

Nancy Solomon: Danny, what is your last name?

Danny Koch: Koch.

Lenny Koch: Koch.

DK: Koch. We're brothers.

NS: Who make nets in Baldwin, Long Island. This is May 6, 1987. So, how did you get into making nets? I mean, nobody really does that anymore.

LK: Well, a lot of my relatives were fishermen. My father was a fisherman for years. My father does different things now. He works for an oil company. So, he doesn't go fishing no more. But we liked it when we were little, so we just kept doing it. We just went – from one year, went on a little boat, and then things led from one thing to another. Now, I run yachts up and down the coast.

NS: Was your family from around here?

LK: Oh, yes. We grew up right here in Baldwin.

NS: Where were your grandparents from?

LK: My grandparents were right here from Baldwin also.

NS: Your great-grandparents, do you know? I mean, how many generations are we talking?

LK: I know my great-grandparents were here. I don't know if they were born here or not. That, I don't know. I can find out easily, I never bothered asking.

NS: Do you know if you are English or Irish or...

LK: A little German, a little Irish.

NS: Do you know, Danny?

DK: What's that?

NS: What countries your family hails from.

DK: [inaudible].

NS: I am talking about your parents, your grandparents, your great-grandparents.

DK: Most of them are from New Jersey and out here.

NS: My grandparents are all from here. My grandmother was raised in Upstate New York.

DK: They're all farmers.

LK: They were all farmers in the state.

NS: But they used to go fishing.

LK: Well, my grandfather was a captain. He had party boats and charter boats. That was his profession ever since she had met him. He was a captain then.

DK: My grandmother was a farmer.

NS: Probably goes back about a hundred years.

LK: Yes. Well, I would say probably back at least sixty to seventy years, something like that. As you go further back, I don't really know. But I know before that, my great-grandparents and my grandmother's parents came from Ukraine. I know that.

NS: Were any of them net makers or...

LK: Not that I know of.

NS: So, how did you learn how to make nets?

LK: Just working with different people. We have guys that do a lot of work for us. A lot of the nets, we get made already. We do a lot of work on it ourselves. We'll buy them semi-complete and finish them off, maybe make an extension for – make it longer, stuff like that. That's what you saw me tying. It's that rope in the middle. That's what they call a splitting strap. If you get too many fish in that bag – like the other day, we had this problem. So, this net is a whole new net for this boat. We just rigged this one out. So, it's a lot larger than what we normally use. But we found out that we do have the power to work this one efficiently, and we're increasing per tow maybe three or four hundred pounds.

NS: How do you go about making a net from scratch?

LK: We would buy this webbing, and it would come as square panels maybe ninety meshes or a hundred meshes across. It's a machine, so you could give it any length you'd like it.

NS: What is it made of?

LK: Nylon, and then it's dipped in a preservative. It makes it black like that. It's the type of stuff they call net coating. Everybody uses it along this coast. There's plastic type stuff too.

NS: What did they make nets out of before synthetics came around?

LK: Nylon, Dacron, stuff like that.

NS: But before you could buy that stuff...

LK: Oh, years ago?

NS: Yes.

LK: That's a good question. I don't really know. I know nylon has been a thing for years and years and years. Monofilament, these other type of stuff...

NS: About how long...

LK: Oh, Jesus, it's got to be since 1900s, anyway.

NS: Really?

LK: Yes. Well, they used to just knit twine together, and maybe they would make their own webbing. Like the old Italians that I used to work for up to last year, they would have their wives that sit home in Italy years back, and they would all sit there and sew all winter long, making webbing for their husbands who were all fishing.

NS: Do you know how to do that?

LK: I could sew stuff. If I had a hole, I could fix it right. But it takes so much time, and I was just getting good at it. Then I got out of this business for a couple of years, and that was during the oil spills stuff on the water. So, now, me and my brother, we went up getting all these boats from different places, from different friends of mine that retired and stuff. The boats were old, but they needed a lot of refurbishing. So, we did all the work on them and whatnot. They're all shaping up now. Now, it's time to make money. [laughter]

NS: How would you piece the different webs together?

LK: Well, like say, if you have like two-inch webbing in the front – let's say we have a tapered net. We have some nets that start out up in the front, which would be where the net is spread this way. It might spread across...

NS: Across about two feet?

LK: Width-wise, no. This whole net, when it's working, would spread about sixty feet. It's height on this particular net would be about maybe twelve or thirteen feet high from the bottom. Every net rise on the bottom.

NS: So, when you would buy the webbing in the stores, what would those squares measure?

LK: Well, you would have to buy the webbing by the pound. I don't know how many meshes it

would be. So, it's just thousands. Oh, God, they've got to be fifteen or twenty-thousand. Each square is called a mesh. So, there's thousands and thousands.

NS: But how wide would that stretch?

LK: Well, that net right there?

NS: Yes.

LK: Lengthwise, it would be probably about seventy or eighty feet, and it's tapered from about fifty foot out in front – about sixty foot out front, and it goes – let's say fifty foot across, it would go twelve foot high or thirteen foot high. Then it all comes tapered back to a triangle around a sock.

NS: Now, why would they taper it from the top and the bottom so that it would get caught in there?

LK: Well, because you have to have a certain amount of overhang, so the fish – when they get to it, they'll go under it. They'll funnel down and they charge into the net is what they do, because it keeps getting narrowed on them. So, they just see this big black hole, and they go running for the black hole which just winds up down in the bag.

NS: What would it be an example of a net that was not made properly? Would it be too deep or too shallow so that that...

LK: Well, it's hard to say, because you make different sized nets. I have other nets that are made out of eight-inch, but this here is maybe an inch and three quarter or two inch.

NS: What would determine the size?

LK: Well, the wings on this net, let's say we use five pounds of webbing. It would come out to maybe – let's say ten thousand knots. It's ten thousand individual mesh, where eight-inch webbing on the same distance would only be maybe several hundred.

NS: Would you make different kinds of nets depending upon what kind of fish you were catching?

LK: Oh, yes, of course.

NS: Can you give me an example?

LK: Whiting fishing, we'll use two and a half inch, two and three quarter inch, straight through from one end right to down to the back, because all the fish are generally small. Most of the fish are anywhere from a quarter of a pound up to maybe four pounds.

NS: So, you would have to have a finer mesh.

LK: Right, that's what this is like here. Now, that net there, see how much bigger that is? It's laying there.

NS: Yes. Would that be for bluefish?

LK: No. Well, these type of nets, you can get bluefish on them, but you don't use them for bluefish because they move too fast. These here, you tow on the bottom slowly, maybe two miles an hour – two and a half, three miles an hour. The faster-moving fish, we'll go three, three and a half. But realistically, you can't tow much faster than that, because you don't have the capability to do that. See, the bigger mesh, it will move through the water easier, because there's not as many knots and restrictions. I've read a lot of articles through Sea Grant Extension Program, and they have a regular maritime school for net making and everything right in Rhode Island. So, you could send...

NS: But I would think that with all the boating in your family, that is where you really learned.

LK: Well, that's where I did. But you can only learn so much in your family too. Your family hasn't been all over the coast and up and down the coast. My family only grew up and was raised here. My other brother, he doesn't really travel as much. But I just come back, and I've only been back here now for about a week and a half. I was in Florida this year the whole winter. I worked whole West Coast of Florida, which is nice. So, now, the only parts of this whole seaboard that I haven't run are from the Canadian border into Maine, right to the Maine border. From there, I've been all the way around down to Long Island Sound and all of Long Island and the whole coast south of here all the way to Fort Lauderdale.

NS: I would guess that you would know the most about this area that is...

LK: Oh, yes, I do. I know a lot about this area. But now, I'm so used to working here, and I've been working here for so long for so many years that I'm just looking for a little difference in scenery change. It's nice because you meet other people in different areas. So, now, I got friends all up and down Long Island. I just talked to a friend of mine who got back from Florida last night. He lives in the Hamptons, so you have to come out again. I stayed out with him last summer about two and a half months tuna fishing, which was something new. So, we're going to do that this year. It's something new again. But it's all high-profit stuff. Now, we've got the capability to do these things with the larger boats. Years ago, they didn't do this kind of stuff because they didn't have the boats that could cope with the kind of weather that you get.

NS: When you would fix a net, what kinds of things did you need to learn in order to be able to mend them?

LK: Well, you have to learn which way the webbing runs, because it looks square, but it is not. It's a diamond. It's hard to explain, because you have to see a hole and then try to fix it. You'll say, "Oh, now I see," because each bar, you have to come zigzagging back forth. When you get to an end and you finish it, then you say, "Well, I have to cut this and start this one right." A lot of times, you cut the wrong thing and you start in the wrong place and you make the hole bigger

than what it is. That happens a lot. I used to do that myself all the time. Now, I just started getting good at it a long time ago, and then I get away from it for seven years. So, as I was getting good at it, then I went away. But I still know enough where little holes, I could fix those. But when I ripped out a whole great big section, a couple other fishermen, friends of mine, stuff like that, they'll come over. I wrecked one last year. I mean, I rim-racked it. It looked like a shredded net. There wasn't much left of it. I had five of my friends come over one afternoon the day I wrecked it, and they all come over to help me. It's just so I can get back to work. So, it's pretty good like that. You all help each other out like that.

NS: Well, did you have to learn any particular kinds of stitches like you would for...

LK: Yes, there's only five stitches.

NS: What are they?

LK: Well, it's all the same one, but it's just a matter of twisting a knot back and forth and just tying a little different to come back left-handed and stuff like that.

NS: Do they have names for these stitches?

LK: It's more or less just like that. I don't even know, really. I don't even know, really. It's just a mesh. I don't really what kind of not it is. I don't know what the name type of knot.

NS: Is it a particular kind of knot that only fishermen would know?

