Georgen Charnes: Okay. My name is Georgen Charnes, and these are students of the Lighthouse Middle School. Today is Sunday, the 11th of April 2011. We'll be speaking with Malcolm Soverino at his home in Madaket, Nantucket Island. Mr. Soverino was once the Madaket harbor master and worked for the Steamship Authority. We're here to hear a little bit more about your experiences. Mr. Soverino, do you understand that this interview is going to be available to the general public as part of NOAA's Voices of the Fisheries project?

Malcolm Soverino: Nothing I'm going to say will be offensive.

GC: [laughter] It's okay if it is, to me.

MS: I hope it's of interest.

GC: I'm sure it will be. Okay. So, boys, go ahead and ask your questions.

M: Before we start, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself.

MS: I got to have you –

GC: Speak up.

M: Before we start, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself. What is your full name?

GC: What's your full name?

MS: I gave it to you there. My full name?

M: Yes.

MS: Malcolm Francis Soverino, S-O-V-E-R-I-N-O.

M: Thank you.

M: Where and when were you born?

GC: Where and when were you born?

MS: I was born here in Nantucket on the 6th of July 1926 at the old Nantucket Cottage Hospital on West Chester Street. At the time, my parents were living at 43 Fair Street on the second floor. My grandparents occupied the first floor, and they had been there since 1921. Prior to that, my

grandfather Herbert Jones, who was a Nantucketer born on Pine Street, corner of Pine and Lyon. He was born and raised here, and as happens every few decades, they were going through a down period. Whaling had subsided. Fishing and tourism weren't what they are today. It was common for islanders to seek employment on the mainland. So my grandfather, Herbert Jones, moved to the city of Brockton, which at that time was the shoe manufacturing center of the United States. My grandfather, William Soverino, also born here, moved to Fall River, Massachusetts. At that time, Fall River was a heavy textile manufacturing place. They both migrated back to Nantucket after things improved in the 1912-'14 area. My grandfather Jones and his family didn't come back until 1921. They bought the house in 1920. It had a history to it then. And then, they had some renovations made, and it was 1921 when they finally moved back here. By that time, they had a family, and my father was the youngest one and came back to Nantucket as a young man fresh out of Fall River High School but never completed his high school education.

M: What would you say was your occupation?

GC: What would you say was your occupation?

MS: Mine?

GC: Yes.

MS: Well, truthfully, number one was enjoying Nantucket and what it had to offer.

GC: It's a great occupation.

MS: Yeah, really. In fact, a friend of mine was here this morning, and he said how he had visited his daughter in Florida this winter. And though it was something different and very nice, and she had lived there for a number of years, it didn't have the aura of Nantucket.

GC: Just empty, isn't it?

MS: And he went on to explain how to just last year – he's my age. Just last year, he tripped and fell walking up Orange Street. As he was sitting on the sidewalk, trying to gather his bearings, a young lady came along and offered help, and a man and a taxi came along and offered help. The taxi man said, "I think I better give you a lift home. Where do you live?? He told him, and the man brought him home, got him into the house, and said, "Now, you sure you're alright?" He said, "Had I'd been in Florida, four hundred people would walk by and say, 'Look at that fellow laying on the sidewalk.'" But this is something that we feel a need to do: help our fellow citizens. Now, of course, I had to have a paying job. In the early days, my father

had a trucking business here on the island and really went to the mainland. It may seem strange to you people, but when I say rarely went to the mainland, we had students in school who were in the graduating class who had never left the island. That was a big experience for them. Preparing for that – when you got into high school, you made a weekly contribution to pay for your trip to Washington.

GC: Right. Oh, yeah.

MS: It was a week-long trip and involved a trip to, in those days, Woods Hole, train to Boston – first time they'd ever seen a train, first time they'd ever seen a big city or a hotel, a multi-story building – and then train to New York, and again, another train to Washington and saw all the principal historic and government buildings in Washington and then back to New York, Boston, and finally home again at the end of the week. Well, anyway, as our class came along, we continued the tradition of – and if I recall correctly, it was twenty-five cents a week that we contributed to this Washington fund. At the end of four years, we'd have enough money to buy our tickets. However, World War Two started, and travel was restricted. So, my class, the class of 1944, did not get to go to Washington. So, our money was refunded. At that time, we got $18.75 back, which we were told to invest in war bonds. So, we all bought a war bond.

M: We’ve been studying how to create open-ended questions. So, I have a list of things to ask, but it's just a guideline. So feel free to veer off-topic.

