger.

NS: Oh, god.

DK: Rachel?

FS: I got one right here on my glove.

DK: Where?

NS: Did you have close up or...

DK: No.

FS: Also got me on the tip of my boot. It went right through the boot and on my toe.

[talking simultaneously]

NS: When you first began, as you remember, some of the stupid things that happened to everyone?

DK: There are so many stupid things that happened. I couldn't remember half of it. [laughter]

LK: We don't want to remember. [laughter]

NS: Did you two learn together or...

LK: No, we both do things together and work differently doing things.

DK: Well, I feel sorry when I try to help him out. [laughter]

LK: That's what brothers are for though.

DK: Really tough to kind of get to come around. [laughter]

NS: I know you were working in some other places besides here. You've always been around here?

DK: He lives here. He used to work in a sewage plant [inaudible] laughter]

NS: I did not know that. [laughter]

LK: No, I didn't work in the sewage. laughter]

DK: You got to get away [inaudible] [laughter]

NS: I just remember you said like you work in the Hampton

[talking simultaneously]

LK: That's funny with a long-legged man doing a fast dance.

NS: Right. You go it.

DK: Oh, no.

NS: How about you, Dan, have you always been running this company or...

DK: Sure. I'm the president.

NS: How you get to be president?

LK: He elected himself.

DK: I elected myself.

NS: How many kids are there in your family?

DK: Twenty-four.

LK: Twenty-four.

NS: Come on. [laughter]

LK: There's twenty-one, I'd say there's twenty-four.

NS: No. Your parents, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

DK: How many they want to own up, do you mean? [laughter]

My other brother and my sisters, there's really four. But there's an old guy [inaudible]. He's adopted. [laughter] He is out of the will now. [laughter] [inaudible]

[talking simultaneously]

FS: Just been a very weird spot.

NS: Are the others in this business or no?

LK: No. My sister used to work [inaudible] but now she owns deli. My other brothers own the deli also. They're partners there.

NS: Are they still around here?

DK: Yes. They're all from Baldwin Harbor.

NS: What was the scariest thing that ever happened to you when you've been out on the dragger on the bay?

LK: Wash up on the beach.

DK: Yes, the breaking waves wash up on the beach.

NS: Is this right in the inlet?

DK: Yes, right on the ocean, right in front of beach. They will catch some stripers. [inaudible] propeller. Big waves can break in the boat and watch this run on the beach.

NS: Oh, my God.

DK: He had to come down and hit the truck and crank the boat up on the beach and bring it home on four-wheeled drive truck. We've done that twice.

LK: Yes. I washed up twice too, but I was able to get out.

DK: I get off most of the time.

LK: Once, it knocked me right out.

DK: But the surf is real big. It's better off just pushing the boat all out on the beach than coming out with the truck as the tide goes up. I mean, no water on the boat, so the high tide just get the boat up there all the way. Then when the tide goes down, you take the boat and you come back after a few hours later with the truck [inaudible] just cranking right. I mean, you take off across the beach.

NS: Have you ever run out of gas?

DK: Where, on the ocean?

NS: Yes.

DK: No.

DK: We can't get out of gas out there.

NS: I was just wondering.

DK: I have a couple of times where I come in with killey boat when I come in with a load of stuff on it. [inaudible] pick and roll on that. You don't want to be out in the ocean for me at thirty miles running out of gas.

FS: We're once we're on the ocean. At night, someone had tried to steal the propeller. But he must have stopped them before they got it completely off. We're up about half a mile off the beach. It was like 11:00 p.m. Hella fell off. It was dark. I don't know. It was dark. So, we had a swim. It was all the electric jellyfish were in the water.

NS: Oh, my God.

FS: I was like, I am certainly here. A half mile is a long swim. We were wearing clothes. I was pretty scared. It's all over your face and neck and everything. Danny has a leg that gets tired, so

I had given the cross chest carry all the way in. [laughter]

NS: Oh, Christ, you must be some swimmer.

FS: I usually like [inaudible].

DK: She floats the highest in the pool. [laughter]

FS: One time I'm gill netting. He used to have this guy in Brooklyn, Joe worked with him on his makeup. I used to work with Danny on his makeup. It was so rough. Me and Joey created mutiny. We refused to work.

LK: On both boats at the same time.

FS: I wasn't even talking to Joey. It was so rough. [laughter] They go right into where people swim. Before the breakers, that's where they have the anchor. You have to go in and grab the anchor and pull it out. So, if it's really rough, he's hanging on to the engine. There's nothing to hang on. You get pounded boy of what hit you. You get ribs broken and everything.

LK: Look what happened to me that day, right?