LK: Not really. I don't think so.

NS: So, it could be used like a Boy Scout knot, kind of?

LK: Yes, pretty much.

DK: [inaudible].

LK: He eats the live bait that he catches.

NS: I was just asking what particular kinds of things you needed to learn to be able to make and fix your nets.

LK: I'll tell you, you have to be good at math, because you have to figure out all your different sizes of meshes. When you tape them back, they'll be cut...

DK: You have to count very good.

LK: Yes. It's like keeping track of everything when you cut things down and you go to sew things back together because everything is tapered and stuff, so you have to maybe cut two meshes in, go one mesh down, or vice versa. You know what I mean? You have to do it even

on both sides.

NS: So, you have to have a good sense of proportion and spacing.

LK: Right. Usually, what we'll do is we'll draw it all out and lay it out on a piece of paper. Then you count the meshes, and we'll know the right way to go to them. You start one way...

NS: Is that the way the old-timers used to make nets?

LK: Yes. Oh, yes. It has to all be counted because otherwise you'll wind up with too many meshes in one spot or other, and what will happen is a lot of fish will jam in one spot and they'll trash up. It might collapse the net one side and make it work for them. So, you can't have that. If put together right, they'll work right. But if they're a little bit distorted, they won't work right at all. So, it makes a difference in catching two or three hundred pounds per tow versus twenty-five pounds, something like that.

NS: When you first began, was there somebody who you went to who had been doing this?

LK: Well, most of the guys would have that stuff, but most of them made their own stuff too. So, just by working with them – you work alongside them every day – you learn little things here and little things there.

NS: Who were some of the people who were doing that around here?

LK: Well, I guess probably pretty soon, a couple guys would start building them in Freeport, the boats like these.

NS: No, I was talking about the nets. Who were some of the people that were experienced at this?

LK: Well, gillnets, I went and had to make those for my cousin, Elwood.

NS: Is he still around?

LK: No, he died. He got killed about two years ago. He had an accident out on the bay.

NS: I am sorry.

LK: So, he taught us a lot of stuff over the years. When we were little and stuff, I used to live out of his house out on the island and stuff like that. So, I did a lot of fishing with him from when I was maybe fourteen or fifteen. Then I was fishing with my father as well. So, I split my time up with him and back and forth,

because I was out there as well as I was here. So, he just gave me more knowledge of where to work more than what I was used to working.

NS: He showed you how to do things?

LK: Yes. Well, he showed me how to make a lot of the gillnets and stuff like that, different types of bait nets...

NS: What are the different kinds of nets?

LK: There's gillnets.

NS: What is a gillnet for?

LK: A gillnet is a stationary net where you would set it. You would run it out to the back of a boat and leave it set. It sits like a wall, like a fence, and the fish swim into it and hit it. You would take them out as they get caught.

NS: So, you would use that for trolling?

LK: No, no, it would sit there. The fish have to be moving in order for it to work.

NS: So, you would actually sit there and just wait until the fish would get...

LK: Right. We'd set it out and just sit there and watch it and hope something goes in it. Well, you can't see it. It's under the water. You can't see what's going on under the water.

NS: You said there are five kinds of nets.

LK: Well, no. There was five types of knots for sewing or webbing.

NS: What is another kind of net?

LK: They have a seine net. That's the kind that you would take along the beach to catch bait.

NS: What is the name of it?

LK: A seine, S-E-I-N-E.

NS: Oh, that is what that is. I have seen the word.

LK: Right, a seine net. It's a real fine mesh for catching bait. Well, they use them in the ocean and on the beach in the Carolinas and stuff like that for catching bluefish, weakfish, bass, stuff like that.

NS: Now, would you trawl with that?

LK: No, you would use it on a boat, and you would set it along a beach and then pull it back to the beach and pull it ashore. You would just drag it straight up – everything that was inside of it

would come up with you. That's what a seine is. These are what they call trawl net, drag nets, because you drag them. You drag them behind the boat. Those doors go down, and they spread open, and they hold that net open. It keeps it a constant...

NS: I have seen those doors on a couple of people's lawns. They use them for decoration. Is that where they would get them, from a boat?

LK: Yes, probably old ones that are bad or something. When they lose the steel with...

NS: Is there any particular name for those doors?

LK: No, those are just regular wooden trawl doors. I don't know if those are (corkwood?) still over...

NS: What are they made of?

LK: Heavy oak wood and steel, all different types of steel welded – you can see on these ones, these are the same ones. But these are a lighter set. We had these on the boat, and we had to put the bigger net on and we had to put bigger doors on.

NS: So, would you have one at the base to keep it straight?

LK: Well, what we would do is that these brackets here would stand out like this, both of them, and you would have them clasped together into two tops. You'd have the two of them, and they'd spread apart. It's like they both drive in different directions. We'll have cable and chain between the top of the net and the bottom of the net and the top and the bottom of the door.

NS: That is what I thought.

LK: Then that'll make the net ride like this, where the top of the net would float, so it'll stay up high, and all that chain that you see will hold it to the bottom as well. That makes a big opening. Then these are dragged through the water. You see on the bottom where the heavy steel is, that's what rides on the bottom, that part right down there. That's why all that extra steel is there. These are pretty heavy too. Well, these ones are light ones, but they're about three hundred pounds each. So, you'll need a winch and stuff to lift this thing as it comes up.

NS: Yes, I see. That is a big winch.

LK: Yes. It's pretty heavy duty. Well, it's like our other boat over there. That one's got a net reel and everything else on it, so we don't have to hang a net like this. This is an older style rig. That's more modernized. That one's getting refurbished next.

NS: So, we have got gill nets, trawl nets, seine nets.

LK: Seine, yes.

NS: Seine nets.

LK: What other type of net? There's a pound net where they puts stakes in the ground and have a webbing that they hang on that. They run large webbing through it and ropes and stuff. The fish run to it and get scared, and they run along a fence. There's a big pond made out of webbing, and they'll go in – it's like a maze and they get stuck in the middle of it. They just come out and take that out...

NS: I have seen those when I have been out.

LK: Sunrise Fish Company has one out in Islip, but they have it outside of Robert Moses Park. It's on the ocean there. You can see from the beach there. Matter of fact, a lot of early mornings, if you get down there real early, you can see the boat down there emptying it right at the end of the parkway there.

NS: I will have to go over there. But what time do they usually do that?

LK: Usually fairly early in the morning.

NS: Like 6:00, 7:00?

LK: Yes, 6:00, 7:00, 8:00, like that. They got to be there until 10:00, 11:00 in the morning. There's a big, long, gray boat with this little itty-bitty cabin on the front. It's really a weird-looking boat. It's just for emptying that thing, though. I know they had a lot of trouble setting them. I don't think they're in operation there yet, but they'll be setting it up. They're probably even working on it now, on the nice days when it's not too rough in the ocean. All the work that you do is all limited to the weather that you get. So, you're pretty limited. I guess you're limited to 150 to two hundred days, maybe, out of the whole year. When you figure out what the fishing seasons are, that eliminates it more. So, you get the odds against you, pretty much. They're pretty well stacked.

NS: It is like farmers in the Midwest these days.

LK: Yes. Actually, we're the same thing with farmers, but we're just farmers of the sea. That's all. The fish have tails. They move. So, you can't you can't say, "Well, they should be here." It doesn't mean that they're going to stay here.

NS: Well, the one good thing about fishing is too much rain does not matter. Not enough rain does not really matter.

LK: Well, I guess too much rain does matter. It changes the salinity in the water, right?

NS: How does that affect the fish then?

LK: Well, it creates a lot of growth, kills a lot of stuff when it's hot in the summer. The algae grows in it. It needs cleanup. You can see here how these canals are clear right now. But you

come back here in two months' time, and the canal turns brownish because the water's getting warmer and you have more boat traffic. The water the rest of the year, nine months out of the year, it's crystal clear down here. We can see four or five foot in the water, unless we got the sun on the water.

NS: So, all the chemicals and stuff would change it. Would fish actually leave the area?

LK: I don't know about that. I don't believe so. There's always going to be fish here, to a point. But I mean, as for stuff like – now, you have a lot more bulkhead and stuff in here. You have a lot less vegetation than what you had fifteen years ago. This canal, everything here, we'd see all meadows this whole side of the canal fourteen, fifteen years ago. Now, you can see it's condos, houses. See? Look, you have one empty lot. I think that's probably about the only empty lot on the canal, and they want something like \$150,000 for that. Half of it washed away. Somebody will buy it. They always do. If somebody built one here, there's a whole lot – there used to be an old boat house there. This guy put this big house on it.

NS: The red building, that was an old oyster house? George was telling me.

LK: No, that brown one down there. The boatyard down, that used to be an old oyster house.

NS: But what was the red one?

LK: This was always a restaurant and an inn, stuff like that.

NS: That brown one would be the saltbox...

LK: Right. Oysters used to land there.

NS: Well, I just took a picture of the wrong building then.

LK: That building is still pretty much the same as it used to be. It has the overhang over the canal, and the boats would pull in. They had a big back door, and they would bring everything in. I think the historical site probably has pictures of that place years ago. Actually, you can see a lot of the old stuff. Even there's old pictures here where they used to have the old net reels and stuff like that.

NS: Really? Oh, those things are incredible.

LK: Right. This particular property here has been used commercial fishing for over a hundred years. This shack here is just about...

NS: This was the oyster shack, and now it is the clam shack?

LK: Well, they used to use that one mostly for bait. But they just kept a lot of equipment in them, and whatever they needed at the time – your shack turns into whatever you needed for at the time. You got to be diversified with everything nowadays – even back then. Back then, they

just made a living. I don't think I want to live the way that they lived all those years and stuff like that. They even don't have anything. That's why I do a lot of different things. I go to a lot of different places. I see a lot of different things. So, I can say, "Well, these guys make a lot more money than we make," and stuff like that. Also, we incorporate different things to what we see at different places. Some of them work, some of them don't. But we do okay.