GC: He's going to ask you some questions but feel free to talk.

M: I know you were once a Madaket harbormaster. What did the job entail?

GC: Once you were the Madaket harbormaster –?

MS: I was. I took that job – I don't know – seven or eight years ago, maybe longer than that, strictly because nobody else wanted it. It wasn't that I had outstanding qualifications. But my family's association with Madaket started a long time ago. My grandfather Soverino and grandmother had a house up here in the center of Madaket up on the high bluff, which, unfortunately, they didn't get to use much because of death in the family. So, in the ’30s, we were out here quite a bit – 1930s. Then, my grandmother finally died. My grandfather had died. My grandmother finally became so incapacitated she couldn't enjoy it, so sold the house. But as children, we were out here quite a bit and enjoyed it and enjoyed the fact that everything was free and open. The people who lived out here all had boats, which may be hard to understand now. But there was – one, two, three, four – four houses down this way from where Ruthie Grieder – where the pier is. There was maybe a dozen houses up the other way. There were no houses on the south side of Madaket Road. There were no trees out here, even then. The highest

thing was just these Bayberry [inaudible] bushes. And then 1938, we had a hurricane. Nobody knew it was a hurricane at the time. I remember the day. It was in September. School had already started. We're in the Academy Hill School at the time. It was a nasty day. In kid fashion, the waterfront was a place of activity. At that time, they were still running the summer schedule with the steamers, but it usually stopped – and I'm not sure just the date of the '38 hurricane, but it usually stopped by the 10th of September. So, went down out of school in the afternoon, down towards the waterfront – rainy and nasty. The steamer *Naushon* was just going out. She went round the point and sailed, and that was it. As I say, we had no conception that this was going to be a hurricane. At that time, we usually had a storm in the late summer, which we all identified as a line stone; where the term came from, I don't know. But usually, the result was a few boats washed ashore, we had a little soaking from the rain, and little damage to the property. But in '38 hurricane, it washed in – up here, as you go over the bridge, there was a house there on the dune, and it washed underneath, and the front porch fell off. That was the extent of the damage. The *Naushon* sailed; Captain (Oscar Stansbury?) of Nantucket at the wheel. They sailed up, as usual, easterly and blowing. It was very rough at Woods Hole, but it was extremely rough at Oaks Bluff. That's where the steamer used to stop at the Vineyard. So, with weather like that, never thought of stopping at Oak Bluffs. So rough the vessel would be going up and down, so you couldn't safely take people on or off or freight on and off. So, she continued on to Woods Hole and couldn't possibly land there either, and continued – went on into New Bedford and tied up at the State Pier in New Bedford for the night, without damage to the boat or the people. A great test of seamanship, I will say.

GC: Really? Yeah.

M: Keep going.

MS: The next day, when the paper came out, which we get every afternoon, then – the paper came down on a boat. Came down on a train from Boston. Our boat came out of Woods Hole around 10:30, 11:00 o'clock. On our way down, they stopped as close as they could get to [inaudible] and throwed a bundle of newspapers over. Didn't have plastic bags in those days. Used to wrap them up in canvas and put them in an old oil jacket sleeve, tied the ends tight, and [inaudible] as close as they could get it to the lightship, and the gang was on deck there with a boat hook trying to retrieve it. Sometimes, they got it; sometimes, it drifted away.

GC: I'll bet.

MS: That was one of the highlights of the trip to Nantucket – see if we get the paper. Didn't have radios in those days. Even the steamers didn't have radios. They had shortwave. They had a radio operator aboard – Morse code. That was it.

M: How long did you do that job?

MS: Harbormaster?

M: Yes.

MS: I think I did about five years. I had already retired from the Steamship Authority, so it was just a summer job. Needless to say, even at that time, the creek was never big enough. More people wanted to put their boat in the water and moor it out here. At one time, the creek was Matakut people, but now, it's people from all over the island. If they're fortunate enough to get a permit to set a mooring in the harbor or in the creek, that's an ideal place, really, because it's pretty well protected no matter what way the wind is.

F: So, as harbormaster, your job was to watch over the boats?

MS: Well, watch over the anchorage area so the boats didn't obstruct the channel down to the boatyard and also see that they were moored properly so they didn't bang against one another as the wind shifted. Third of all, and probably the most important thing, was a lot of people could buy boats, but they didn't necessarily know how to take care of them or observe the safety that was necessary.

GC: Right, or how to drive it.