FS: Well, that made me and Joey refused to work. Me and Joey went on his boat. He went with Danny. I couldn't get the stuff you got pounded all over the place.

LK: I guess I did come out of my head one shot.

NS: I have been hearing a lot about how the sportsmen have really hurt the business around here. What do you think of that?

LK: Well, in a way, they have hurt it. They create a lot of problems for us. They want this protected. Certain things like that. They don't know what it's like working on the water, have no idea what your livelihood or working on the water is all about. They have no idea at all. They just want to legislate this and legislate that. It's a lot of crap because they don't know what you're talking about in the first place. If you have somebody who works on what we see what's going on.

NS: Do you think that there were some things the fisherman will be able to do to change it?

LK: I was trying. But with such a little voice, it was something ridiculous like 3-1/2 million to about 10,000. The odds are a little bit stacked against you. It's like trying to find a needle in the haystack, more or less. It's ridiculous. You don't really get too much voice out of it, so.

NS: They want to pretty much have [inaudible] with the local people and politician.

LK: Yes. Sure. We're going to battle on tuna club presses. They get two or three seven just because they were big ones after striking up the bass issue last year.

NS: Oh, really? That is where my father belongs. [laughter]

LK: Yes. Looks like this guy Owen Johnson. [laughter]

NS: How many commercial fishermen used to be involvement with harbor?

LK: Here, at one time, I guess maybe twenty years ago right on this canal, between little boats and offshore boats, probably about fifty to sixty people.

NS: These were all people whose families were here?

LK: Old families, yes.

NS: Now m you're the only one?

LK: All residents of the area of Baldwin Harbor. They all lived here. [inaudible] right here in Freeport Harbor somewhere. We're all local people.

NS: That is good.

LK: We're going to check everybody out.

NS: [inaudible] right here.

LK: Everybody. With whack job neighbors we got the condo over here. That's ridiculous to crap like this. This used to be automated years ago. Now, we're getting developed by ISOs all over the place. There are no more rolling meadows. There are nothing like that.

DK: It used to be [inaudible] the ocean from here.

LK: Yes. Well, I remember back in the days, old Grandpa Koch, [laughter] he used to have horse and buggy to bring their boat down to the beach and everything, right? Bring him down behind the medicine school is now.

[talking simultaneously]

Then they sail across the bay. They throw in sail and stuff like that.

FS: Did you guys have [inaudible]?

LK: They would remember and they saw him. [inaudible]

NS: Do you ever had any stories about this?

DK: Also rich. [laughter]

NS: Do you know if the Depression really affected things around here.

LK: It sure did. They all started making money with the Depression down, running all that hoots and shit. Every one of our uncle have thought we're millionaires. We've been away for a long time. Yes.

NS: [laughter]

LK: Some of the wealthiest people around this part. The funny part is now they're dying off and they're all leaving the money to charity and shit.

NS: Oh, God.

DK: I'm a charity.

LK: Look at Danny, that guy had more money than the treasury, real estate, everything else.

NS: Have you ever thought about working in something other than fishing?

DK: He's going to get a job in the zoo one day. laughter]

FS: Who's going to get down there?

[talking simultaneously]

Danny worked in the [inaudible] in motion pictures.

LK: He used to work with Frank Sinatra, right?

FS: John Belushi.

LK: Yes.

NS: Belushi?

FS: Yes, he did *Neighbors* with Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi.

DK: [inaudible]

NS: [inaudible] Have you done eel trapping and stuff?

DK: Yes. I showed Cory how to build an eel traps.

NS: Really?



DK: Yes. As a matter of fact, all the traps, I gave to him. Uncle Elwood does [inaudible] the ultimate trap, killey trap. They don't make them like that, it takes too much time.

NS: How are they made?

DK: All handmade nylon funnels, stuff like that. It takes a lot of time to make. But they catch a lot better.

NS: How long does it take to make the trap?

DK: It will take a few hours at least. On a trap like that, I may take the half of the day to make each trip.

NS: You spent most your winter making new traps?

DK: Yes. We had a lot of other stuff to do. A killey traps are easy. You can make a whole gear done in a couple of days with the modern tools that I have. I got all kinds of unit. She has electric staple guns. Pneumatic tools [inaudible] with the hammer and the nails. [inaudible]

NS: That boat had a lot of really old males in there.

DK: Which boat?

NS: Your Garvey?

DK: That one, [inaudible]. The fiberglass closes to the [inaudible] on a couple of blocks. The boat [inaudible] ripped the pieces in the railway. I was going to shake all that out of my arm because that other little Garvey in the water [inaudible]. I'll take this one out. I'll put my new rails and stuff on it and I'll paint it up.