NS: What do you find that works best?

LK: Just hard work and perseverance. It's just a matter of being there, putting the time in out there in the ocean. You have to be out there to catch anything. When you're just look around long enough, you'll find something.

NS: What kinds of qualities do you think you need to be a good fisherman?

LK: You're going to have to want to work hard and long hours. Sometimes little pay or none. I've done that. I've gone for a month, really, without making any real money. I make \$25 or \$30 a day, that's not making any money. I'm not even interested in going commercial fishing unless I can make \$500 a day. Last year, the guy I was working with, there's a lot of days where he was making made \$300 or \$400 a day. But this is specialized fishing, like what we're doing with this dragnet. So, you got to really know your stuff. The guys that I worked with last year, they're the ones who showed us a lot of different stuff. The one guy is building us a new net. He's been showing us how to build this. So, these guys are going to be retiring, and their market that they used up is going to come available. We might be in the right spot to pick a lot of this business up.

NS: Who is making you the net?

LK: A guy named (Charlie Connor?).

NS: Is he around here?

LK: He has a boat in Freeport, but I wouldn't know how to get in touch with him or anything. He just comes down. We have an old guy, Willie, from Freeport also. I guess you've see him...

NS: Black guy?

LK: Yes.

NS: He is one of the people I have got to talk to.

LK: He does a lot of work for us. He's one of our best buddies. He's an old retired guy, but he's good people. He's been around. He could tell us what we're doing right and wrong and stuff. So, it's nice having somebody old like that that's got so much experience. He'll tell you, "Well, these guys do this, and these guys do that. But this is how you do it." He's been around for fifty, sixty, seventy years or something.

NS: So, you know to listen to him.

LK: Yes. So, you don't say nothing. You just listen to him. You always give it a try. You set up the way he tells you. If it don't work, go from there. Try making different adjustments on stuff, and you wind up catching it. But ninety-five percent of the time, he's right. I do use different stuff nowadays, but he keeps up one stuff too. So, it's pretty good. It works out good for us, keeps us working. We ripped up a lot of stuff and couldn't fix it.

NS: Do you ever catch anything in your net that really scared you?

LK: I had a bombshell once.

NS: What happened?

LK: Yes, a big bombshell. Nothing. It was just old and crusty.

NS: An exploded one, I hope.

LK: No, no, it was a shot one. It was already shot out of its shell. But the head of this thing was nineteen or twenty inches, like that, and it was all brass. I chipped it off with a hammer. I didn't even know what I had. I was working on a boat that was all steel at the time, a clam boat. It was funny, I was smashing it on the deck trying to break all the stuff off. I'm beating on it with a hammer. An hour, I'm doing this, and I find this brass cone on the top of it that had numbers on it. So, I said, "Wow, this is getting more interesting." I'm chipping away and chipping away. All day, I work on it. I found find it's a bomb's head. It's the head of a bomb. It was a little funny at first, but then...

NS: Did you ever catch a whale or anything or a shark?

LK: No, I see whales all the time. Sharks are no big thing. I go tournament fishing for sharks all the time. There's tuna fishing and stuff like that. We do this all the time. So, wrestling with a big fish isn't that much. But it's just a matter of keeping an eye on them and just keeping an eye on them teeth.

NS: What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you?

LK: On the water, you mean?

NS: Yes.

LK: When we were surf fishing, striped bass fishing with the gillnets and stuff, we have to get right in the wash of the surf with the boats. You have to run them in. A lot of times, if something would happen, you only can stay there for – you got a split second and everything, you could be timed just right with the waves. Then you got to back in and set the net and take off, setting the net, right on out through the breakers. So, you have to watch and wait and count your waves and know which ones to go through, because they'll be the smallest. A couple of

times, if something would happen, all of a sudden, you had one break right on the boat and fill the boat up with water. It would just scare the hell out of you, because you don't realize the power behind these little waves. God forbid a big one should ever hit you. I get hit twice in about two weeks. the one time I actually got knocked out, it knocked me out for about forty seconds or so until I was in the flopping in the water with the boat. For that, I wear what they call a float coat, which is a life-preserve coat. So, if I ever do get knocked out, I don't have to worry about it. I was expecting it. You know what I mean? So, you go prepared. You don't just go into these things...

NS: In a pair of shorts and T-shirt, no.

LK: Yes, especially when the water's chilly like that, even though you are in the surf, and you can swim right on the beach because you are at the beach. A lot of times, I would be setting and I would hit bottom. So, that's how low it would be. Then you take off for deeper water. You take off back off the beach. So, it is tricky. Danny got washed up once. He got washed up down here, and I went down to help him out. I was too late. There was nothing I could do. So, I got in a four-wheel drive truck, and we have a trailer and stuff. We just go right on down and pick up the boat like it's nothing. For most guys, they wouldn't know how to get the boat off the beach and stuff like that. We get prepared for this.

NS: Did you ever get caught in any real scary storms?

LK: Oh, yes. I've laid a hundred miles off shore on an eighty footer, and it was blowing seventy-five, eighty miles an hour. It was the most scared I've ever been in my life – all these thirty, thirty-five-foot seas and stuff. You're looking up at the moon and there's waves up there. You're like, "Oh, my God. I don't think I'm going to survive this." You couldn't cook anything in the boat. It was just so rough, you couldn't stand up. You couldn't sleep because you couldn't lay flat on...

NS: How long would you go out for?

LK: I would've went out for a four-day trip. We were out a day and a half, and it got real nasty. Everybody else split for home, and it's like eleven, twelve hours to get home. So, rather than us just getting going and getting home, we just figured, well, we'll lay there, and this will blow over. It'd be a thirty, thirty-five mile an hour storm. Well, it would increase so bad. We were like, "Wow, we don't believe this." It was quite the wild storm. It was like that for two and a half days. Of course, we couldn't move anyway. It was too rough to try to go against it. I think we drifted just the first night. We drifted about twenty-two miles or something just because of the storm.

NS: Would you drift so that at least the wind would just kind of blow you back and forth instead of...

LK: Yes. Well, what we did was we just turned the boat and headed down the sea and just drifted with the boat like that. It was a little bit comfortable, but not really a whole hell of a lot. You couldn't sleep. When you got in, you felt like you got beaten up. You were black and blue

all over from running into things. You try to walk across the floor and you're slipping and sliding and grabbing on stuff. I went to open the refrigerator door, this great big stand-up refrigerator door that's bolted to the wall. I opened up the door, and the whole thing just toppled down on top of me. There's two guys that were standing behind me. I was lucky that they were there. I would have gotten flattened by this big refrigerator. There's all kinds of little different things like that.

NS: What are some of the things, if you are in a bad storm, that you should do or not do?

LK: Don't panic. That gets you in the biggest trouble.

NS: That is easy.

LK: What happens is a lot of people say, "Oh, God, we're going to sink. We're going to do this and that." They wouldn't stop and say, "Wow, what should I do," and not worry about sinking. "What should I do here to keep afloat?" They just kept a level head. So, let's just say, for thirty seconds, stop and pause for thirty seconds. If it's going to happen within thirty seconds, there ain't nothing you're going to do to prevent it anyway. So, you just stop for thirty seconds and say, "Well, what's my best option here? We can let the boat sink and get out and swim or we can try to fix the leak. We'll find out where the source of the leak is, evaluate things real quick." You have to. It's like when you're outside and you're going for a couple of days. You might be working down south or something, and then the motor breaks down. What do you do? You've got to go through the whole system and find out what happened and hope you can get it going again. We did that the other day with this one. We had a sprocket break. We couldn't lift the doors and had nothing. We couldn't get anything back to the boat. Danny went down the engine room, and two hours later, he wound up getting the thing working. He just got lucky. He was able to clean – fishing spots. You have to do that by working with different people and keeping an eye on what they're doing or how they're getting stuff. You got to be pretty perceptive. When I was in Florida this winter, I got this guy to take us out on a shrimp boat.

NS: I am just going to – this dock is not – now, that one is moving. This one is stable, but I thought...

LK: Yes. Really, when I was down in Florida, I didn't know nothing about the shrimp business at all, but it was the same basic technology that we used in this stuff. It's just that it's itty-bitty webbing. It's like three-quarter-inch and one-inch webbing. So, I said, "All right. I won't be able to pull them as fast. It'd be harder to pull and work with and stuff like that, but I know what to expect, anyway." So, we got this little shrimp net. We went out with this guy first before we went and bought a net. Well, when I'd seen what they did, I was like, "God, this is a piece of cake. This is just what I'm used to." The first night, we went. We didn't catch anything the first night because we didn't know where to go. So, we went to this different place the second night, and we did just as good as the old guys that have been doing it for ten years. They were all like, "Who are these guys," because we're from out of town.

NS: Do you think this area is one of the harder areas to fish in?

LK: No, I don't think so.

NS: Different?

LK: I don't believe there are any harder areas than others. The only thing that makes it harder is really you and your outlook of the situation, really. Everything that you do on the water, more less, is hard. It's all hard work a lot of the time. You can't figure out what you make an hour or anything like that.

NS: Oh, that was your boat creaking. I thought something was wrong with my tape recorder.

LK: Yes, it does. When it's rubbing against a bump it's...

NS: Is this pretty much the standard boat you would use?

LK: Well, we used my dad's little killi boat, the little black boat there. It catches live bait, killis, and you sell them to bait stations, to fluke fishermen.

NS: Do you ever go lobster fishing?

LK: My father used to do that. That's really back-breaking.

NS: Did he make his own lobster pots?

LK: Yes.

NS: Do you have any of them around?

LK: There used to one or two around here. Good question, if there is anything...