MS: So, that was all part of the job. Also, I used to patrol up to Tuckernuck and to Muskeget because you never knew; somebody might be out there in trouble. On occasion, they were. So, I'd pick them up, or I would go over to them, see if they were all right. And if they were – Whale Island, an arm off of the southwest part of Tuckernuck, was a very popular place then, protected area. A lot of people used to go and picnic there for the day. On more than one occasion, I used to go over there and say, "Look, it's nice now, but the weather forecast says we've got thunder squalls coming this way. I'm telling you it's your decision. If you want to stay, fine. I might advise – get underway and get home before nasty weather comes." And they used to appreciate it. Or if someone really did get in distress – word was passed around. I'd go get them, tow them back.

M: What was the difference between your Nantucket harbor master job and your Madaket harbormaster job?

MS: The only difference, I would say, was location. Of course, the Nantucket harbor master position involved a lot more boats and set the principles for allowing moorings to be set in the creek and Madaket Harbor. Also, Nantucket harbor master was involved with what they call the

pump-out boat, taking the surge runoff from these yachts out there, whether it was dishwasher or sewerage.

GC: Yeah, the bilge.

MS: And pumping it out of those boats and bringing it to the pier and pumping it into the sewer system in town, rather than have it pollute the harbor. We didn't have that here in Madaket, nor did we have people living on boats out here. All of that was pretty much the result of this being a very shallow area. Boats of any size couldn't get in here. Probably a four-and-a-half-foot draught would be about the limit to get into Madaket Harbor, but a three-foot draught getting into the creek would be the limit. So, they were restricted to small boats.

F: So, the other was much busier. The Nantucket Harbor was much busier.

MS: They stayed down there, and I stayed up here.

M: What would your typical day as a harbormaster entail?

MS: Typical day?

M: Yes.

MS: Well, as always, if you're involved on the water, first thing you do when you get up in the morning, you look at a barometer. That's the atmospheric pressure. Then, you can pull water here, and it run downhill. Here, the same way. Low pressure here; the air runs this way. High pressure here; the air runs that way. It's a very good indicator of how strong the winds are going to be. And secondly, you look at the weather and say, “Well, the wind [is] southwest, barometer’s pretty near flat, and it’s low. Chances are we're going to have a foggy day.” So then you have to figure there may be some people out there that don’t know how to get home. So, you got to make yourself available to that. On occasion, I'd come home with two or three boats in tow. The people were delighted to get a line and a lift home.

GC: [laughter] I’ll bet.

MS: Because you get out there, and it’s thick fog, everything looks the same.

GC: Yeah, it’s hard to find the channel.

MS: It can be thick enough. So, I'll say fifty feet is the limit. It's not unusual out here when it's foggy – even where we are now – to see across the creek. You can't see Little Neck over there; it's so thick.

F: How did you know where you were? Did you have a compass?

MS: Oh, yes. You need a couple of things. You need a compass, and you need what's called a lead line. Now, in sunlight, you read the water. Yellow is sandy bottom. Dark green, deep water. Really yellow, shallow water. But in foggy weather, you don't have that. And fortunately, around here, we have sand. There isn't anybody around here, myself included, whoever spent time on the water and didn't run ashore once in a while. The secret was to be going slow enough so you didn't go high and dry. You might slow down and have to back off a little bit. You knew you didn't have a heck of a lot of water [inaudible] say, "Go over to starboard a little bit." It's getting a little deeper, a little deeper. Okay. Deepest place you'll find is right off Eel Point. You got, in some places there, ten, twelve feet of water. But twenty-five feet away, we got two feet of water. Twenty-five from that, we got six inches of water. So, you have to proceed with caution. And today's boater is speed.

GC: Right. Is today's boater different from boaters a long time ago?

MS: Very much so. Outboard motors have revolutionized the boating public, really. Anybody can buy a boat. And recommended horsepower is recommended. Doesn't necessarily mean that's the limit. Matter of fact, I viewed this boat out here one day, skimming along the [inaudible], and then it would stop. Then, the cover would come off the boat. And then the –

GC: [inaudible]

MS: – cover back on. Go like the dickens again. It was a mechanic from the boatyard. They had sold this boat, and the specification said it would go forty-two miles an hour. They could only get it to thirty-nine, and the owner brought it back because he was upset he wouldn't go forty-two. So the mechanic was trying to adjust the engine to bring it up to the forty-two. This is maybe typical of a lot of summertime boaters. I saw them then, and I see them now – have a boat down at the boatyard, out they go, observe the rules getting out and all. As soon as they get clear of the creek – *zoom* – fast as it'll go. They fly around the harbor and up towards Tuckernuck, maybe out through the opening. Ten minutes later, they're coming back again – same way – *zoom* – fast as it goes back to the boatyard. You think, "I bet you didn't see anything except the bow of the boat." So busy going, never look to the side to see maybe some ducks, maybe some seals, maybe even some other boat. Speed is everything. When they get back to the boatyard, all they really need is more gasoline. They don't take the time to fish. They don't take time to throttle down and just drift along and enjoy the scenery.

