

Nancy Solomon: Who taught you? Your father?

Rick Verity: Yes, my father.

NS: That was Elwood?

RV: Yes.

NS: He had been doing your work in the bay?

RV: Yes. His father before that caught lobsters.

NS: What was your grandfather's name?

RV: William, Bill.

NS: Bill Verity?

RV: Yes. They call him Ike.

NS: How come?

RV: I don't know.

NS: That is just a name?

RV: Yes.

NS: Do you have a nickname?

RV: No.

NS: No?

RV: Rick.

NS: So, they call you Rick. Is that your given name?

RV: Yes, Rick Verity.

NS: How old were you when you first started going out on the water?

RV: I don't know. About three to four years old. I just sleep while my father was just raking clams around Patchogue.

NS: Breaking clams?

RV: Raking clams.

NS: Raking clams.

RV: Patchogue but we used to call it [inaudible]. Now, we moved out here. Then that's when I really started because we don't live on the water in Blue Point. Ever since we came here, I started.

NS: How old...

RV: Since third grade. I started going out treading at fourth grade.

NS: Did your dad teach you that?

RV: I don't know. I just learned myself.

NS: How did you know where to...

RV: He showed me where to go. That's simple. Where can I yield for the clams, that's all.

NS: Did you wear anything on your feet or...

RV: Some places you go. It depends what type of bottom you're in. There's a lot of crabs and horseshoe crabs and whatnot in the bottom then we're going to wear boots. If it's nice and soft and muddy, let's go barefoot because you can feel them better.

NS: I hear it is pretty soft?

RV: Yes. Well, straight across the bay, it's still a hard bottom. But I go up west to [inaudible] in the meadows. There is a nice soft bottom there.

NS: Is it pretty much most people go clamming with you in the meadows?

RV: Yes.

NS: Where did your dad rake clams?

RV: I don't know. He used to a good fifteen years. He hasn't raked clams. He raked down Patchogue. Then usually he go and rake up Baldwin with that until they closed on the west end of the bay down.

NS: When did that happen? Do you remember?

RV: About fifteen, twenty years ago, it must be.

NS: So, about early [19]60s?

RV: Yes.

NS: What year were you born?

RV: [19]68.

NS: So, it must be early [19]70s.

RV: Yes.

NS: What were some...

RV: I was born before. So, that has already been closed before I even was born. When they found it, we moved out east. Then my father started working out there. He wants to get a house on the water, so we moved out here. Then he started eeling. I cried out back here. This whole place used to be full of eels.

NS: Really? [laughter]

RV: But no more.

NS: Most people when they catch eels and they use traps, did you go jacking for eels or were you combing for eels.

RV: No, comb.

NS: You combed for eels.

RV: Yes, comb with pot to trap them.

NS: Did you make your own traps?

RV: Everybody is going to make their own traps.

NS: How do you make yours?

RV: First thing, I just get wire, wood, hammer, nails, and still hammer.

NS: [laughter] Where do you get the wood from?

RV: Around the house.

NS: Is there any particular kind of wood you use?

RV: I don't know. Pine for the frames, then oak lath.

NS: Any particular reason why?

RV: Because the oak holds it up. But the pine, you can get away with it on the nozzles for the frames because the wire is holding that altogether.

NS: Is there a particular design you use? I know some people have a single funnel. Some people have double funnel.

RV: Yes, we used double funnel. Now, we're using the front nozzle. We've got two nozzles in the front and then the back nozzle. It is made out of webbing. They are not wired.

NS: Wire. You called that a double funnel?

RV: Yes, that's a double nozzle.

NS: Double nozzle?

RV: Yes, two nozzle. Well, it's really three nozzle because now...

NS: Right, because that middle one in between.

RV: Yes, because first, the traps I used to make it based off the two nozzles. They had the front nozzles made out of webbing and then the back nozzles webbing. But now instead of that, they make little wire ones on the sides, see that one, two, and then you get a three. They go into first nozzles, eat the bait, and then they go through the back nozzle and they couldn't get back up. Because it's close tight, they slip in but they can't go back up.

NS: How come you changed the way go?

RV: To save time on building the traps.

NS: This one worked better?

RV: Not necessarily. They only save time, I guess, on building traps.

NS: How long did it take you to make this kind of...

RV: That will take about good ten hours into each trap.

NS: Wow.

RV: From scratch, from starting the trap until you got to tape your webbing, cut out your webbing, saw that together, and then pack it all on the frame. It's a little tedious but it's got to be done.

NS: Is there a particular place you will get your webbing from or...

RV: I get most of my webbing from Memphis, a net company, stuff like that.

NS: So, you just ordered it. Do people used to make their own webbing?

RV: Yes, like gillnets and stuff. Gillnets, they all handmade.

NS: Is that something you know how to do?

RV: Yes, like it was. Well, I don't have it anymore.

NS: How do you make a gillnet then?

RV: First, you got to stretch out your lines, the float line and then the lead line. Then they got like a needle thing and then wrapped a twine around that. Then you just follow along with that.

NS: Is there a particular shape to a gillnet?

RV: Yes. Well, it comes out like this and then they all connect together, you know what I'm saying? So, that makes boxes when the fish pulled the net.

NS: Oh, it is like a Christmas tree shaped?

RV: Yes, just a regular square. Then when you stretch it, that's the way you measure the mesh. We have three-inch stretch, about two-inch stretch. That's the only way you can really measure to make sure your box is all the same. You measure it when you stretch it, you know what I'm saying?

NS: Yes.

RV: Looks like they finish this.

NS: What other kinds of things do you make to...

RV: Make eel traps or spearing nets.

NS: What are spearing nets?

RV: Shiners and snapper bait like hook shiners.

NS: Do you catch shiners out here in the bay?

RV: That's what I'm doing right now. I'm catching shiners.

NS: When is the season for that?

RV: They catch them all year round. If they want it, they chase it.

NS: But when do you go for shiners?

RV: I don't know, in the spring. We chased it all this summer.

NS: Is that when most people are catching shiners?