NS: Once we are done talking, could we take a look?

LK: Yes, we could take a look around. I don't even know if there is any. I might have taken one home or something. I thought I had one home and I think we gave it away. I took it home for decoration around the side of the pool and stuff. I have lobster buoys on my fence, all kinds of different stuff.

NS: Really?

LK: Yes.

NS: Do you find that fishermen do that a lot?

LK: No, I just do it for decor.

NS: Have you ever been to Al Grover's house?

LK: Yes.

NS: He has got that huge anchor in front of his house.

LK: He's got all kinds of neat stuff. Matter of fact, he's gotten a lot of stuff from us over the years, like the Verity skiffs that he built himself. As a matter of fact, the last one he got, this big one that he hasn't produced yet, was my boat that I got from my father. The other boat that he produced, a twenty-eight footer...

NS: Was this an original wooden one?

LK: Yes.

NS: He has got it?

LK: Sure. The twenty-eight footer that he used for his fiberglass boat that he just copied and everything was my father's boat years ago, this old Verity skiff.

NS: Do you have any more Verity skiffs somewhere?

LK: No, we don't have any. Well, now, we have these big boats. These are three or four times the size of those.

NS: I am looking to see a real Verity skiff. I did not know he actually had one. I know he has got tons of fiberglass skiffs.

LK: At home, I probably have some pictures of them. I wouldn't know where to look...

NS: Well, I am going to ask him to see if he has got them stashed somewhere.

LK: Well, you ask him. You ask Al or his wife of pictures of the skiff that he used that was my father's. He's got to have pictures of the old (Perguina?) and stuff like that. I'm pretty sure that's the one he had. He had bought the other one that, as kids, the guy who used to own this place had, which is the twenty-six footer he managed, old guy Myron. So, he knows a lot about the history of this area too because he's been around here for years.

NS: I was talking him yesterday.

LK: Right. Matter of fact, he knows a lot more about the boat builders and that kind of stuff because he has really made it a quest going back to the old days, especially with the going-ons with his boats and stuff like that.

NS: Do you know anybody who makes rope?

LK: No.

NS: Do you buy it from one of your supplier?

LK: We'd just buy from a...

NS: Island?

LK: Island Fishing, either one of those places. We try not to deal with that because it's so expensive. We order a lot of stuff, different catalog places like that in Tennessee. There's places in Florida...

NS: Always amazing to me that a lot of these inland places who do not do any fishing make these things.

LK: Well, you would be surprised. Down in the south, there's a lot of catfish farming. People say, "What? Catfish farming?" I was checking into all that stuff.

NS: Well, they have a little lake where they raise them and fish hatcheries.

LK: Yes, it's the same basic thing. Well, this is freshwater, and they raise catfish in pens. There's nothing big about it. Catfish live in any kind of freshwater. Catfish, they clean the pond. They would survive on only algae and stuff like that. So, these guys got a pretty good racket going. These farm-raised catfish is getting them pretty decent business now.

NS: Is there a bug crawling on me? I just thought there was an ant about to crawl in my eye. [laughter]

LK: No. You get used to the bugs down here. It's not even bad yet.

NS: I know. I grew up in Mamaroneck and on the sound. So, it is pretty much the same story, I guess.

LK: You don't get as much wind out in summer. We get the nice breezes.

NS: Oh, it is terrible for sailing.

LK: Yes, it's like the desert. [laughter]

NS: When you get the wind, it is always blowing from the northwest. So, you go south real fast and then spend the rest of the day tacking back. [laughter]

LK: We used to do a lot of dragging up there in the sound, like on Smithtown Bay. Way up in that way, and east of there, up to Mattituck, as far up in there, New London, all through there in the sound, it used to get hot. We used to call it the desert because there was never no wind up there. All day long, you'd be hot as hell. You are guaranteed to be burnt.

NS: When you would go out, did you ever sing any songs or do any of that stuff that fishermen is supposed to do? [laughter]

LK: It depends. Sometimes, you start catching fish real good, everybody gets in a crazy mood because they're like, "Wow, look at this." Things are just going astronomically. You're like, "Wow, it doesn't happen like this all the time." So, you're appreciating a good moment out of it like that. Sometimes, you get a little jolly. You start carrying on doing stupid things. It's just funny.

NS: Like that.

LK: Oh, I know, just stupid things. Whatever comes to mind once in a while, getting your crazies.

NS: Climb the mast pole or something like that?

LK: No, nothing like that. Well, once in a while, swinging around on one of the ropes or something, stuff like that. Sit there and antagonize everybody or something.

NS: [laughter]

LK: "I got the big one," something like that, and then you get the biggest fish out of there.

NS: What is the biggest fish you ever caught?

LK: Well, Danny has the biggest codfish that was caught in New York. It was like ninety-six pounds. That was big. Him and Al Grover caught that. Matter of fact, Al's probably got some good pictures of that. That was caught with the old set lines. You bait each hook on them, and they're tied on a big main line. I believe he still does that.

NS: How about yours, the biggest fish you ever caught?

LK: The biggest ones I've had were about sixty-five pounds. I had a big one, but it got broke loose. I don't know how big it actually was. But it was the biggest fish that I ever had, but I couldn't estimate how big it was. But it was enormous.

NS: I once went bluefish fishing and caught one that was so big it broke the rod. [laughter]

LK: Tuna fishing and stuff like that, I catch a lot of fish that are a hundred, 110 pounds. They'll walk you around on the boat. It's not like walking a dog. They beat you up. I caught three fish, and they had me beat. I couldn't catch no more. Then I went to bigger reels and stuff like that and it wasn't as bad.

NS: Do you have any of the old fishing rods, the bamboo ones?

LK: No, I never used anything like that. They don't really use that kind of stuff around here.

Really old-time stuff is still pretty much the way stuff was – as it is now, it was then. But it's just that they have marketed different types of stuff a little bit. But everything is pretty much the same. It's just different equipment types and stuff than fancy-looking stuff. Everybody's got to have high-finished things now. It's going to be ultra glossy and stuff.

NS: I think that is about it. This is the second interview with Lenny Koch about bay houses on May 27th, 1987. You said that pretty much most of the people who went out to Meadow Island – you call that Smith Island?

LK: We call where the beach was, where the monument is, our names. But they have it on the map. I guess that's Meadow Island, I guess. I don't really know. But we always called it Scott's Beach on one side and Smith's Island on the other, right?

DK: Yes.

LK: So, that's why when you said Meadow Island, I said, "Where the hell is Meadow Island?"

DK: You got a tomb over there. You've got a tomb, Smith's tomb.

LK: Yes, I was [inaudible] the other day.

NS: So, there it is, called Meadow Island.

DK: I think it's still there, yes.

LK: See, I was over here. So, this is High Meadow. That's West High Meadow. That's where my house is. It's right on the point right here. So, it's West High Meadow. I thought it was High Meadow.

NS: Did we go to Meadow Island or West High?

LK: We went to Meadow.

NS: Most of the people who were out there were Freeporters?

LK: Well, from this basic vicinity. Maybe Baldwin, Freeport, Rockville Center, like that, I guess. Maybe a few from Hempstead. Years ago, it's hard to say, because these areas weren't built up as much as they are now. With everything on the waterfront now, it's just like, "Forget it." It's not like it was years ago where people had lots next to their houses and everything. There is no lot. They don't exist anymore, or very, very few.

NS: I guess with all these...

DK: What did you say? Lot?

LK: Huh?

DK: Lot? I didn't get you.

LK: Building lots. Everybody used to have...

DK: [inaudible].

LK: Years ago, everybody had lots next to their houses and whatnot around here. This all used to be lots all over there, the whole thing.

NS: Let us talk about bay houses. How would you get a bay house?

LK: Well, most people that had them built them. You'd get a lease from the Town of Hempstead. They paid – it was like \$100 a year, the lease on the property. But you only owned the house. You didn't own the property. That's the whole idea of the lease. But anyway, I guess they started building them – what, I guess in the early [19]50s, like that?

DK: It's been a long time. It was old.

LK: I know my house was built around in [19]58. He used to come to my house the whole time.

DK: The only ones that they don't lease are the ones on Meadow Island. In theory, they own the land over there. But that's the only place.

LK: Well, that is actually leased too. That was a hundred-year lease.

DK: That was a lease?

LK: Yes. That was through the federal government, I believe. I don't know if it was through the state or the federal government. That was a hundred-year lease or a ninety-nine-year lease. That's why those houses – they can buy them and sell them because you can leave the house there and you can build them. You can do anything you want with them. That's what people are starting to do with them now. But as for these other ones that you see on the marshes around here, the local houses, those were supposed to be outdated years ago. What, 1980 I think it was or something?

DK: Around that.

LK: Now, they just go from year to year. They won't give you a five-year lease or a ten-year lease. Nothing. Now, it's strictly year to year.

NS: What would be in a bay house?

LK: Just half of them have bare walls. It's just like a shack out on the Meadows, and you're swimming off the dock and barbecuing on. Just hanging out, nice and peaceful, relaxing.

DK: The people that have the bay houses don't leave anything of value. If they want to bring anything, they bring it out with them. They don't leave anything of value, because when they're not there, the kids break in the house and stuff. So, they can't leave anything of value in the house. They furnish it with huge furniture and stuff. They can't have anything that's any value because the kids would wreck it. There's people who would go out in the bay and then – vandals. They break into the house, wreck...

LK: Look what they used to do to my house all the time, right?

DK: Oh, yes.

LK: I mean, any days, they'll wreck my house sometimes. It happens to everybody. The kids on holiday seasons, they put their boat in the water for a day or two out there. "There's nobody out here. Let's go see. Let's go break into this house." They think they're getting away with something. Although there's nothing there, but they're just going to be vandals, that's all.

NS: How many rooms are in a bay house?