GC: Yeah, I hate that.

MS: Speed.

GC: I hate speed boats.

M: Can you tell us some things – not necessarily boating but landscape – the landscape that has changed over the years?

GC: How have things changed on the waterfront and the area over the years?

MS: Well, I tell you, that's an interesting story. As a boy your age living in Nantucket, the waterfront was available to us, and the waterfront was vital to Nantucket. Hard to imagine, maybe boys your age, but we even had at that time in the '30s, a sailing schooner bringing freight to and from Nantucket. We had oil tankers coming in. We had coal barges coming in. They used to come in the summertime because, in the wintertime, it was too nasty to bring a barge over here. So, in the hottest part of the summer, there'd be a coal barge tied up at the island service wharf. They used to bring around a thousand-ton of coal, and usually a variety of coal, several different sizes. Some were for a furnace, some for a stove like this, and some for even smaller stoves. That was all stockpiled on the dock in the coal shed. There'd be three or four of those barges in. It'd take them a week to unload them. They'd bring them in, and the sailing schooner – she'd come in – would bring soft coal, and that was trucked up to the schools because that's what they burned in the Academy Hill and the Cyrus Peirce School for heat. Of course, the tankers brought in gasoline, home heating oil, and kerosene. So there was always activity on the waterfront. In addition to that, of course, there were the steamers in and out. During the day, in the summer, there were three boats a day – big stuff, really.

GC: Three boats a day for the tourists and the travelers?

MS: Well, they were for the tourists. But also, they bought everything we needed. It wasn't in trucks in those days. It was on what we used to call dollies. They were four feet wide and eight feet long and piled all the stuff on them and towed them with electric motors onto the boat. That was all predicated on the fact that gasoline was dangerous in a confined area. So, being confined on a freight deck, gasoline was a no-no. At early stages, they used to make the automobile drain out the gasoline before they put them on the boat.

GC: Really?

MS: But [it's] become more prevalent all the time. I'd say, middle of June, we'd start the summer schedule. Tenth or so of September, the summer was over. The families had left, and the children are back in school. We're back to one boat a day again. Another interesting thing. Those boats, as I said, brought everything [that] was needed, which meant, in the summertime, the population of Nantucket increased even then. So, every child should drink milk. So, it meant the boats had to bring cows over here. So, they were delivered to New Bedford by trucks. The boats were so low the trucks couldn't come on the boat. So they had to unload the cows and walk them onto the boat and horses at the same time. For years, and even long after they stopped using that mode of transportation, there was the passway and the horseway. That was identified where the animals went on the boat. They went on the horseway. They had planks they put down and plank barriers to keep the animals from moving around. They get here, have to walk them ashore. This was something that took place in the spring, of course. Then, the cows would be driven up from the wharf, up Broad Street, up through Hussey Street, out across Main Street, up Milk Street, and out to the farm areas where Bartlett's and Somerset Farm, Dd Gardner, and Larrabee's would probably double or triple their animals to handle the summer supply of milk. Then, in the fall, they'd take them back and ship them back to the mainland.

M: Were there many interesting people working around Madaket Harbor?

MS: Interesting? Well, let me tell you. When you get to my age in life, you've seen a few things and met a few people. You find them all interesting because – I don't know how or why, but Nantucket has an attraction; it draws people from everywhere. Not just [the] United States. They come from everywhere, all over the world, really. Over on the other island – you can see it from here – Tuckernuck. There's a summer colony over there. They're very protective of that island. It's all private. There are no public places on Tuckernuck. Their families over there have been there for years. Some come from Australia. Some come from the Netherlands. [There are] many places in the United States, of course, but there's no place like Tuckernuck. Madaket's all right, but for them, Tuckernuck's the place to be.

GC: Didn't you operate the boat from Walter Barrett?