RV: Well, that's the only time I can really see them. That's when the bay back themselves, we'll take them. But then we catch them on a Christmas time a little bit then we sell them into the market and people eat them.

NS: Oh, really?

RV: Yes.

NS: Is this Fulton market or...

RV: Yes, Fulton.

NS: People do not eat them the rest of the time?

RV: No, not really, sometimes.

NS: Do you know why they only eat them in the winter?

RV: Yes, for Christmas in the market.

NS: Is that a tradition of Christmas?

RV: Yes, at this time, we just eat it.

NS: Really?

RV: Yes.

NS: I did not know that.

RV: They only been on harbor right around Christmas or so and on Jewish holidays sometimes if that's the only fish around to catch.

NS: What other kinds of things do you make? You mentioned killey traps.

RV: Yes, you go to make killey cars. I made everything.

NS: What is everything?

RV: Everything you see out there.

NS: Do you go eeling?

RV: Yes.

NS: So, there is killies and eels and then shiners.

RV: I catch killies in the summer, shiners in the spring, eels in the fall, eels in the spring, eels in the winter.

NS: [laughter] Do you go duck hunting?

RV: Yes.

NS: Yes, you do?

RV: I catch – I don't know, crabs, blue claws –

NS: Blue claws, stop.

RV: – king crabs.

NS: What kinds of traps do you build for the blue claws or do you go with a net?

RV: No, I make wire traps. I make these square big boxes.

NS: How are they...

RV: They will at least [inaudible]. I'll draw out the traps for you.

NS: Why did you not tell me?

RV: Instead of coming out to explain, I just draw a box and say what it looks like.

NS: How come you say that?

RV: This when I realized to build the most. This is how we sell along with a long ago, pots, traps.

NS: When do you build most of your traps?

RV: Anywhere after Christmas. I'm still working with traps right now. Without my killie traps,

I should not be where I am.

NS: [laughter] So, that is one of your killie traps.

RV: That's eel's.

NS: That is your eel trap.

RV: Then this is the killie traps. This one is a single nozzle.

NS: I mean, that is the design I have seen everyone use. How come?

RV: It works, so we use it.

NS: Is that what your dad used?

RV: Yes.

NS: Is that your crab...

RV: Yes, this is a crab trap,

NS: That is trap for a green crab or blue claw?

RV: Blue claws. That's it. No more there.

NS: Is there a particular name to that kind of trap?

RV: Square traps.

NS: Then for green crabs what would you use?

RV: For green grabs, we take the eel pots, open up the back nozzle, and we fill them out with green crabs.

NS: [laughter] Let us record those. You used this [inaudible] with eel trap.

RV: Yes, I use eel traps. Here, I'll do an eel trap for you.

NS: Sure. Now, one thing I saw at your uncle is there is a Winkel pot?

RV: Yes. I take those too.

NS: What are those used for?

RV: Scungilli.



NS: Squid?

RV: Scungilli.

NS: Scungilli. What is scungilli?

RV: Snails. You saw this snail?

NS: Oh.

RV: Yes. Those are very useful.

NS: Then there is a canary pot?

RV: Canary pot?

NS: You know what I am talking about?

RV: No.

NS: I mean, it might be something just your uncle uses. Is that where eel comes from?

RV: Well, I brought wood and I write out the wood to get aluminum heads made up from machinist. When I drilled out and everything, we take wooden dowels, put them in holes, drill them up, and then we turned ice picks and we soak them with [inaudible] for a while.

NS: How come you soak them?

RV: Makes the wood swell around the picks.

NS: Does that make it easier to pick up the eels?

RV: No, that makes the picks stay in the comb.

NS: That is what I was thinking about.

RV: Yes. This one's an eel trap.

NS: Winkel pot. It is wood on the outside and then metal on the inside. You learn to make all these things from your uncle and your dad?

RV: Yes.

NS: Wow. Are there any other kinds of traps you make? [laughter]

RV: Is there any other kinds? That's about it. It's just my kinds.

NS: That is your repertoire of traps, as they say?

RV: Yes.

NS: Now, have you ever built your own boats?

RV: No. Not move on [inaudible] some boats.

NS: Where you get your boats from?

RV: They are more made by both of us.

NS: By who?

RV: Ron Pickerell made one of them and then (Ollie Richter?) made the other two that I got.

NS: Where are they?

RV: Ollie in Freeport and this [inaudible].

NS: Ollie Richter?

RV: Yes, he lives in Freeport.

NS: Is he in any relation with (Mike Richter?)?

RV: I don't know.

NS: Is Ollie use his formal name?

RV: I'm not sure. I don't know. He's not related to Mike. Yes, that's his name.

NS: The other guy you mentioned, what his name?

RV: Ron Pickerell.

NS: Where is he?

RV: On north shore.

NS: Where?

RV: Port Washington.

NS: Both of these guys baymen?

RV: Yes.

NS: How can we know that they built their own boat?

RV: My father gave me those. [laughter] I had three boats my father built when he passed away.

NS: Wow. You still use them?

RV: Yes, every day for four years, I think more.

NS: Wow. What are they made of?

RV: Oak wood, mahogany wood.

NS: You mentioned that you go duck hunting. Do you make decoys or...

RV: No.

NS: So, where do you get your decoys from?

RV: I never did.

NS: You do not use decoys?

RV: No, I got whole bunch from my father. I got decoys that old ones as far as sixty, seventy years old.

NS: Wow. He made decoys?

RV: No.

NS: No?

RV: Because my grandfather gave it to him.

NS: Wow.

RV: Because of money he was bugging me for [inaudible].

NS: [laughter]

RV: I don't like decoys.

NS: How come? Are they good decoys?

RV: Yes. I think Dick Abbott down the [inaudible] made them.

NS: Wow.

RV: I think they got it there. They probably mentioned Dick.

NS: Oh, yes. He is kind of famous then. When you are first learning, where there a lot of mistakes that you made that...

RV: Yes. You make mistake along your way. You never get it right in this business. You never get it absolutely right. It is just about impossible.

NS: You find yourself making the same mistakes?

