

Paul Ewell: Let us go. This is Paul Ewell interviewing Mr. Larry Linton on June...

Larry Linton: Sixteenth. [laughter]

PE: Sixteenth, 2013. Could you please state your full name?

LL: Larry Kefford Linton.

PE: Your dad's name is Kefford, right?

LL: Yes. Lawrence Kefford, but he goes by Kefford.

PE: You do not have to tell me the exact address, but where are you from?

LL: I reside right now in Copeland, Maryland.

PE: Copeland, Maryland. But where are you from?

LL: I'm from Saxis, Virginia, born and raised.

PE: Born and raised on Saxis, Virginia?

LL: Yes.

PE: What type of work do you do?

LL: Right now, I'm working at Speed World in Ocean City and got away from the water. But I've worked on the water ever since I was, well, I couldn't say work, but 5 years old.

PE: Really?

PE: By the way, you kick back, relax.

LL: All right. Good. [laughter]

PE: So, tell me about what kind of work did you do when you first started out?

LL: Well, first thing I did was help my father crab. Didn't get into fishing until later on in the years. But crabbing, helped him with that. Slept on the bow of the boat half the day and helped him clean up the boat and pick the crabs up at the bottom of the boat. Then I worked my way up from there.

PE: Now when you say crabbing, how did you crab?

LL: Peeler pot. We'd go out, break the day, and get in somewhere around 11:00, peeler potting. I never did any hard crabbing either until I guess later on into the years, around, I don't

know, 12, 13 years old. So, that's when I started doing all that. I've worked with other people too, also, like Bill Bailey.

PE: I know Bill Bailey.

LL: Don Porter, Little Donny Porter, also John Shertenlieb. I comped with him. I did all kinds of varieties of water – I've scalloped and fished.

PE: Where did you scallop out of?

LL: I scalloped, started out at Ocean City, off the Elephant Trunk at Ocean City, on the *Miss Peaches*, which the owner now has passed away.

Then we left from there and went to New York and scalloped up in New York.

That was a little scary one too, by itself.

PE: Why?

LL: Well, that's when, I'm not going to say any names on that part, but the captain wanted to be stupid and started doing his drugs while he was running the boat. Then when we were out there on the deck, we didn't know what he'd done. One of the other guys knew because he could tell by the way he was acting. He came out there and wanted to try to take control, also run the boat at the same time and almost got one of the guys' arms cut off from the winders, which they're very dangerous. That made my mind up right then. I mean, don't get me wrong, I'd do scalloping. I love it, but not with him. As soon as I got in, I made up a little white lie [laughter] and had to get away from there. I got my pay and everything else. I left and never went back on that boat again. But it was 50 miles offshore. Nobody around, sharks in the water, whales, you see whales, all kinds of stuff out there, stuff that you'd see on TV, actually.

PE: Was it a good boat?

LL: Oh, it was a good boat.

PE: Well-maintained boat?

LL: Yes. It was a good boat. Yes, the owner was very good, I mean, very nice. I had never done it before until – that first time I'd done it, they showed me how to stack the deck, which you go through the scallops and stuff like that. They had two big nets on there they were pulling. Well, after you shuck the deck, then you take and pull all the scallops into the shucking room, which they had a shucking room that had an air conditioner, radio, and everything in that room. So, that was nice. But the third day, they got on the radio, called me the Beast in the shack deck, because they went inside – I've never done it before. They went inside. Then when they came back out, they asked me what I did with all the scallops. Did I shove them overboard? I said, "No, they're in baskets up there." So, I shucked the deck, got it all done before they even come out. That's when they started calling me the Beast. I never shucked a scallop before. One day,

the first day, then the second day, my pay raise went up because I was keeping up with the rest of them. Never done it.

PE: Well, I have to ask you then, I have never shuck a scallop. I have done plenty of oysters and clams. Which is worse?

LL: Clams are worse because it's a technique on how you do it. If you don't do it just right, you can get what they call some kind of – what do they call that, Tina? Some kind of cramp.

Female Speaker: Waterman's cramp.

LL: Waterman's cramp for shucking scallops and something like that. One of my friends, Raymond (Tudy?), they called him Tudy. He's passed away now.

FS: He started the same day.

LL: Yes, he started the same day I did. He got it. Luckily, I never did get it. But he passed away actually doing that, scallop.

PE: Well, I know, growing up – of course, I grew up on Bayside, grabbing an oyster net off that Bayside. But we heard horror stories as kids growing up about working on a clam boat. Have you heard any of those stories with scallop boats like the clam – it seems like they were sinking all the time.