MS: Well, I retired and shortly after retired – and Mr. Walter Barrett used to run a launch service from Madaket over to Tuckernuck. A cute little story goes with that, too. Used to take anything and everything to Tuckernuck, and it was a lot of work, really – propane cylinders, people, food, animals, musical instruments. You name it. We had it. Even we took a baby over there one day, less than a week old. But Walter was at the age he needed help, and I was available. So I started going with him. We did. We took everything. We had one family we used to take over. We used to take cars once in a while over, too.

GC: I've seen a picture of that.

MS: This one man took a brand-new car over there. Walter had nothing but old cars, and I mean old. They were worn out here and rusted out, then they went to Tuckernuck. But this man didn't want an old car. He wanted a new one because an old one was nothing but trouble. A new one, he was sure, would be all right. So we took a new car over for him, and it was good thinking. He never had any trouble running it. He had four-wheel drive. And as I say, no public roads over there. So, a good [inaudible] area was in soft sand. But on that particular family, the first trip we went over, we was to take, really, a boatload of cat food. They had many cats. The first trip each spring was to take a summer supply of cat food over there. And trips after that were people and food. Go to the drugstore and get their prescriptions and gasoline for the generators, propane – whatever they needed. Many nice people. Many interesting people. We even used to bring in the mail over. Always delighted to get the mail to see what was going on, and the relatives were all right wherever they were. At that time, I think there were about twenty-five houses over there. They were all seasonal houses. They didn't occupy them much after Labor Day. A couple of families stayed later, but most of them were gone with children back into school again. But it was an interesting life, and as we say, rewarding. At the end of the day, I think you accomplished something – made somebody happy.

GC: They depend on you.

M: Do you or did you fish, scallop, or [inaudible] scallop? And if you did –?

MS: Scallops, yeah.

GC: Did you ever fish or go scalloping?

MS: I never bothered fishing up here too much. And I'll tell you, I had some neighbors that were good at it, and they used to keep me supplied with fish. But I did go scalloping. I built a shanty out here, [inaudible] them out myself, and never got rich, but I didn't need to. I was rich just by living here.

GC: Did you sell your scallops or just for personal –?

MS: Yeah, I did. Until they came out with –

GC: Who'd you sell them to?

MS: – these fancy regulations.

GC: Fancy regulations.

MS: Where you have to have hot water. They scalloped here for a century, and no one ever got sick. But modern science says you got to have hot water [inaudible].

GC: They're not fresh.

MS: Years ago, a bucket of water right out of the harbor would wash down [inaudible] good enough. Science is not all it's cracked up to be, you know?

GC: I don't know if it's science or it's the people – the politicians – [who] are implementing it.

MS: Also, the winter months out here are pretty tough, too. We were on Fair Street when I got married. We also lived on – same general area, originally in '43. My parents bought the house in '45. And then, when we got married, we bought the house across the street in '44. So, we were always in the same neighborhood. That was fine until we'd been there about thirty years, and they made Fair Street a one-way street going north. Well, that was all right. I could get to work, but I couldn't get home again. So, we sold the house and moved out here. That was a good move.

GC: Yeah, it's beautiful out here.

MS: This was just a seasonal house when we bought it, but then we put this chimney in and put the coal stove there, and we've been very comfortable since. The waterfront in Nantucket was taken away from us downtown.

GC: When was that?

MS: When Mr. Beinecke took it over. All those little shops on the wharf down there now were fishermen's shanties years ago. I have to admit, the aroma was kind of ripe down there from the bait for the lobster fishermen here. But summer people seemed to love it. If they could get down there and talk with some of the fishermen and see what was going on, this was something they couldn't do in Boston, or they couldn't do in New York, or they couldn't do in their hometown, wherever it was. But when they came to Nantucket, they could do that. They could see them unloading coal barges. They could see the tankers unloading. There was no police and all that stuff around. They just went ahead and did it. So, the summer visitors were really exposed to something they had never dreamt took place. But this is how we lived. We didn't think anything of it. Fishing boats would come in and unpack fish, tons of it. It would go off on the steamer to the mainland. We had a number of people who used to come down just to watch the boat come in, watch them take the freight off, watch them put a few cars that were traveling on the boat. Another thing – I can tell you this from actual personal experience working at the

dock. You knew just about everybody in those days. This local gentleman had passed away, and his wife used to come down in the car, park there, and watch the boat unload and load up [inaudible]. Her health and her mind were deteriorating a little bit. Once in a while, she'd get out of the car – "Have you got another boat coming?" "No, that was it." "Well, I was expecting someone, and I didn't see them get off the boat." "Well, maybe tomorrow." Well, then her health deteriorated a little bit more, and she wasn't able to drive. So, then she used to call – "Has the boat been in yet?" "Yes." "Well, I was expecting someone, but they didn't show up, so I guess they maybe didn't get the boat." "Well, we're only running one boat schedule now. So, maybe tomorrow." "Yes, I guess you're right." Well, she used to call, I'll say, four days out of seven expecting someone. We knew who she was. I'd say, "Maybe tomorrow." Whether there was anyone who ever came, I don't know. But you wouldn't say, "No," *bang*, down goes the telephone. This may be her only outside contact –

GC: That's right.