RV: There is something always going wrong. You can't probably get anything perfect, you know what I'm saying?

NS: Yes.

RV: You're always constantly changing something or doing something trying to improve it. You then will improve it, but you never get a hundred percent perfect.

NS: What about your dad? Does he ever get it perfect?

RV: I guess he came close, just about as close to as you can get.

NS: Do you think you learned a lot from him?

RV: Yes.

NS: What was the most important thing he taught you?

RV: Everything.

NS: If you had to pick one thing now?

RV: Everything, spearfishing, eeling, killie-ing, everything. Everything is [inaudible]. I like combing eels.

NS: How come?

RV: I don't know, it's fun. If you catch some eels, you bail them in the boat. That's fun.

NS: [laughter]

RV: But then if you're not catching nothing.

NS: There are certain things that make some people catch eels and others never do.

RV: I'm going to find them first and lock them up so you can catch them.

NS: Where do you find them?

RV: [inaudible] as far as Patchogue right on [inaudible].

NS: Are there particular ways that eels behave, you know where you going to catch them?

RV: In the winter, they come to the north side of the bay. In the summer, they move to the south side, just like anything else. Killies are [inaudible] and come over here in these creeks in the wintertime. In the summer, they all go across the bay over to the meadows over there. About two weeks ago, they moved across the bay and they're still moving on now.

NS: Do you go over there as well?

RV: Yes, we follow them. Chase them.

NS: I mean, I have never gone combing so I do not know how that is done. Is there particular tricks you have to do in order to get them?

RV: Yes.

NS: What?

RV: That's how you do it, I guess. That's the whole trick. [laughter]

NS: How do you do it?

RV: All you do is you go around in circles, put the comb down, and you feel eels when they hit the comb. They get stabbed by these little ice picks. They get stabbed by them. Then you can feel them on the comb. When you hit them, then you feel [imitates sounds].

NS: [laughter]

RV: This is connected to a cable. It goes up to the front of the boat. It's called the boom. There's the boat right here. You have to attach the boom right there. Then I stand right here. Then you are holding onto this right that. You just keep that in front of you in case you have anything, take your head off, you know what I'm saying?

NS: Yes. When it hits the comb, what do you do next?

RV: When you're going alone, you just take your hands off the comb with the use of wooden poles. They slide right up by themselves, just from the power of the boat going around circles. So, it's got the inside so you don't [inaudible]

NS: Do you lift it up quickly?

RV: You bring up pretty quick. You won't bring up too quick and knock the eel off the comb. When you get really big eels to the comb, because the eel is squirming around in the comb.

NS: Oh, God. So, you got to replace the whole comb?

RV: No.

NS: No?

RV: You take this. You pull this right up and you go [inaudible] flop on the floor.

NS: [inaudible]

RV: No, they fall right on the floor of the boat. Once you get a certain amount in there, if it's too cold, we got to shovel them to the cars and put them overboard.

NS: Why?

RV: Once they freeze, they turn white, they die.

NS: So, you go combing in the winter?

RV: Yes.

NS: It gets pretty cold out there?

RV: Right after Christmas.

NS: What do you do to keep warm?

RV: Work.

NS: [laughter] You do not have a problem. Did you ever get iced in while you are combing? [inaudible] frozen over.

RV: My boat is all right. That's as soon as I can leave. We got iced once this winter.

NS: How long?

RV: How long was this ice? Four weeks?

Male Speaker: Yes, something like that.

RV: We have about four weeks. Pretty good, we were fine, broke our way out.

NS: What was the scariest thing that ever happened to you when you were out working?

RV: I fallen out of the boat.

NS: When was that?

RV: A couple of years ago. I was going down the bay. All of a sudden, the boat busted off the steering arm and the [inaudible] kick to the side. The whole boat swung this way and the side went down like this. Before I know it, I was like forty feet away from the boat and boat was going around in circles. When I was in the water, gas tanks, everything floating around. A friend came flying out, "He is right over there." I guess they see it all happen just about I don't know, he pulled me out of the water. Then I had to jump in the boat. I was standing on the bow of Fred's boat. We were chasing my boat around. It was going pretty quick. So, I was going down the bay probably about thirty miles an hour when the boat broke snapped. That was it. It all happened quick like a car accident happens.

NS: Did you get the boat back?

RV: Yes, boat was going on circles. Because I was going to make sure that – no, I was going to turn a little bit.

NS: So, you jumped on the boat while it was going rouge?

RV: Yes, I was standing on my uncle's boat. This boat was coming around. We waited for it to come around [inaudible] gasoline. I just jumped in.

NS: Oh, my God. [laughter] It was like the boat was going to get you and Fred?

RV: Yes.

NS: Do you remember any other things that really sticks in your mind?

RV: That's the main one, I guess.

NS: What about when you heard about your dad? How old were you?

RV: Nineteen.

NS: Where you with him?

RV: No, I'm at the house.

NS: I am not too sure. I know that he died. Do you know what happened?

RV: I'd rather not talk about it.

NS: I know that you did not like Fred and Dott going. Did your mom ever go and fish?

RV: Yes, she had all pots and everything on boat.

NS: Really? Is she still around?

RV: Yes, she lives down the farm.

NS: Oh, boy. Did you go out with her?

RV: Not that much.

NS: Did she teach you anything?

RV: Not really. I didn't go out with her that much. I was at school studying. When summer came, I went out by myself. [inaudible]

NS: [laughter] Did you ever get clipped by a blue claw?

RV: Yes, everyone of use was bit by a blue claw. We do it every day. You step on a horseshoe crab, it will cut your feet open. Three years ago, I cut from the tip of my big toe right on to the back of my heel.

NS: Oh, Jesus.

RV: About half an inch deep.

NS: What happened.

RV: When I'm climbing, I slide my feet along the slope of mud, I slide along. I don't know what it was and I stopped to check to see what it was. I thought it was like [inaudible] foot.

NS: This is the spine of the horsefoot?

RV: I'm not sure. I could not [inaudible] a piece of metal stuck in the mud when I came across in my foot.