LK: Well, they all range from one to three or four, five, like that. Mine was, what, five rooms? Yes, five rooms.

DK: You had a big one.

NS: What were those five rooms?

DK: One of the big ones.

LK: I had a eighteen by twenty-two screened-in porch, all nice with the furniture.

NS: You had the dimensions in there. [laughter]

LK: Oh, yes. Well, I had quite the nice house. Mine wasn't your average bay house, right, Bob?

DK: Yes.

LK: It's all nice and paneled and everything. Nice picture windows and everything. Nice, nice house. I had a bedroom downstairs, a small bedroom.

DK: It had a big porch on it.

LK: Yes, I was just saying that. Eighteen by twenty-two. Then I had a big outdoor deck out back that was big enough to put a (bad bittencourt?) on. This is all lumber over the Meadows. Out back further, I had the outhouse with a shower in it and everything else.

NS: With a shower?

LK: Oh, sure. I had a classy house.

NS: It was an outdoor shower?

LK: No, it was indoor.

NS: What?

LK: Regular showers, door, everything. Though, at the time, we didn't have hot water because I didn't have a water heater. Although, I could have put one in. I could have put a gas hot water heater in or something like that. But at least I had about a four-hundred-gallon tank, and then I put it up on a rack, up above it. It was just gradually fed.

NS: You just pulled a cord?

LK: No, you just turned the valve on and water would come out like that. But you had to put water in it all the time.

NS: Is it just one big room inside the house where you...

LK: Well, I had a regular living room. Then I had a little kitchen off the side of that. Then I had a big loft bedroom upstairs. Then the loft bedrooms slept about eight or nine people, right?

DK: Yes.

LK: It was big. I had a big house.

NS: Was it mostly men who went out there?

LK: No. Well, most people, for instance, we only used the houses during the summer. It was nice out in the summer. It was nice and cool, cool nights and stuff. It was quiet, peaceful. My house, on the other hand, we used all year long. I had lots of different friends anywhere at the house. I'd have all kinds of friends stop over all the time, because there's not too many new people who have houses. So, it's a pretty unique thing when you have a house. But my house was rather nice. They would all come out, and the next thing you know, there would be fifteen of us there. Everybody would be sitting in the sun, having cocktails, and barbecuing, just having a good old time, especially on the weekend. We might go clamming right from the house. Right up in front of the house, just walk right off the dock, fishing, everything.

NS: How many houses were out there?

LK: Where mine was, right on there on West High Meadow, when it was – through over the years, I know there was at least fourteen more than what's there right now.

NS: How many are there now? About six?

LK: Now, it's down to four or five. Let's see, Maddie's house, two, three, four, five houses. Yes, five houses left.

NS: Now, were these houses also passed down in the family?

LK: Yes. The law states that you're not allowed to sell them outright to another person. So, what you would do is you would lease it to somebody, but it's all just hush under the table. The guy still owns the place who originally owned it. If you go to change them to somebody else's name, they'll take the house down.

NS: But pretty much, if somebody wanted to lease it to somebody else, it would be somebody they knew?

LK: Yes. It's a friend of a friend, definitely. There's so many people who would want one, but you have to know somebody to get one. It's almost impossible to get one, especially now, where there's less and less of them. Very limited.

NS: You said that your house is pretty nice. What would a more typical house be like?

LK: Like a regular old shack. One-room shack, two rooms, like that. A little porch, maybe, a dock. Just like a regular old shack. Nothing fancy. Just look halfway decent outside. Have a fresh water well. Usually, they have a little sink or a little kitchen in there. Just anything, whatever somebody decides to build. Depends how elaborate you wanted to build it. The one I had, a friend of mine built. But he only excused weekends and whatnot. So, he was not a baymen enough. Well, he was always on the bay, but he never worked the bay or anything like that. So, this was just like a weekend place for him to go out and hide out. Him and his wife and the kids would go out, maybe we would be swimming, water skiing, crabbing, clamming, fishing, like that, just all that recreational good-time stuff.

NS: Some people said that they would go duck hunting out there.

LK: Yes, we used to do that with the guys in the winter. It was nothing for us to be out on the weekend and have fifteen or eighteen of us hunting. It would sound like a war. It would sound like a real live war going on around the area because you hear us all shooting.

NS: [laughter] Everyone shooting.

LK: Yes, everybody would be shooting in different areas. It was kind of funny. But we used to go shooting and stay out in the middle of the winter. We had a potbelly stove for heat. It used to get that place roasting hot.

NS: That must have been also a kind of situation where it was like only men, no women around.

LK: No. Well, Chris used to come out with me all the time. My friend (Richie?), his wife, (Donnie?), used to come out. We had a lot of women come out to the house. They wouldn't go out hunting and stuff, but they would just be hanging around the house. It's like why should they

sit home and be miserable when we're all out having a good time?

NS: When you would go duck hunting and come back with all this duck, what would you do with it?

LK: Cook them and eat them.

NS: How would you cook them?

LK: Roast them. There's all kinds of different ways. We'll have just the breasts, fillets and stuff. Sometimes, you make them with biscuits and gravy, stuff like that. It depends. We used to take black ducks, and then we'd cook them. We'd roast them, put a little bacon on them, and maybe a couple slices of fruit or something. Then make some wild rice, stuff like that.

NS: Were these recipes things you learned from your father?

LK: No, just all around, whatever was handy or something, we'd throw in the pot, make a big old stew.

NS: Was there somebody who was always picked to do the cooking?

LK: No, not really. But I used to do a lot of the cooking because I went to school for four years to be a chef. So, cooking was no big thing. Plus, a lot of people just throw a whole bunch of shit together and expect to eat it. I'm like, "Forget that." [laughter]

LK: Well, you remember, right? We made some elaborate meals out of our house, right?

DK: Oh, yes.

LK: We had baked clams and fried clams. You name it, all kinds of filet fish, spaghetti and meatballs. There was nothing for us to roast a turkey or something, but we had a regular full-service house. We'd make lasagnas, pizzas, you name it. Anything we wanted to make, we could make it. So, we had good freshwater and stuff. Everybody says, "Wow, I didn't know you used spring-fed water for coffee." It's all natural, ain't it?

DK: Yes.

LK: When I went there, I would go out and buy a bottle of [inaudible] cup of coffee.

NS: Bet you made a lot of friends having a bay house out there.

LK: Yes. You get to know everything about the bay too, because you're living right out there with nature. We had pet ducks come into the house and everything.

DK: We used to hunt in Meadow Island.

LK: Yes. We used to walk right out from the house and go hunting.

DK: During the season.

LK: Yes, it was all during the hunting season. In the springtime, we'd always have baby ducks all around here. I said, "I'm going to be feeding them and stuff, keeping them as pets." Later on, you'd hope they'd fly away. You wouldn't know one duck from another.

NS: Look at all these bites. [laughter]

LK: Yes, a bunch of them.

NS: When you would go out duck hunting –care to join this conversation about duck hunting and bay houses?

MS: Who?

NS: You.

MS: I used to go duck hunting once in a while. Yes, I used to hunt.

LK: He used to make us all the decoys.

NS: Did your dad teach you?

MS: He used to go duck hunting with big waders on.

MS: He used to hunt when he was young.

MS: He used to go [inaudible].

NS: Who did you learn how to make decoys from?

LK: (Duck Duck Bon?)

MS: [inaudible].

NS: Was he a duck hunter? He just made decoys?

MS: He's a retired electrician. [inaudible]

NS: You pretty much use your own decoys when you go duck hunting?

MS: Huh?

NS: Do you use your own decoys when you go?

MS: Yes.

NS: How do you make yours?

MS: Well, I make them out of wood or wood cork. You can make them out of wood or you can make them out of cork. I haven't been working. I just can't find the time to do it. If I didn't have anything to do, I would. But I guess I got to open clams.

NS: Was it hard to learn?

MS: No, it's just a matter of work. Once you get the basics, [inaudible] some sandpaper and stuff. You need the time to do it. You know what I mean? I'm busy shucking clams all the time.

NS: I was talking about – I forget now. My memory is going – you said a lot of times when you would be waiting for the ducks, you would get kind of tired?

LK: Oh, yes.

NS: You said that when you got real tired, you would start telling stories about snakes instead?
[laughter]

LK: Well, I guess, you'd pick up a conversation after sitting there a few hours, because we used to – who knows, you'd talk about all kinds of different things. But it's just out hanging out or whatever.

NS: I mean, were there any particular stories that somebody always told?

LK: No, just like, "I remember years ago," stuff like that. "They used to shoot lots more ducks than we did. We don't earn nothing." We're all kids and they're all old. They've been around for years and everything. But now, it's like, "Move over, Jack, because the young kids ain't the young kids anymore." The old guys are real old now, so they don't do it no more either. But I guess it's like with everything and everybody. There's younger people all the time, and they're going to come in and do it later on too. The sea has changed, but a lot of things still remain the same, basically.

NS: When you would go out to the bay house, is there a certain time of year when there would be – I am thinking farmers always have a harvest party. Is there something like that at the bay house?

LK: No. We would have a lot of parties at different houses, but not like 4th of July parties, stuff like that. Once in a while, we would do stuff like that. I think you were at the house when we had the 4th of July party.

DK: Yes.

LK: We were at the Meadows and the party with the fireworks. We had a couple of those big

mortar bombs, and one of them just went [sound effect] and just dropped out of the pipe. It didn't shoot up in the air. It blew up all over the ground and started a whole mess. There's like seventy-five of us out at the house. It all stretched out from in the house, out on the docks, everywhere – on the boats, everywhere around the house. Everything, the ground was orange from all the fireworks.

NS: Would you have like a clam bake?