MS: – for the day. So everything was tempered with a thought about your fellow human being. Going back to 1938, we had the hurricane. There was a man [who] lived up above here by the name of (Elliot Holden?), and in 1938, he decided that he needed something for a windbreak. Well, there was a man out in Polpis by the name of Bassett Jones. He had an interest in growing pine trees. He experimented with several types of pine tree and decided that black Japanese pine was probably best suited for Nantucket. So, we had quite a crop of pine trees growing out there. After the '38 hurricane, which caused considerable damage on the south side of Long Island, he got word somehow that those people were interested in buying some pines for a windbreak. So, several local fishing boats loaded up with pine trees. He sold them to people in Long Island. Mr. (Weldon?) got word of that and decided he needed a windbreak around his house. So, he got some out here and planted them on the west side of his house for a windbreak, which was good. They grew quickly, and they provided good windbreak. The wind was good at scattering the seed, so from those trees – not too many of them left now. But the pines that you see out here all came from up there. But as they went to seed, the cones came off, and the seed flew out, flew through the air, and they were easy to take root and grew quickly. You're familiar with Bassett Jones?

GC: Yes.

MS: I'm told that he was responsible for the development of quick-frozen foods –

GC: I don't know.

MS: – and was the instigator and developer of what is now the Birdseye frozen food line.

GC: Interesting.

MS: Yeah. He had quite a nice estate out there in Polpis Harbor. Had a couple of boats built. Had his own railways. Successful financially. Again, he was interested in a variety of things. But people who came to the island brought with them a lot of talent, and some of it was exposed to here. They also brought with them a lot of money. It was an interesting time because a lot of things were accomplished with next to no effort. If something needed [to be] done, these people saw that there was money available to have it done, which benefited the island tremendously. Usually, the last thing they wanted was to be associated with it. This was done very quietly, whether it was the hospital or whether it was some local church, or some other activity. People at that time weren't looking for notoriety. In fact, getting back to where we started with the children going to Washington. For years, as young children, we were interested in airplanes. We used to make model airplanes. There was a man at the Coffin School by the name of (Aly?) [Alvin] Paddock. He was there fifty two weeks of the year. When we needed balsa wood, he had a supply there, and we'd go there, and for five cents or ten cents, we would get what we needed to complete our project. He was one of these very quiet teachers, and I mean teachers. Later years, when I got into high school, I took the industrial arts course at the Coffin School. Mr. Paddock was one of our teachers. He taught mechanical drawing. Never raised his voice. But he got his message across. But what I wanted to tell you about – in the '30s, living on Nantucket was difficult because there really wasn't any money around. Mr. Paddock was a bachelor. As senior classes came up for their trip to Washington, some families weren't able to supply the money necessary for the tickets. But the deserving children went anyway, and Mr. Paddock took care of the expense. Again, this was very quietly done. The children who came from disadvantaged families were able to enjoy the trip to Washington as an educational thing. It wasn't a fun time as going to an amusement park. But that's the type of people we had here then.

F: How did you travel –?

MS: And made Nantucket better.

F: How did you travel around Nantucket? Cars. I know some cars. Any other way of traveling? Any other ways of traveling besides cars when you were a young boy?

MS: Well, we used to bicycle a lot. Of course, you didn't have any bike paths in those days. But we didn't have many cars either. I do remember we had the Dreamland Theater movie house. I think it was twenty-five cents to go to the movies. This was a talking picture. We returned bottled goods for a nickel deposit or whatever. Eventually, we'd get enough money to go to the movies. We'd see a Western or whatever it was. I think it was around 1937; the police got an automobile of their own. We had been to the movies from time to time to see news clips,

and it was naturally kid-fashion – we were all impressed with the gangster Al Capone out in Chicago. Occasionally, in the newsreels, we'd see the G-men chasing the gangsters, shooting machine guns out the window. Well, that was our impression of what this police car was going to be. Turned out to be a Plymouth sedan. On the door was painted the town seal. On the left front fender was a siren. Oh, boy, that was some car. Shortly after it was here, we were out playing in the street one day, and it came up Fair Street and turned into Lyon Street. Well, we got to follow this. This is big. The police car's out. So, we were expecting a shoot-out, but it didn't happen. They stopped in front of his house; and one went in the front door, and the other went around the back. And eventually, they came out. They had a bookie. He had been booking numbers.