NS: Oh, God. You must have screamed. [laughter]

RV: That didn't even hurt.



NS: Yes?

RV: At first, I didn't really feel it first. I knew it was a big cut. If you ever got a big cut like that, you won't feel it because everything goes numb on the foot. I just made my way on the boat, wrapped it up in a towel and head home. [laughter]

NS: Were you living here at that time?

RV: Yes. I didn't go to hospital. I just washed the whole thing and butterfly stitched it. I was like, "I got to [inaudible] get two long stitches in the bottom of my foot."

NS: Oh, God.

RV: I'm better of with butterfly stitches. I got tons of butterfly stitches.

NS: You did this yourself?

RV: With my mom.

NS: Wow. I mean, that is pretty scary. I guess it sounds scary to someone like me. [laughter]

RV: This happens. Once it happens, you can't do anything about it.

NS: It sounds like you had a lot of, I guess, normal in the course of work.

RV: Yes, something definitely happens to you every day about bad things.

NS: What was the most unusual thing you ever saw out there?

RV: People put their boats up on the meadows. [laughter] Big racing boats coming down the bay like eighty miles an hour and head the meadows.

NS: [laughter]

RV: You're talking about half a mile up on the meadows. That's pretty funny. [laughter]

NS: [laughter] How about when you have just been the only person out there, ever seen anything that just made you think twice?

RV: I'm not really concentrating on that. I concentrate on working.

NS: Some of these guys who go out and whatever, seen some pretty stupid things.

RV: Yes, a lot of them.

NS: Do you remember one thing that you saw that stick in your mind?

RV: I've just seen too many of them for one thing to stick in my mind. Like Sunday afternoon coming out of state channel, oh, man, it's pretty funny scene.

NS: [laughter]

RV: Two hundred people coming out of the channel is like Long Island Expressway and not one of them knows what the heck they're doing.

NS: [laughter]

RV: It's like Long Island Expressway rush hour on a Sunday. The state channel is right across the bay. It's only sixty, seventy yards across at one point.

NS: Woah. A lot of boats around here.

RV: Yes, a lot of boats.

NS: Did you have a bay house?

RV: No.

NS: When you go duck hunting where would you go?

RV: I went right across the bay.

NS: I mean, what would you do to the duck once you have it?

RV: Take them home, scale and eat them.

NS: How would you fix them?

RV: You are going to pluck them, gut them, soak them. Burning the feathers off on the stove.

NS: What would you soak them with?

RV: With water, salt, then salt. Take the blood of it. You have to pop the bullets out of them.

NS: Oh, God. Was it usually dead by the time you got them?

RV: If not, you grabbed them by the neck and give them a nice jerk.

NS: That would be the end of it.

RV: [inaudible]

NS: So, you would soak them and then what would be next?

RV: Dry them off. Then there's just a little feathers left. Not feathers but it's the [inaudible] stuff.

NS: Like a fuzziness?

RV: Yes. Then you take it and put it over, I guess, stove and we just turn the duck as long as I can burn them.

NS: Oh, God.

RV: Then we wash them off again. Then put them in the oven, stuff them.

NS: What would you stuff them with?

RV: Stuffing.

NS: Well, what kind of stuffing? [laughter]

RV: [inaudible] stuff.

NS: I was not sure if you had your own special recipe on that?

RV: You can add stuff in it if you want.

NS: How do you fix it? Were you just buying the stuff in the store?

RV: Yes, buy stuff. I never really stuff it to myself. [inaudible]. I never have duck in two years now, [inaudible] wild duck. Never went hunting, I think about three years now. Never gone hunting.

NS: Mostly you catch black duck around here?

RV: I guess black duck and [inaudible] ducks, geese, [inaudible].

NS: How come?

RV: [inaudible] cabbage and jumped on the bottom. They stink when you cut them open.

NS: [laughter] I guess the other ducks, they fly around more.

RV: Yes. The brant, they dive. They dive down to the bottom and eat the cabbage.

NS: I know some people...

RV: So, they're like a goose [inaudible].

NS: So, they are not local duck?

RV: Not really around here. This is a big flock. This big flocks of geese and the brant will hang out right [inaudible] every night and every morning, they fly over.

NS: [laughter]

RV: We got about 2,000 Brent geese. They fly across the bay.

NS: [laughter]

RV: And they sleep over there at night. Then they come back in the morning.

NS: Are they hard to tell apart? It is hard to imagine. When you see ducks, they all look the same. How can you tell?

RV: You have to get close to them.

NS: Close to know what to shoot at it? [laughter]

RV: The black ducks, white ducks if you want to shoot them.

NS: How close do they usually get to you when you're hunting?

RV: It depends on the time of the year. While I'm hunting?

NS: Yes.

RV: It depends how long hunting season been open. It's been open for a couple of weeks, that's scary because everybody has been shooting on them.

NS: [laughter] What about in the beginning?

RV: On the beginning, you set out your schools and your whole flock of them turn to them right away.

NS: Five feet away, ten feet away?

RV: Yes. It depends what time you're open. You're not allowed to go at night. They call that (dusking?). Just before the sun goes down, all the ducks come from the north side of bay and they all fly across the bay. They go over there to sleep. They call that dusking. You know I can do that, it's the best time to hunt.

NS: I am just going to say I am sure a lot of people do that.

RV: They come flying in by the hundreds.

NS: [laughter]

RV: You come and load your gun fast.

NS: [laughter] You know a lot of people who put their boats where the tide goes in and out. Did that ever happen to you and get stuck?

RV: Yes. [inaudible] here and there.

NS: [laughter]

RV: Let me say I've gotten stuck but I haven't got stuck where I had to sit out the whole time.

NS: Really?

RV: I'll push and push. [laughter]

NS: [laughter] What is the longest you've ever had to push for?

RV: I don't know, an hour.

NS: Oh, my God.

RV: Pushing boat across the bottom. I helped out many boats out of there when tide goes down.

MS: [inaudible] and dry.