LK: Yes, all kinds. We make clam fritters. Everybody brings stuff, so it used to be good. Everybody would bring us their coolers, a whole load of different stuff. Later on, all of a sudden, people would say, "Oh, we're hungry." All of a sudden, everybody starts putting everything together. It's just like a big old thing, like one of those old country barbecues, something like that. That was always a lot of fun.

NS: Were there certain things that the men always took care of and things that the women did?

LK: Yes. Well, we used to leave all the cleaning to the women, and they will do the cooking and all that kind of stuff. Us guys, because it was the winter time – like I was saying, we'd go out in the winter a lot. We'd go out in the daytime. We'd all go out cocktailing and whatnot. We'd take a big boat and a little boat with us. We might go down to Scott's Beach or something and look for firewood. We'd do that for maybe three or four hours, five hours like that, and we'd all be getting a buzz on as we're picking up firewood. We would pick up enough firewood for two or three months in one day. So, it was like an adventure. All of us were out and about. It was all the guys were playing with the guys, and all the girls were playing with the girls, like that. We always come across different things. There's driftwood. You never know. There's always something.

NS: You said that you would put a driftwood up in your entire house?

LK: Yes, it made one of the rooms. In the bay house, had the whole watches all done with panel, wood-made panel.

NS: How did you do that?

LK: Just by overlapping one piece over another. It was all different and we just cut the ends.

NS: Did you nail them?

LK: Yes, we nailed them up. It looked just like regular paneling. It's just like how you put shingles on a house. We just overlapped the boards one over another. If the house was there, I'd take you right there and show it. It was still there last year. The hurricane took it away. So, so much for that place.

LK: Bay house always...

NS: Have you thought about building another one?

LK: You're not allowed to.

NS: They do not let you replace them?

LK: No, not at all. It's totally off limits now. Otherwise, I bet you there'd be condos and everything out there. It would be nice. If I could have another house, I would. I'd love to. I'd put it in the back of the bay, where you can only get there at high tide or something like that, just so you don't have the basic traffic running through it. It's nice and quiet. It'd get buggy, but that's why I had screens for every window, stuff like that.

NS: Can you go out there though, because you know pretty much the people over there?

LK: Well, I know people have houses, but I don't go to them. Now, I usually go over into beach house out on Fire Island or something like that. My little brother has a condo on Fire Island now, so I go there a lot. That's nice, because I spend the weekends down on the beach and whatnot. I'm always around the water. When I go to the Hampton Bays, I have an apartment there. So, I stay there. It's nice. I'm always around the water. I see what's going on all up in the island more or less too. So, it's different. It takes me away from here. So, you see different things.

NS: One of the things that intrigued me though is the fact that you knew everybody. You knew exactly whose house...

LK: Well, you do. You know a lot of people and stuff like that, but you don't really hang out with them. But you'll see them in a restaurant or a bar and say, "Hello, how are you doing?" Stuff like that. It's just like a common thing. You grow up in the neighborhood where everybody gets around – where anybody has anything to do with the water, anyway.

You know this guy from this boat yard and this guy from that boat yard. Well, this guy keeps his boat at that guy's boat yard, stuff like that. You run into people. You just wind up meeting more people here and there.

NS: You say there is a certain loyalty among the fishermen.

LK: Yes. So, I guess that's sort of like honor among thieves. [laughter]

There isn't any. If there's some kind of big thing going on with the village or something, everybody will jump in on a bandwagon like that. But as in general, everybody does their own thing. You try to pretty much maintain yourself to your own thing, because nobody really wants to tell you what they're doing. I have good friends that will tell me what they're really doing, but only at certain times. A lot of guys won't give you the time of day also. So, you treat them just like they treat you. That's what I do. If they're nice to me, then I'm nice to them. A lot of them, I don't care about anyway. But a lot of nice people...

NS: Does that stop out at the bay houses where everyone is always there for each other?

LK: No, but guys will come down and give you a hand if you need one. With my house, a lot of my friends – I'd say, "I'm having a work weekend." You know what I mean? "Bring some hammers with you, light tools," stuff like that. "If you got any spare lumber around, bring it out." Somebody would always come by or somebody would be redecorating their house and said, "Well, I got a couch," or something like that, "Well, bring it on out. Bring it down to the dock and we'll bring it out," stuff like that. A few of them, yes. I have to ask different friends, because different friends have different pictures and stuff like that. A lot of them, I don't even know what they have. But I can ask around a little bit. I have a voice myself somewhere.

NS: How did you get out there? I mean, the only way to get out there was by boat?

LK: Yes, strictly by boat. I had a friend of mine that had one of those ultralight planes that goes buzzing in and out. We liked to die. We didn't know anybody were one of them. I think I'm sailing on it or sail right around the house and sail twenty foot over the dock and yelling at everybody. We were like, "Look who it is." Then it comes splashing down in front of the house. So, that's a little extraordinary. In the summertime, everybody's got their work boats. But then again, everybody's always got little toys too. Now, a lot of people have jet skis and whatnot. Back then, I had a race boat. A friend of mine had a little race boat. He had a house on the other side of the bank. We used to run back and forth all night long from house to house. Everybody would be cocktailing at my house, and "Let's go over and visit Frankie." We'll all steam on down to his house. We'll be up there in fifteen or twenty minutes and stay there for a couple hours. "Let's go to Jimbo's house." His house is on the other side of the bay, too. Then they head to Carson who's down on one side. There's lots of people that had houses. Especially on weekends, there's a lot of people around. So, he would be going by, and everybody, "Hey, let's go see him." So, we'd just stop to dock, and all of a sudden, everybody walks right on in. You're looking at a big barrage of people coming aboard.

NS: Were there ever any conflicts between families, different kinds of families?

LK: No, unless there were some personal things. But nothing that I can recall.

NS: No age-old feuds I should know about?

LK: No, not that I know. Do you know of any age-old feuds?

DK: No.

LK: I've never heard of nothing like that.

NS: Where most of the people that had bay houses – were they baymen or were they also ocean people?

LK: Some of them were. They were just people who just were out in the boats all the time and figured out – when they were made available leases, I guess they decided to do something with them. Not everybody had them and not everybody wanted them. Everybody was like, "What,

am I going to build a house out in the middle of the sticks – on the sticks out in the middle of the marsh?" The weather takes a toll on stuff out there tremendously. The wood rots left...

NS: Really?

LK: Oh, sure. Oh, we used to replace our dock all the time. Every time we're out there, we would fix some one piece or another. We'll paint and something. I always kept logs up pretty well. Logs always looked pretty good, right?

DK: Oh, yes.

LK: It's a big house. I mean, I had rugs and everything in my house. [laughter] But it didn't have like a full carpet. So, what I had was throw rugs all over the place.

NS: Wayne Carman said that his house was a big fancy place. He got very upset when I called it a bay shack. I think he yelled at me.

LK: A house, a shack, it's all the same thing out there. It's just some kind of structure on top of the Meadows. My house wasn't a shack either, but it's still – a lot of people called them shanties. Everybody's got a different pronunciation. Some people just like to be a little bit...

NS: Is there ever some guy who designed a shack or a house and spent a lot of money on it, or is it all pretty much, if you want, you build your own house?

LK: Yes, everybody just did their own thing with them. You faced them different ways. A lot of guys didn't realize – if you were going to build a house, I wouldn't want a house that would have a southerly exposure for the sunlight and stuff like that. A lot of people don't realize things like that. So, you can see, back then, I don't think a lot of people realized that either. That's why it could be in the middle of the winter, and when you were sitting on my porch in my bay house, it was seventy-five, eighty degrees inside the porch. It was like a big sunroom with all the winters we had. But at night, it was very cold, too, because there was cracks in the floors and stuff like that from the boards, because they swell and contract.

NS: When people first came to New England back in the eighteenth century, they always built their houses with a southern exposure.

LK: Right, for just that reason, just having natural heat from the sun.

NS: Were all the houses frame houses?

LK: Yes, they were all basically a frame house. Then maybe they'll put a little addition on one side of it next to it, and a couple years later, they might add another room to that. A lot of them did stuff like that. They'd build a deck and then put a structure on top of it.

NS: I would imagine that was also the first time that, when you were growing up, you saw an outhouse, because the houses around here all had bathrooms.

LK: Yes, that's true. Every bay house had an outhouse. More or less, it was just a toilet seat with a bucket under it or something. [laughter]

NS: Was it somebody's job to get rid of that stuff?

LK: Well, we used to say anybody who used it unloaded it.

NS: This is pretty disgusting, I know.

LK: Oh, yes. It gets to be like that sometimes. But everybody has to do a little bit to help too. So, all hands have to help.

NS: Another more personal thing. Was this kind of the place when you were growing up where you bring your girlfriend?

LK: Oh, yes. We used to do that stuff all the time. [laughter] We'd be out there with a couple of six packs or something like that. Now, see, my parents didn't own this house then. It was a friend of mine that I used to go to school with it. His parents had it, and he had a bad accident. He never used it during the winter. But even when he had his accident, he wasn't as agile as he had used to be. He had to scoot up his legs and everything. So, you got to be pretty agile out there if you get stuck in the mud or something like that and run aground. You need to get pushed...

NS: Really? You would get stuck in the mud out there?

LK: Sure. How many times did we –

DK: Oh, it happens all the time

LK: – go to cross the creek and sink right up to your waist in mud or something? I've had to throw my gun on the bank and crawl through the mud to get out because you would sink. You would sink right up to here. I lost my boots in the mud, all kinds of stuff.

NS: Ever lost a boat in the mud?

LK: No. Well, it won't sink. A boat won't sink in the mud. But I've had like my motor get stuck in the mud. I come out in the morning and I see my boat had sunk because the motor's stuck in the mud and the water just came right in and held the back of it under. Remember my little green boat, right?

DK: Yes.