GC: Oh, boy.

MS: That was big crime in Nantucket.

GC: I heard a story that you told, something about the Gliddens selling their fish door to door.

MS: Oh, yes. Yeah. You know the Glidden fish market now?

GC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It's still open.

MS: Well, grandfathers to that – Walter Glidden and Horace Orpin were in the fish business on Steamboat [Wharf]. I'd say about where Stubbys is now, somewhere along in there. They sold fish. Their families had been in the fish business even before that. Old man Walter and his brother, Reuben, who is Jimmy Glidden's father, were forced to take the fish around door to door, knocking on doors, trying to sell fish. So, this, again, was more successful on some days than others. So, turned out, on this particular occasion, they had some fish, and nobody seemed to be buying. Walter had made a couple of demands at the door, and people didn't want fish. Reuben had sold more fish than Walter. So, Walter said, "You know, Reuben, you're a better salesman than I am. I'll hide the wagon." They towed hand wagons. "I'll hide the wagon. You go up to the door with the fish in your hand and see if you can sell it." So, Reuben went up to the door. Knocked on it. The lady came. Says, "Would you like to buy some fish?" And the lady says she didn't think she wanted any fish. Rueben said, "Oh, that's too bad. This is the last one I got. If I could sell this fish, then I can go home. I'm tired out." Well, the woman felt bad. "Well, Rueben, I guess maybe we could use the fish." So, they'd buy it. "Thank you." Took the money, went back – Walter – "Come on, let's go to the next house." Repeat the same thing. "This is the last one. If I sell this, I can go home." "Okay, I guess I'll take it."

F: Pretty good sales gimmick.

GC: That's pretty good.

MS: So, Walter was convinced that Reuben was the better salesman.

GC: [laughter] That's funny. Sure couldn't sell them that way now.

MS: Oh, couldn't do it nowadays. No, you got the Board of Health to put up with nowadays. I'll tell you a funny little story. This schooner I was telling you about – you probably have heard the name the *Alice Wentworth*.

GC: Zeb [Zebulon] Tilton.

MS: The skipper and operator of Alice Wentworth was a man named Zebulon Tilton from Vineyard Haven. Well, he enjoyed conversation. A lot of times, unloaded or loaded, whichever it was, and then they'd lay at the dock for a day or two waiting for favorable wind. Had no motor in the boat. Women and gentlemen and kids – everybody liked to go down there. Sometimes, the kids were a little frightened of Zeb. He was kind of a hard-looking character but really a very gentle man. A friend of ours was down one day. She had brought a friend with her, and they were on the end of the island service wharf. Zeb was tied up there and said, "Well, Captain, when are you leaving?" He said, "Well, I can't leave until the weather improves. Get a little wind, and we get underway." "You're kind of old for running this vessel, aren't you?" "No," he says, "I'm not really that old. I enjoy doing it. I want to do it as long as I can." They said, "Well, how long have you been doing it?" "Well," he said, "I've sailed through five wars." "[inaudible] five wars. Let's see. You could have been in the Spanish-American War and World War I. World War II hadn't started, and nothing since then. Two wars is all we can figure out. How do you make five?" "Well," he says, "I was married three times, and every one of them was a war." [laughter] He was a character. The nice thing about it is the language that he used was just as acceptable on Main Street as it was on the waterfront. I don't think I ever heard him use a bad word. Never heard him discuss someone in a derogatory manner. Might not necessarily agree with him, but if I can't say something nice about him, I won't say anything. But he was a character. I don't know whether you ever saw pictures of him.

GC: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

MS: If Zeb carried a boatload of soft coal, he wore some of it quite a while.

GC: He looked like a character, all right.