RV: [inaudible], Sometimes you got to push a mile and a half. You got to push and the boat is running on the bottom.

NS: Oh, good.

RV: If you want to get home, you got to push. A lot of times I used to just take clams right out of boat, just leave them right there. I would take a stake and put it maybe a hundred yards away from them. I put the stakes, that's why I know no way out. That's why I put the [inaudible]. Just in case anybody does come by, they'll see the stake but they won't look there and see my clams there. My clams will be a hundred yards away from the stake.

NS: Smart idea.

RV: Yes, I know.

NS: Are there any other tricks you have? I know sometimes when I went out with Cory, he

forgets where his eel pots were.

RV: You got to take ranges when you [inaudible] your pots. Some track right in the middle of the bay [inaudible] and you line something up on the shore. Let's say, you take a house in the water tower. [inaudible] the house and the water tower be right behind now and then you know which way they are. Looking north and south then you got to pick northern range to have southeast to pick another one. Then align right up north [inaudible] line that up. You got to be there right on top of it.

NS: That is pretty smart.

RV: Yes.

NS: How do you spend most of your time when you are growing up in terms of going out on the water?

RV: My father.

NS: Did you ever spend time with (Lenny and Danny)?

RV: Not much. I went there in the wintertime, right around Christmas. I parked my boat and I go back home. [inaudible] I stopped out here. Lenny was out here the other day with his friend, Georgie. You know Georgie?

NS: Yes, I have heard about him. I have not met him.

RV: They were out here on their boat. Georgie [inaudible] Nashville. They came out here, they come from [inaudible]. They're all fired up [inaudible].

NS: [laughter]

RV: Lenny's almost fallen over on the chair right there. [laughter] I thought that was pretty funny.

NS: [laughter] Did you ever work on a dragger?

RV: No.

NS: How come?

RV: I don't know, never needed to.

NS: When you work now, do you go out with Fred and Jack or mostly Jack, I guess?

RV: I go out by myself. Well, me and Jack are sharing the fishing deal. Jack's catching deals. Jack's boxes both he works on here.

NS: Are we talking about Jack (Buchic?) or Jack (Barrady?)?

RV: No, Jack (Barrady?). It's John (Buchic?).

NS: John (Buchic?), I am sorry. How does it feel to be working by yourself after this? Did it get scary out there?

RV: No. I'm used to doing it for so long. I'm going to say, this is as scary to go work in the city. Maybe in first couple of days.

NS: Have you ever try working on land?

RV: Yes, I've worked in the city.

NS: What happened? [laughter] What did you do? I am curious.

RV: Quit. [laughter]

MS: Best.

NS: Who you were working for?

RV: I was working in the fire district.

NS: [laughter]

RV: I don't know. 34th Street in Manhattan. Then here now I work for my friend, George. He owns his own landscaping business. I work for him. We have a good old time to work for him. [laughter]

NS: But you prefer the water?

RV: Oh, yes.

NS: How come?

MS: More money.

RV: It's the only thing I ever do.

NS: You could do anything you want.

RV: Yes.

NS: Why the water? I am just asking.

RV: I don't know. That's just what I do.

NS: What do you like most about it?

RV: Of course, my family's always done it. Also, I want to carry on the tradition.

NS: What do you like most about being on the water?

RV: You work for yourself, first of all.

NS: That is important to you?

RV: Yes. That's important to anybody who is working for yourself. [inaudible] if you don't want to make any move. You know what I'm saying?

NS: Yes. What about being out on the water? What do you like most about that?

RV: Being out there. I want to work out there. [inaudible]

NS: About how many months a year do you spend out on the water been working on your traps?

RV: After Christmas, I work on the traps. I don't know. Let's say about full three weeks working on new traps. You get everything done for the next year.

NS: How many traps you build?

RV: How many?

NS: Yes.

RV: I don't know. It depends on what you need for the next year.

NS: Like this year, how many did you built?

RV: Only twenty killie traps. I still got a whole bunch of brand-new eel traps I got from last year. [inaudible] If you're not smart enough to build them [inaudible].

NS: How many traps do you have altogether?

RV: What's that?

NS: How many killey traps do you have altogether?

RV: I got about – I don't know about fifty-five killie pots and about seventy-five eel traps.



NS: Wow.

RV: With about 150 scungilli traps.

NS: How many combs do you have?

RV: About twelve.

NS: How many crab pots?

RV: I do not have any crab pots.

NS: Are they crab traps?

RV: Yes.

NS: How many crab traps?

RV: None right now.

NS: How many would you be making?

RV: Well, I am to make – I don't know I think I'll make myself about seventy-five of them. They're quick to make though.

NS: How long does it take you to make one?

RV: Once you get the hang of it, I could start putting mine together in about forty-five minutes if I get all materials cut out.

NS: [laughter] It's pretty good.

RV: Damn easy to call. They're asynchronous. Everything is hog rings together because it's all wire. No nails involved. Everything just snip, snip, I think it runs about twenty hog rings involved.

NS: How many eel pots do you have?

RV: Seventy-five.

NS: So, each year about how many do you have to replace?

RV: It depends how many gets runover and stall.

NS: Typically, a year.

RV: About twenty traps.

NS: Of each kind?

RV: I don't lose any of my killie traps because I set them out on the [inaudible] killie traps when the old ones are worn out. I guess they last to about three to four years.

NS: When you set your killie traps, how many times a day you do that?

RV: It depends how many killies I need. I have one, make that seven on the tide, flood set in the morning. Then when the tide comes up, I go around to get the traps and then you reset the traps again. You catch the tide coming down.

NS: So, you will do this how many times in the day?

RV: I can make four to five sets in a day.

NS: Would that be the most you would do?

RV: Yes. Sometimes I just want to make one set because that's all the killies [inaudible]

NS: Like this time in a year, about how many sets?

RV: I'm going to catch killies. [inaudible] and catch of course, come out here. I just go out the course and I'll throw a bunch of traps over the [inaudible] overnight. I'll pick them up in the morning. But across the bay, I set them on the tide because killies go up into the meadows. I set the traps before the tide comes up. When the tide comes up, killies will swim right into trap.