LK: My little green race boat I had, this one was fast. It's like a part-time pirate boat for clamming and whatnot – clamming illegally at night and stuff. [laughter] We used to do all kinds of stuff. This was all years ago. I mean, it's still done today, but not like it was.

NS: Were these soft clams you would go after?

LK: No, we got hard clams, little necks and cherries and chowders, everything.

NS: It is different than on one of these boats.

LK: Oh, yes. Well, it's just with a garvey or something. Mine was just more or less for a chase boat or something like that. If Conservation would come, I'd just be sitting there waiting while everybody was clamming. I would take off and draw the attention away from everybody else, and they would all cut away a different one. That's really all I managed to do.

NS: You had to figure out ways not to draw attention to you.

LK: Now, they would say, "You didn't have your lights on" and this and that. I'd say, "Oh, yes. Well, I have them. I just didn't have them on." You go to court and say, "Well, I forgot to put them on." So, they couldn't give you one for inoperable equipment or anything like that. You just play their little games.

NS: I did not know you used to go digging for clams. I thought you just used your boat. How did you learn to do that kind of stuff?

LK: I just grew up around it. You wanted to make a couple dollars, that's what you had to do. You had to work to make a buck.

NS: Is it very hard to learn?

LK: No, rather easy. It's just a matter of time. Just putting time in. You can't be afraid to get wet and dirty. That's all. That's how this whole business is. Everything is wet and dirty. [laughter] If you don't want to be wet and dirty, forget it. No matter how much you don't want to, even though you can wear all kinds of equipment, rain gear and stuff, you're still going to get dirty. Not as much, but it helps keep a little stain off.

NS: Had you ever thought about like working inside in an office?

LK: I did. I worked for a book company for a long time. I did that for about a year. I said, "Man, I'm just not happy here. I can't do this." My mind wasn't into it. My heart wasn't into it, nothing. So, I was just like, "I'm out of here." I had a good job, too. I was a chauffeur for a book company, for their owner. I did rather well working for him, but I just didn't like it. It wasn't me. I had to be outside. I tried all kinds of different jobs over the years, but I wind up always coming back to this. Other things will pay good money for a while, and all of a sudden, they peter out, too.

NS: It seems like there are also some real special things about working out here.

LK: Yes, you're your own person. It's not like you're going to sit there and punch a time clock.

I just get up in the morning, and whatever time I want to go, I go. If I don't want to go, I don't go. It's like somebody says, "Oh, I'm going to take the day off." Yes, you don't have to punch the clock today, huh? "Oh, but they're going to give me a hard time if I take off. I can't take an off day." I don't know. I couldn't hack that. I tried it and it didn't like it, so you live and learn.

NS: Would you say that there are some things that you have to really love in order to be in this business?

LK: You got to love the water. You got to have a good respect for it – very good respect for it. I like being around wildlife and stuff like that, too. That's a big part of it. There's not a day you can't go out in a boat and not see something different. We got some real nice wildlife here. You have different birds and ducks. Bob will tell you, we used to go out in duck boats and sit out there with duck stools – I don't even know if it wasn't hunting season – and shoot them with a camera. [laughter] People think would we were nuts.

NS: Really?

LK: Yes. People think we were nuts. We got photographic like you couldn't believe. You got to like the nature part of it. If you like nature, you'd love it. It's just like being in the mountains. A guy grows up on a farm, and he goes to the city and doesn't like it. "This isn't the farm."

NS: What do you think is probably the biggest problems you face in terms of this is what you love to do?

LK: The biggest problems that we face right now is pollution. Everybody says, "Yes, we'll do this. We'll do that about it." Nobody really does enough. Then they tell us we can't catch stuff because everybody else polluted it. We polluted a little bit too, I guess, to a degree. I mean, it's everybody's fault. Everybody's doing it and everybody has to help clean it up. Every year, they close more area for you to work on. So, it limits you more and more. Jeez, by the way they're going around here, I don't doubt – by the year 2000, I don't think there'll probably be any commercial fishermen left. They're dying off, and they're chasing them out.

NS: How many are here in Baldwin? Are you guys it?

LK: No, we're not the only ones. There's a couple guys over the next creek and a lot of independents, little guys. But I guess in Baldwin, there's probably twenty, twenty-five people, something like that. Freeport's got probably, what, thirty or forty, I guess?

DK: Quite a few.

LK: There's a lot of people. You don't see them around. They don't make it known that they're around, but there's quite a few.

DK: A lot of small boats, gillnetters. Gillnetters, they don't need as much of an investment.

NS: They just have to buy that one net.

LK: Well, it all depends what you're going to go for, the seasons, and if you can use that one all year. It's a lot of different things like that. There's all kinds of different factors in this business. It's so susceptible to change, and you have to be able to change with the times and the seasons and everything else. So, that's a big part of it. It's how to get the heaviest haul, if you're getting all the equipment, and have everything there ready to go. We'll come out with this boat, and we'll change all the gear right over. Tomorrow, we'll go fish for something totally different. It's another few hours' work, but that's what you have to do sometimes. We've changed everything over in this thing about three times in three weeks, and we go for stuff every – we just get this thing shaken down and set up. So, it's a matter of trial and error with a lot of different things. A lot of things aren't working our way. Different things would break.

NS: I guess, for you, being away, you have got to relearn.

LK: Well, no. It's not about relearning or anything like that, but things change. There might be a few new wrecks, there might not be. Somebody might have hit a wreck, broke a piece of it off, and dropped it somewhere. I've done that myself. It happens to everybody somewhere along the line.

NS: What about these sportsmen fishermen? Are they hurting...

LK: Well, there's certain times when there's a lot of fishing, and they sell a lot of fish to the markets and restaurants and it cuts the prices down on us. They're just making gas money. They can afford a five or \$600,000 boat, and they're worried about the \$30 for gas to run them.

NS: When I started, what were you pretty much catching? Just flounders?

LK: Some flounders and some whiting. Had a few squid. There's a lot of different things. You get a bunch of crabs and junk stuff, just crabs we caught.

NS: You ever catch an anchor?

LK: Oh, yes. One of the monster anchors, you mean?

NS: Yes.

LK: I've never caught any big ones. But I've caught little ones from small boats and stuff like that. A couple guys have caught them. I just haven't been so lucky yet. [laughter] I wouldn't want one anyway.

NS: Reason I asked is because some of the fishermen's houses...

LK: You see big anchors on the wall?

NS: Yes, and you ask them the story...

LK: I'd love to have one from my front lawn, but I hate to – there's so much trouble to get them. You have to just lay on them and try to pull them up without wrapping the boat and everything. They're big anchors. You got to usually lay on them and stuff like that.

NS: What other kinds of things would you put around your house, let people know you are a fisherman?

LK: Well, I don't know. I have a few sitting around my backyard – my whole decked-out yard where the pool is. I've got a bunch of lobster pots and lobster pot buoys. Well, I had lobster pot. I don't know where it went. I have an old channel marker.

NS: Is that pretty much most fishermen have something around the house?

LK: No, it's just decor. That's all we use it for. You find a buoy floating or something like that – my one friend (slops?) a boat out east one day. I said, "Wow, look at all these buoys." I said, "I need some of these." He's looking at me like, "For what?" For decoration in my backyard. He liked to die. He says, "All the stuff you got, and you need mine?" I said, "Yes. Well, these ones look crummy. They're all broken and worn out and stuff like that." That's why I need that look. Then I got signs different signs that you happen to acquire here or there. I always picked up signs.

NS: Could I see your place sometime? I would like a picture of it.

LK: Well, see, I had a clam right there. I have some of the buoys hanging on the fence. Plus I have like hanging pots all over the fences and stuff. It's not all set right now, so we'll wait a while. I got to start putting flowers in this week and everything. So, then it looks good, because then you can see it all comes together nice. I have little pieces of net hanging around and stuff like that. Just decor.

NS: It seems like every fisherman I have talked to has something.

LK: Yes. It sort of grows on you, I guess.

NS: It is like a way of saying when you are on land, "Well, this is my life."

LK: I have like a lot of natural sponges that I've caught down south. So, those would be in my yard this year.

NS: Do you have a particular way you like to arrange things?

LK: No, just accumulate it. Be it where it may. I space things out, but you wind up with a lot of different things. I just have some different shells. This one comes over and that one comes over. "Oh, I like this. Can I have this?" Sure, I can get another one. It happens all the time. There's one coin that I found, I wanted to make a chain out of it – a neck chain or something like that. It was a big coin. It was like that, so it's a little too big for a ring or an earring or something.
[laughter]

It's a coin from 1826.

NS: Wow.

LK: Silver coin, yes. Twenty gram silver coin.

NS: Where did you get it?

LK: I found that in the ocean. I found a bomb shell.

NS: It came in with one of the nets?

LK: I found it in a clam shell. Bob found some too, right?

MS: I found one.

LK: What year was yours?

MS: I think it was 1880.

LK: Mine's 1826.

MS: Really, [18]26?

LK: Yes. Supposedly, there was four years of coins.

MS: It's either 1830 or 1880. But most of them are 1880. That's probably where it is.

LK: I might have one a bit earlier.

MS: I can't be sure if it's a thirty or an eighty.

LK: Probably a thirty. There's four years. I have twenty-six, so it probably would be thirty. So, I believe they run for four consecutive years from twenty-six to thirty. At least that's the history I got on them so far. But nobody really knows anything about this stuff.

MS: I looked at it and I said, "Well, maybe it's a thirty." But then I couldn't be sure.

LK: It's just one piece. You don't know if it was the coin maybe some sailor had in his pocket or if it was a shipwreck that might be full of change. You don't know unless you really go down and look. I don't know.

NS: Do you ever get any modern-day pirates asking if you found any wrecks?

LK: Oh, yes. We get people asking us for wreck numbers and stuff. I don't give them nothing.