LK: Yes.

NS: For the eel traps, how long are those to make?

DK: It depends how well you work now and how fast you go ahead. You can go to a couple of old pots in there. [inaudible] start to finish.

NS: What is the cost to want to make these things?

DK: It cost about, I don't know, making eel pot probably costs about \$15 to \$20 to build them.

NS: But the killey, she used a single funnel. What about for the eel trap?

DK: Two pots and there's a lot more look good on pot. Eel trap with killey traps. Killey trap is simple to make. The eel pots is three times more involved [inaudible]. You can make a hundred killey pots but you'll probably make ten eel pots.

NS: Because of the funnels?

DK: Yes, they have to watch this. Watch which time [inaudible] laugh at stuff. It was to make an eel trap. Eel trap has two panels and two doors. But killey trap only has one and killey pot is half the size.

NS: Your eel traps, are they the same kind of stories or...

DK: I gave to some. My uncle sold the rest of them. Then he built himself. So, you don't make them quite as nice but they're doing a pretty good job better than most people.

NS: How long did it take you to learn to make a killey trap?

DK: My uncle showed me.

NS: What is your uncle's name?

DK: Elwood Verity. He died last year. He had a boating accident at the bay. They found him gone down to actually about a hundred feet from his Garvey.

NS: How old is he?

DK: He is 42. They found him about a hundred feet from the boat, facedown, on the heavy-duty thunderstorm [inaudible]. The next day we found him with the Coast Guard and the police. We looked all the clam diggers and all of that. We had search up all night long. We looked at the next morning all day. The next morning, we found him. [inaudible] grasp. We found the boat and everything up. Then we found him lying on the water facedown about a hundred feet from the boat.

NS: That is when [inaudible].

DK: Yes, basically, it is quite a shock too. The constables and the police waited around there all night long with the Coast Guard. At least we had some help.

NS: Did many baymen die?

DK: It was few. I had three friends somewhere around the bay [inaudible]. I had a friend, little John, he had a boat then some guy hit a pole or something [inaudible] hit him or something and cut his whole guts out and his arms also. Basically, he just had a baby who was four months old. He's just married about a year now. [inaudible] best friends. I just had built a Garvey from the year before that [inaudible]. That's the Garvey. The black one there we're seeing going in. That was the boat. Patterson was another good friend, so his wife gave him the boat. Here, we had a rough summer last summer. Paul [inaudible] and his wife died. Hervey's wife died. [inaudible] seemed like I was doing well.

NS: Got to keep an eye out when you hear things like that.

DK: He started out today.

NS: The only thing they [inaudible] be out in the ocean.

DK: [inaudible] right out on a boat when I am fishing. A couple of guys cannot go on all the time. They're going someone fish by themselves. You go out there to see the boat keep going [inaudible]. He had a heart attack. He jumped on the boat and get him a helicopter coming out and take you off the boat. It's been quite a few things. A couple of guys said they've seen dead bodies and other people watched that.

NS: People died young in this incidents?

DK: People who died on accidents. There are other people lived pretty long. Mostly old fishermen around here were all seventy-five, eighty now. The oldest died on the sea. I think he was about eighty-five. The only reason why he died is because they did an operation on the back and after another one on the stomach and he wasn't ready for it. [inaudible] cooking along. The although guy was out, his brother [inaudible] opens clams. The other guy that was out the dock, Charley, he's eighty-four, Charley Combs. He comes down. He's about the same age too.

NS: You know pretty most of the baymen around here?

DK: Yes. I'm pretty much old.

NS: These like a pretty young group.

LK: Time has changed. Old people and then all of sudden their kids. Then all of sudden, their kids. It has been long line.

NS: Maybe your cousins in this?

LK: A whole bunch of them.

DK: A lot [inaudible] fishing for the clams was [inaudible].

NS: It's pretty amazing. Did you ever go duck hunting?

DK: Yes. If there is enough time, fishing, and stuff like that [inaudible] duck hunt freezing my ass out here for some stupid duck.

NS: [laughter] Do it anyway?

DK: Yes.

NS: How about you? You are good at that?

LK: I used to. I haven't hunt out for over two years now. No excitement anymore.

FS: Plus, what do you do with the ducks?

LK: I won't eat the ducks anyways.

FS: Such a waste.

LK: No sense of shooting them if you're not going to eat them. You're going to shoot some we're shooting clay pigeons, stuff like that. [laughter] I used to play something like that. I went last year. I went like one once or twice. I went out with Cory a couple of times. But since then, they have so much [inaudible] that much. I used to stay out there the whole season. My friends would come out, why not?

NS: I think that is...

[end of transcript]