NS: How come killies go up to the meadows?

RV: To get away from blue fishes and stuff, snappers are chasing them up there.

NS: Really?

RV: Yes.

NS: [inaudible]

RV: [inaudible] All the bait fish, you got to hunt for the bait fish.

NS: So, you would get them in the ditches in the meadows?

RV: Yes.

NS: That is why [inaudible] those.

RV: Yes. The snappers, they all patrol around and all the bait fish, they run off in the back. They run as far into the meadows that they can get. You got to watch the snappers.

NS: It must be hard for you then because you have to go during low tide also?

RV: Yes.

NS: So, you must do a lot of walking around?

RV: I do lot pushing, a lot of walking when I'm [inaudible], that's for sure.

NS: When you go eeling, how long would you like [inaudible].

MS: Rick, I'll be back in a while.

RV: Where are you going?

MS: I'm going to go to the store and get [inaudible]. Anybody want [inaudible]?

RV: [inaudible]

MS: All right.

RV: You want some?

MS: You want some?

NS: No thanks.

RV: Are you sure?

NS: Yes, I am sure. When you put your ell pots out, how long did they sit out for?

RV: Twenty-four hours. I come back the next day [inaudible] as far as how many hours of catching.

NS: Do you sell your eels or do you smoke them out?

RV: I sell them often [inaudible] a lot. In Christmas time, [inaudible] fresh market selling out eels in there. Right now, we got a tanker truck from Philadelphia and fix them up.

NS: That is a long way to come. This is somebody you know?

RV: Yes.

NS: You have been doing visiting for a while.

RV: Yes. My father has been [inaudible] for a long time. Everybody sells [inaudible]

NS: What is his name?

RV: Sheldon.

NS: Is that his first name?

RV: Yes.

NS: What is his last name?

RV: I forget his last name.

NS: You got a card or anything with his name on it?

RV: No, I don't. I only have it written out.

NS: It is okay.

RV: I got a jacket. It doesn't show his name on it though.

NS: [laughter] I thought to meet him someday. I have heard they have monitors to keep the eels away?

RV: Yes.

NS: They felt like the noise I hear.

RV: No, they pump air into it.

NS: Oh, okay.

RV: They pull out the air raving to keep the eels moving. So, we water off a lot. Water stays pretty current [inaudible] fifty degrees or something keeps the water. That's all freshwater in there. We take the eels right out on the salt water and put them right in fresh water.

NS: They stay alive?

RV: [inaudible]

NS: Do you keep any for yourself?

RV: Here and there, I only feel that much. You and I get some smoked eels.

NS: Do you smoke them?

RV: No.

NS: Who smokes them?

RV: Fred used to smoke them. I don't smoke them.

NS: Did you ever [inaudible]?

RV: Of course, we won't be [inaudible]

NS: Yes, of course, you must be.

RV: Of course, I must be [inaudible].

NS: How long do you put your crab pots out?

RV: Overnight.

NS: About how much do you catch during good season?

RV: A good day?

NS: Yes.

RV: Ten bushels.

NS: About how many crabs do you have?

RV: A couple of hundred.

NS: What do you do with this?

RV: Sell here and there. It depends on what the price is going. If the price is low, instead of selling to a buyer that buys them all year around for, let's say, \$30, you can peddle them off to the restaurants.

NS: \$30 a bushel?

RV: Yes. I peddle to the restaurants for fifty.

NS: That is pretty good.

RV: There's a lot of steamers too.

NS: Oh, really?

RV: Now, these steamers in the summer. I pump them out.

NS: These are steamer clams, right?

RV: Yes, I pump them out on an upward order.

NS: [laughter] Where do you get steamer crabs?

RV: Across the [inaudible] in the marshes and stuff. They have certain places where their beds are.

NS: Do you go musseling?

RV: No.

NS: When you catch the green crabs, what do you do with those?

RV: Something to eat with taco sauce.

NS: Is there a place that you normally go to?

RV: All my customers I have now. All those people out there.

NS: So, how many customers do you have here?

RV: About forty, fifty people.

NS: That is a lot of people. You have been working with your family?

RV: Yes. Off the road, here and there.

NS: [laughter]

RV: When they got something they need a hand from you. Then I give them a call, see what's happening.

NS: Do people ever steal your pots? Eels pots or your traps?

RV: Yes, traps gets stolen. I think they get stolen here. [inaudible] gets stolen over here on the flats. Because people that go out at night when they go jacking for crabs, it's like, "Oh, an eel trap." They put it in their boat and take it home.

NS: Oh, my God.

RV: I found plenty of eel traps on people's front lawns with flowers in them, stuff like that.

NS: Oh, Jesus.

RV: [laughter]

NS: Did you ever go up to them and say, "Hey."

RV: A lot of times I'm banging on the people's doors. [inaudible]. But I go out there in their garden and kick all their flowers and take my own pot out of there.

NS: [laughter] That is good. I see anchor on the front lawn. Is that yours?

RV: No, it's my father's boats.

NS: Where did it come from?

RV: From the [inaudible] used to go and gillnet there.

NS: You said you do not go gillnetting, how come?

RV: Yes. We don't get many fish around anymore, first of all.

NS: What did they catch in gillnets?

RV: They catch someone draggers. [inaudible] weak fish, striped bluefish. Anything that swims down the bay and then fit and ready.

NS: How come you do not do that?

RV: I'm doing a lot of things. You can only do so many things.

NS: Do you work pretty much year-round on all this? Do you ever have to either take a job on land?

RV: No. Let me see, I may go down this year. Last year, I went down to Florida for a couple of months.

NS: Oh, that is right.

RV: [inaudible]

NS: You were working on the shrimp boats down there?

RV: No.

NS: What were you doing there?

RV: We were clamming. We were throwing the shrimp off my Garvey.

NS: That is the one that I was thinking of.

RV: Yes.

NS: You took your Garvey all the way down there?

RV: That is the trailer.