MS: Well, it was a sight you'll never forget to see him coming in, the sails all set. Another funny story. There was another school [that] used to come in here before my time; I don't really

remember. But Captain Parker Hall was the skipper. He used to bring all kinds of things over here, too. He was coming in in his schooner one day. Parker Hall had an impediment. He stuttered. So, he's coming up to the island service dock. This was a science really rigging those boats [inaudible] because they had no reverse gear. Whatever headway they had, they had to check when they got up close to the dock. So, as they got close to the dock, another local man by the name Charlie Barrett was on the dock, local fisherman, who went on the (*Petrol*?) – I don't know whether you remember her. Well, Charlie was on the dock. As they got close, Parker Hall took the line, threw it up on the dock, [and] Charlie Barrett got it. Well, Charlie had an impediment, too. He said to Parker, "Wh-wh-wh-where do you want it?" Parker thought he was mimicking him. He said, "Ar-ar-ar-around your neck, you damn fool." He actually wanted it on one of the [inaudible]. They take a turn on the cleat, slow it down, and finally, you stop the forward motion. But it was one of those unusual events when both of them had the same problem.

GC: Two stutter –

F: Well, you are full of stories. Thank you so much.

MS: Well, it's easy to relate to them because they're all true.

F: Any other questions, boys?

M: No, thank you very much.

M: Yes, thank you.

MS: How old are you?

M: I'm thirteen.

MS: Thirteen.

M: Yes.

MS: You got to leave now?

GC: We better get going. I got to get these kids home.

MS: This will be short and sweet. When I was thirteen, in the summer, after school got out, I went down the dock, and there was a fishing boat named the *Eunice Lillian* tied up there. You know Carl Sjolund?

GC: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MS: Carl's father –

GC: Rolf.

MS: – had the boat the *Eunice Lillian*, relatively new. But it used to be the custom then, in summertime – fish prices were down – they'd tie up, paint the boat, [and] do whatever necessary repairs on it. So, at that time – our family bought the house in '45. The apartment upstairs was available. So Rolf Sjolund and his wife Eunice, who had lived across the street in '42, rented the upstairs apartment. So, I'm down there at your age, thirteen. I'm going up to the island service to get paint, and I'm going down and putting some on. I thought I was a big shot doing it. I guess they were there pretty near ten days or two weeks, getting all this done. Painted her all the way down to the waterline. Did a lot of maintenance work. So, when we got all done, he said, "How'd you like to go on a trip fishing?" "Sure, I'd like that." So, I came home, and I told my parents, "Captain Sjolund wants to know if I'd like to make a trip with him. Think it'd be all right if I went?" My father was – "Sure, that'd be all right." My mother went, "How long you'd be gone."

GC: Yeah, I don't know.

MS: "Well, I don't know. Seven or eight days." "I don't know about that." "Let him go. He'll be all right." Anyway, on this particular Sunday morning, I went down with my little sea bag, got aboard, and off we went. It was in the summertime, and it was thick fog the whole damn trip. We didn't see much of anything other than another fishing boat every once in a while until we were going down through Long Island Sound. At that time, they took their fish to New York. Boy, this was something. You'd look on one side, and you'd see – as you went further down – Long Island on one side, Connecticut on the other. Got into the narrows, going in the East River. I never saw too much Pepsi-Cola in my life. Didn't know what it was at that time. Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company was in Long Island City, New York. There was a pile of Pepsi-Cola boxes piled up – wooden boxes in those days. LaGuardia Airport – plane going off every three or four minutes. Tugboats pushing barges with railroad cars on – all kinds of activity. Right underneath the Brooklyn Bridge – Fulton Fish Market. Fish from everywhere in there. We got in there in the dark at night. The next morning, the whole place out under – I think it's South Street – loaded with fish. We took out our trip. I'd say, by two o'clock in the afternoon, you couldn't even find a fish scale. Everything in there is sorted out. Fish have been sold. Trucked

away. And Rolf said to me, "You go with Carl." Okay. So, I went with him, and I don't know where the heck I went, but it was a freezer. And he gave me this big cotton bag with something in it. I didn't know what it was. But every once in a while, it was sticking to my clothes. I had a bag of shrimp. I didn't even know what they were, but the tails would stick out through the cotton bag. On our way out of New York, the cook cooked those shrimp, and I found out they were pretty good.

GC: Pretty good.

MS: But that was quite a nice trip for a thirteen-year-old. I want the next three summers – went again and made the trip. Landed a couple more times in New York and one trip in Boston.

GC: That must have been some culture shock for a little Nantucket boy.

MS: Good trip, yeah. Nobody got hurt.

GC: That's right. Well, I better get these boys home. Thanks so much for talking to us.

M: Thank you very much.

---END OF INTERVIEW---

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