One of these days, maybe I'll go out there and look around. I'm not going to volunteer or whatever. It's my luck. Somebody will give them a wreck, and I'd go out there and find ten million in treasure. They'd be like, "Oh, yes, we remember you, you jerk," something like that. I'll help people to a point, but I'm not giving them nothing. But nothing was ever given to me. I worked for what I got.

NS: You get a lot of people just trying to get a free ride.

LK: Yes, we got lots of people like that. A guy buys a boat and thinks he bought the property that it sits on. They figure, "All right. You got wreck numbers. Why don't you give me a bunch?" I caught these things in a net. It cost me thousands of dollars over the years with stuff getting damaged and stuff like that. Hitting these things, that's how I found them. You got to go find them yourself too. You go buy some of these trucks and stuff.

NS: You ever get people, when you come in with your fish and stuff, asking if they can buy it, or do pretty much sell it?

LK: Well, we sell it to a lot of wholesalers, but we...

NS: Sell your fish to your set places.

LK: Well, we have a lot of customers, and we're always trying to find a few new ones. We can always deal with Fulton Market. That's been a place for years. But we try to move stuff around ourselves if we can, try to keep things going on in the neighborhood. But you don't realize how much of the economy you really do help, because not only are we making money off this product, but the guy in the restaurant's making money off the product. He's paying the guys that he buys different things off of. So, there's all little things running down the line. It's one of those things where the economy does work. It's not that it's a great amount of money into the area or anything like that, but this has been a regular old thing for years. We're not setting the world on fire or anything like that, but we're existing. Some of us exist a little bit better than others at times. You have your up days and downs. You want to make more, you got to work a little more. That's all.

NS: The maritime traditions of Nassau County's South Shore stretches back to the 1600s when Hempstead was first settled by English and Dutch groups. The Carman, Raynor, Ellison, and Gildersleeve families came to Seaford, Freeport, and Baldwin and other towns because there were abundant fish and other kinds of wildlife in the bays and ocean. Like all fishermen, they built boats, decoys, fishing rods, and other necessary tools. They also built houses on the bay. As time passed on, parents taught their children valuable lessons on how to work the bay, how to handle any natural threat such as storms and hurricanes, and how to make the proper bayman's tools. These lessons have survived to the present day despite numerous changes in technology, settlement, and the environment. While the South Shore today is a densely populated suburb, the fishermen continue to practice various traditions of a time-honored profession. garveys and gunning boats were the two most common traditional boat types built on the South Shore. While the garvey was in fact imported to Long Island from New Jersey, it was well suited to the shallow bay waters like other traditional boats. The garvey is used by fishermen, eel trappers,

killi trappers, and other baymen. The gunning boat is only used in duck hunting. Occasionally, these boats were also used for recreation. The last traditional boat type on the South Shore is the Seaford or Verity skiff. Today, Al Grover of Freeport makes skiffs modeled after the Verity skiffs. Al Grover became famous by crossing the Atlantic Ocean in 1985 in one of his boats. The boat survived a major hurricane with hundred mile per hour winds. Grover broke the Guinness World Record for a transatlantic trip on the smallest outboard motorboat. In recent years, sport motorboats have overwhelmed the South Shore region. In Freeport Bay, there are over forty thousand boats docked. Miraculously, the garvey, gunning boat, and skiffs have survived. Yet boats are just one part of the maritime traditions. The bay house was and continues to play a major part of the fisherman's existence. The bay house was also a place where men could freely talk about the world situation, their business or their personal lives. The baymen also prepared lavish feasts. The bay has changed greatly since the 1700s when the first bay houses were built. Yet, there are still eel trappers, bait catchers, and duck hunters. While they are rare today, they continue to practice the traditions of past generations. Surprisingly, most of them are in their thirties and fifties. Here, we will examine three individuals from the Freeport Baldwin communities where the earliest fishermen settled. Like most baymen, Corey Weyant started fishing and working on the boats at an early age. After the eels are caught, they have to be cleaned and gutted just like fish. They are then soaked in brine – a combination of brown sugar, salt and water. Aromatic fruitwoods and hardwoods are used to smoke eels and other fish. Unlike most conventional business owners, Corey sells mostly to friends and acquaintances. Corey is one of a group which prefers to fish, clam, or duck hunt for their living, because his family taught him and because he enjoys it so long as it pays him. Like most baymen, Corey knows how to do a variety of related activities so that he can work year-round. A more seasoned bayman is Wink Carman whose family roots stretch back to the 1700s in Baldwin. Today, Wink carves decoys which he uses for duck hunting. Wink also makes show decoys which he sells to stores or gives to friends. The Koch family in Baldwin, like the Carman family, has lived off the bay for several generations. Danny and Lenny Koch currently run the family business, the last commercial fishing boat in Baldwin Harbor. Danny, like most baymen, catches various things later used for bait – horseshoe crabs, killifish, and green crabs are used to catch eels, bigger fish, or more kinds of bait. Danny catches killis which are sold in bait stores to catch larger fish. While humor plays a part in many fisherman's lives, danger is by far the strongest common element which baymen and ocean men alike have to deal with. Storms and hurricanes have claimed many lives. Elwood Verity of Baldwin, Danny and Lenny Koch's uncle, was one such person. As fierce as the bay can get, the ocean is a far more dangerous place, especially for the men who work on the small draggers – boats which pull nets along the ocean floor. Sudden storms and mechanical failures can mean death for a captain and his crew. On small dragger only two or three people go out. Tony Sougstad, captain of the *E.T.*, was once on the *David Bryant* when it sprung a leak at George's Banks in Rhode Island. A severe storm then hit the area, as Tony tells the story. Working on a dragger requires a wide variety of mechanical skills such as engine repair, installing equipment, and mending the nets. Most dragger fishermen learn these skills from older, experienced captains such as Frank Cona, whose family ran draggers in Italy. They must also learn where the good fishing spots are – a never-ending and ever-changing process. Just as baymen learn to build their traps and boats, draggers learn to splice cables, operate winches which pull in the nets, and install and lower trawl doors. They must also sort out the fish caught from all the other types of fish which are returned to the ocean. Because dragger fishermen must learn the same lessons, there is a common bond among

them. Yet, each must earn the respect of the others. As we have seen, there are many kinds of maritime traditions. From building garveys and skiffs, to clamming and eeling, to dealing with nature's threats, the maritime traditions are ever present on the South Shore area. Whether one is a bayman or a dragger, the traditions of past generations are passed down to today's small commercial fishermen. What unites all fishermen, however, is the love of nature and adventure. Yet larger issues threaten the maritime traditions on the South Shore. As development increases along waterfront communities and new residents buy high-speed motorboats, the bays have become extremely dangerous. As sports fishermen sell their catch to the markets, the price of fish drops for the commercial fishermen, thus decreasing their yearly income. Finally, the number of fish is declining so that what used to be caught in an hour now takes a morning or an afternoon. All of these factors jeopardize the traditional baymen and draggers' way of life. Despite these problems, they continue to work the bay and the ocean. After the eels are caught, they have to be cleaned and gutted, just like fish. They are then soaked in brine – a combination of brown sugar, salt, and water. Aromatic fruitwoods and hardwoods are used to smoke eels and other fish. Yet larger issues threaten the maritime traditions on the South Shore. As development increases along waterfront communities and new residents buy high-speed motorboats, the bays have become extremely dangerous. As sports fishermen sell their catch to the markets, the price of fish drops for the commercial fishermen, thus decreasing their yearly income. Finally, the number of fish is declining so that what used to be caught in an hour now takes a morning or an afternoon. All of these factors jeopardize the traditional baymen and draggers' way of life. Despite these problems, they continue to work the bay and the ocean.

MS: The skiffs were things you had to respect as a kid, because people [inaudible]. You had to respect the boat because it was capable. To fish with no radios, no electronics, with no depth [inaudible] they always managed to come home and [inaudible]. It's sort of a way of life. It still exists some places, but not too much. It was an independent way of making a living.

NS: How many traps do you put out?

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

NS: Do you make your own traps?

MS: [inaudible]

NS: The way you make them, is that pretty much the way your grandfather made them?

MS: [inaudible]

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

MS: [inaudible] clams. I catch crabs. Probably some crabs, eels.

NS: Are these blue crabs?

MS: There's a lot of eels.

MS: These crabs are blue crab [inaudible] in the bay business and ocean business. There are a few generations...

NS: Where do you get your horseshoe crabs from?

MS: I catch them on my dragger. I just pick them up out in the bay [inaudible] making them fall out.

NS: How many traps do you put out?

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NS: Do you make your own traps?

MS: Yes.

NS: The way you make them, is that pretty much the way your grandfather made them?

MS: Yes. They all like that. I don't.

NS: What other kinds of things do you catch in the bay? Did you build that boat that we were on?

MS: Yes, I built a bunch of them.

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

MS: I was only about sixteen or seventeen. There was a bunch of them. Look this way. That one that we passed, that black one going in here, I made that one there. The other one down the creek was (Joey Heard?), I made that one. Another one over on Freeport that looks like Mark's with a little higher bow – I mean, built about a half a dozen of them.

NS: Wow, that is a lot of boats.

MS: Not really.

NS: Are they all Garveys?

MS: Yes, all twenty-footers, sixteen-footers, seventeen-footers, and nineteen-footers, one every size. This is a little sixteen-footer.

NS: I mean, it seems like everyone I have met has built a Garvey.

MS: Yes, you can build garveys, and you can build nice Garveys.

NS: What is the difference?

MS: Well, the lines on them, the way drive and they ride.

NS: If there is just a little curve, is that considered a good garvey?

MS: A lot of curves, more than anything.

NS: How come?

MS: Because they ride higher. They ride drier. They carry more clams. They're not wet. They don't bounce when they go across the water. They drive nice and straight.

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[end of transcript]