NS: Did you drive the trailer and drove that. Okay, I was going to say like I think it would not last in the ocean. So, the two of you, how long are you down there for?

RV: About two months, one and a half months.

NS: Was it pretty good?

RV: Not bad. Things got right my first year down there and things are new to me. I found a bunch of clams down there. There were clams I saw down there. I got shrimp down there. I hear they catch a lot bait fish down there. Not a lot but I hear there are shiners down there.

NS: What kind of bait fish did they get?

RV: Shiners, that's what I hear. They catch eels down there on the East Coast, not on the West Coast.

NS: Is there a difference between the fishermen down there and the fishermen up here?

RV: Yes, fishermen down there are lazy, first of all.

NS: Really?

RV: Oh, yes. They get a couple of \$100 in their pockets and they're good for a month.

NS: [laughter]

RV: Since I need more money, how I can I go out and make some more money. That's the truth. You can ask Lenny about that.

NS: Are these guys whose families have been doing it for a while or...

RV: Yes, everybody is fishing.

NS: Are there any Cubans down there fishing?



RV: No. Most of them are real southern people shrimping.

NS: Did you learn anything down there that you use up here?

RV: No, I used down there what I used up here.

NS: Really, like what?

RV: I don't know, treading clams, raking clams.

NS: Then did the guys ever done that down there?

RV: Yes. While we were on the West Coast, nobody goes clamming. There ain't that many clams. Most of the clams are in the pool, what they call [inaudible]. That's where we caught most of our clams.

NS: Are they good?

RV: Yes, they were good clams.

NS: Do you see them used (steamer cleansing?) or [inaudible]. Is that what you would do with the clams down there?

RV: [inaudible] clam on the bottom in east coast. You had a truck that came. It went all around the state of Florida.

NS: Wow.

RV: He started off in [inaudible] worked its way right up around Florida. I think he worked his way right up to where Alligator Alley is? That's right by the Everglades.

NS: Yes.

RV: That's right by the Everglades. The Everglades are here, and then he went straight up there, where [inaudible]. He went straight across and then down I think it was 775 on the West Coast straight down in [inaudible] absolutely square. He drop off calico scallops and pick up clams and drop off other stuff, pick up and drop off.

NS: Did you notice if there were things that you did differently than the fishermen down there?

RV: They do everything different down there. Any place you go everything is done different.

NS: I guess that many fishermen work in two areas. That is why I am asking.

RV: I don't know. They were shrimping and that's like drag. So, work where you want to work.

That's the way in any place. You work in the bay, you work where you want to work. So, anything anybody else owns is what's in their boat.

NS: What about here? Do you have a lot of policies, like these guys who try to undersell you on the weekends. Is there a lot of that over here?

RV: I got my customers. I get somewhat close to my customers every day, year after year after year. You know what I'm saying?

NS: Yes.

RV: I get killies for me. I know we really [inaudible]. At least, respect for each other. Know what's good for them.

NS: How many full-time bayman are they managing?

RV: [inaudible] only?

NS: Really?

RV: Between what? What do you mean?

NS: Like right here in [inaudible].

RV: There is not many here. Not really, a lot easy now. A bunch of these [inaudible].

NS: Oh, yes, the [inaudible]. But I am talking about like right here [inaudible].

RV: There's not many.

NS: You and your family about it.

RV: Let say, there's about twenty-five that come right now [inaudible]. There's probably about thirty, thirty-five, forty guys [inaudible] that go out here and that's between everybody clam diggers and whatnot.

NS: You know all of them?

RV: I know most of them.

NS: You must have been doing it for a long time?

RV: I know all of them. Some of them I don't know by name. I just know them.

NS: Is there pretty much a collaboration?

RV: Yes, we respect each other. You just don't want to work on top of someone. It's a whole bay out there. You just don't do that.

NS: So, this is pretty much your territory?

RV: No. I won't say that. Anybody can work where they want to work. If you're working right here, he's just going to come up right next to me and stop working. A couple hundred yards over or whatnot. You still coming on top of someone.

NS: So, you keep an eye on what the other guy is doing?

RV: Of course, everybody does.

NS: How do you find out what is going on?

RV: Call them on the telephone. Everybody talks to each other.

NS: Does anybody tell each other anything?

RV: Yes.

NS: Like if somebody calls you and said what kind of day you had. If it was a bad day, would you tell them? [laughter]

RV: No, I think they don't ask questions like that. If anything happened out there, say, they [inaudible] yet. They will say, "What's going on out there?"

NS: What happens if somebody has a bad day and somebody asks him? What would you say?

RV: What's that?

NS: If like somebody asked you, how are you doing if you are not doing well? What would you tell him?

RV: I did pretty well. [laughter] I'm satisfied. Everybody has some bad days.

NS: Yes, I know. But nobody ever tells it.

RV: That's what it is. Somebody asked me if I have a good day, I'll tell him fair enough.

NS: Were there certain things that you were told that you should never do on the boat like some people say you should never whistle on a boat.

RV: What?

NS: Have you ever heard that? Have you ever heard anything like that?

RV: What do you mean? Like?

NS: I do not know, just like old superstitions.

RV: No. There are some things that you got to be careful of. That's the first thing. Be careful. [inaudible] out there

NS: Are there certain kinds of days you should never go out on? I am wondering if you should say if there is a full moon, you should not go out.

RV: No, there's not.

NS: I am just passing along old wives tales that you know.

RV: We were having full moons in summertime while jacking, we're getting horseshoe crabs on full moon.

NS: I guess that is when they...

RV: I don't go out in the bay at night. If we're going out and crab and say it's nice and glass out and clear out, I'll hop on my boat and go out jacking. Other than that, it's got to be smooth out to go out jacking, you can see on the water I think.

NS: You must have some really long days.

RV: Oh, yes.

NS: [inaudible]

RV: Killie is a long gap between eight to twelve hours.

NS: What time would you leave in the morning?

RV: Around 4:00 a.m. in summer, 4:30 a.m. I got to move my killies , come back here, and get my boat, if you want to work all night. I used to pay someone to fill up my killies for me. My mom was filling up my killies for me.

NS: That helps?

RV: My sister helped me last year. She filled up my killies. Now, she's getting married so I'm [inaudible].

NS: Oh, my God.

RV: I'll fill it in myself or I'll hire my friend that can fill it up for me.

NS: I do not mean to pry but about how much money do you make in a year?

RV: I don't know what to say.

NS: Enough to live on?

RV: Yes. I do fine. I have no problems financially.

NS: You think you will do this for the rest of your life?

RV: Oh, yes. Like this one, I'm walking through [inaudible 01:01:02]. If I got the money, I'm looking to get a shrimp boat.

NS: Really?

RV: So, when I packed up everything here right after Christmas, I'm going to pack it up. I'm going to go down to live with my mother. She's got a big old house down in Florida.

NS: [laughter]

RV: She got a house there and a couple acres of land, around the water.

NS: How long would you go down there?

RV: I would go down there I figured right after New Year's. I would stay right up until about – I don't know, March. Somewhere in March, I come back. It depends when the weather breaks here. [inaudible] talking in the warm days.

NS: Do you think you will be able to make a living here for the rest of your life?

RV: Yes, also if they keep cool on the pollution and whatnot. I say they should stop a lot of these big boats running around the bay. So, this big operation boats and whatnot. Some of those things are really so loud, you hear them out of the water. From what you hear out of the water, it's something like a hundred times a lot underwater. I got to feel this. I can be screwing the [inaudible] processes with the fish and whatnot. They should regulate those kind of boats to the ocean. Those big cigarettes and stuff? On a nice day, I see fifty to sixty [inaudible] back and forth at eighty-nine miles an hour. They got [inaudible], three to four Big-Block Chevy's. They got forty, fifty-foot long [inaudible].

NS: What other kinds of things do you think they should do to keep guys like you in the business?

RV: I don't know. They should do a better job on receiving the bay, clams, and whatnot.

NS: [inaudible] environmental pollution.

RV: Because [AUDIO GAP] I don't know why they're not resetting. Some people say it's from the bottom paints on the boat that we used to [inaudible] paints that makes the clams sterile.

NS: Oh, God.

RV: Or something like that. You never know. They're seeding out there, but [inaudible]. I don't really know too much about...

NS: Are you going to plant sea clams?

RV: Am I?

NS: Yes.

RV: No, the town should. They spent so many other tax dollars on everything else. I don't see why they can't seed the bay. That's an expensive process at all.

NS: About how much can that cost?

RV: I don't know. If they do it over here across the bay, [inaudible] floats which cost next to nothing.

NS: Yes.

RV: They could buy sea clams out of Maine and whatnot, tons of them quite cheap. The whole western bay are full of clams, right? Why they won't allow to take them out of here? Let's pay fishermen to go up there, to get bayman to go up there [inaudible] clams up. It's all up to the town. I've seen other places that need it. [inaudible] take clams out there to thousands and thousands of bushels of clams die up there every year. Some of them take them out. That's another wasted process right there. [inaudible] those they want to come out. They want to check you out and busting chops all the time.

NS: Like where did they get your...

RV: Checking licenses, checking the seed and whatnot.

NS: Everyone is going to like it. Do you think you will be able to make the living off of it?

RV: There's always somewhere else to go. If not here, somewhere else. This place [inaudible] in a flash.

NS: Everyone keep saying it is going to be done in ten years because [inaudible] to that?

RV: There's always something to tell.

NS: You really love it. I have a feeling.

RV: Yes.

NS: Did any of your other friends ever say, "What are you going to do, Ricky?" Did any of your other friends who are continuing to work on the water?

RV: All my friends tried it and whatnot. Not just anybody can get in the boat and go out there and make good days and make a good living. I mean, anybody can walk there and make plans and whatnot. What's the difference so we're going to walk there and catch a fish? Anything that swims. It's a lot harder to catch than the clams. The clams are just sitting there.

NS: [laughter] Sure.

RV: You know what I'm saying, right?

NS: Right.

RV: You can always go out and rake clams. You can always go out and catch [inaudible] clams. You can always go out and catch fifty cans [inaudible] spearing. You can always go out and catch hundred boxes of fish, a couple hundred pounds of eels.

NS: Definitely, something that you learn from people around you.

RV: I learn a lot of things on my own.

NS: Do you know what are some of the things you have learned on your own, other things?

RV: I learned killie by myself.

NS: Really? Did you dad just say, "Can you go catch the killies?"

RV: I never killed with my father.

NS: How come you started?

RV: All the customers all year, all months, everything are full. I like shiner fishing too.

NS: You like what?

RV: I like catching shiners with spearing and killies. Killie-ing is sort of boring. That's really boring. That's probably one of those boring things I've [inaudible].

NS: [laughter] What do you like most?

RV: Eel, combing eels.

NS: How come?

RV: It's fun. You're always moving, you're always on the move.

NS: It must be hard to get [inaudible] comb. Did they ever slip around the boat?

RV: It's a process. [inaudible] and stand like this and hold the comb. When the comb comes right up like this, we use steel poles and use wooden poles. I got [inaudible] poles.

NS: Oh, wow, high-tech poles?

RV: Yes.

NS: [laughter]

RV: The deeper the water, the wooden poles a shimmy the shape down to the water, you know what I'm saying? Steel poles are right along nice and smooth, go right to the bottom nicely. The wooden poles got push on. Those hanging on the poles keep them on the bottom [inaudible] water and how the water is driving the pole up. Steel poles just sank right in. They sink twenty, twenty-two foot.

NS: Wow.

RV: The steel pole.

NS: How shallow of water can you get into?

RV: I only get in at least four-foot water, five-foot water on high tide. If it's low tide, five-foot of water.

NS: What's the shallowest water did you get into when you are killie-ing and stuff.

RV: A couple of inches of water. As long as my boat floats, I'm good.

NS: [laughter]

RV: I do a lot of pushing. I get off the boat, I do a lot of pushing.

NS: [laughs]

RV: I get [inaudible] pushing pole.

[end of transcript]