LL: Well, it's almost the same thing. The horror stories about sinking and stuff like that, that's true. Any boat can sink. Look at Titanic. [laughter] It's just certain ways, if you don't have a good captain – I will say this, that guy was a good captain, very good captain. But you've got to have a good captain who knows what he's doing and have some experience. That was one of the ones that we had one of the incidents. The other incident was across the bay. When was that? 2002? No, this was before that. I think it was 1996, 1995. I was still married the first time. No, I wasn't even married yet. So, it had to be 1995, somewhere like that, across the bay when I was working with Bill Bailey.

PE: Doing what?

LL: We were peeler potting. We had a bunch of pots on the boat. We went out that morning. We started catching peelers like crazy. I mean, they'd be squealing. I would jump up and down. The pots would be loaded. You know how they're square? Well, they'd come up round. They have so much in them. We loaded up the boat with pots to move them over in that area. We got the boat loaded. We had like, I guess 200 pots on the boat. I mean, we stacked it. I was declawing Jimmies before putting them back in the pots. I leaned up to ask him a question, because he bought hard crabs from somebody over there, which they didn't know that much about the peelers over there. They didn't really know how to tell the sign. They were mostly hard crabs.

PE: You were declawing the Jimmies to put the top of the pots.

LL: Right. For the peelers, yes. Well, when I started looking, I started noticing the red sign on the fin. They have pink signs and pink rims, white sign, and ranked crabs. I noticed they had signs on them. I leaned to him. I said, "Bill, what do you want me to do with these peelers in the basket of Jimmies?" He goes, "What? Peelers?" So, he leaned up. What happened, he took his hand off the wheel for just a second. That's all it takes, just a second. We were running along. He put his hand back on the wheel. Everything was fine. He goes, "Put them in a basket. Heck, save them." They were big Jimmie peelers. I was like, wow. So, I started declawing Jimmies. I had my back to the side, to the washboard [inaudible], just pouring paint up, didn't pay no mind, music going. I was steady going. Bill was just steady driving. Next thing you know, wham, we struck a beacon head on, three-legged beacon, struck it head on. When it did, the boat veered off to the left. I was going over to the right. As I was going out, tried to twist my body to catch myself. My hands went straight over the side. The beacon struck me in the side, spun me around. I struck the back end of the pot rack in the back end of the boat, had my oilskins on, and under I went, straight to the bottom. When I realized what had happened, I was on the bottom. I pushed myself up. I went right back down again. So, I grabbed my knife out really quick and cut my boots and cut my oilskins. As I was pushing myself back up, I noticed the prop was spinning. It was coming back. So, I had to just try to get myself from under it. I reached up. When I took my left arm out, I couldn't move, hardly. It hurt really bad. So, I grabbed one hand, scared him to death. He looked at me. He hurt his arm too. He tried to get me aboard that boat. He looked right at me. He said, "Larry, I can't get you aboard." I said, "Don't let me drown." By that time, I guess he got some strength into him. Then when I tried one more time, and I reached my hand up, all I could do, and pulled myself into the boat. When I got on there, I rolled myself over on the pot rack in the back. That's all I remember until I got to the dock because I passed out. Got to the dock. It had to be dead low tide. The ambulance got there. They could hardly get me off the boat because it was so low. So, they had to get another crew to come there to help them get me off the boat. So, I wound up in Norfolk General and then Sentara, all kinds of CAT scans, everything else. I was in the ICU for a week, didn't know if I was going to make it or not because it punctured a lung, bruised my spleen, broke four ribs. That was a hectic day there [laughter].

PE: So, the boat didn't sink? There was [inaudible]?

LL: No, the boat didn't sink.

PE: What kind of boat was it?

LL: It was *Miss Brook*. Was it *Miss Brook*? Yes, I believe it was the *Miss Brook* I was on. It was a 30, 32- foot, I believe, fiberglass. I don't know what kind of boat they call that. It's not an Edward Givens build or one of the Crisfield boats.

PE: [inaudible] Not any of those?

LL: No, it wasn't one of them. I think he bought that *Carolyne*, I believe. Also, Donny Porter has a boat just like it.

PE: Was she wood in front?

LL: Well, she was wood with fiberglass. I don't know. Now I think she might've had wooden ribs into her. But she was fiberglass on the front. She might've had wooden points and wooden ribs. But the rest of it was all fiberglass.

PE: Now did you work on the water anymore after that?

LL: Yes. I was out of work for two months. Actually, Bill was real good about it. He said, "You could've sued the insurance company or something like that." I said, "No. I really weren't even thinking about doing nothing like that. I wasn't going to do that to you, cause your cost to go up or anything." So, what he did was he helped me take care of my bills. He paid for my bills, paid for my house, whatever expense I had. He gave me \$200 a week. I was off for two months. I went right back. So, it was in my blood.

PE: So, of all the work both in the ocean and on the bayside, what was your favorite?

LL: The ocean.

PE: The ocean?

LL: Yes. I guess because I worked on the bayside for a long period of time. The ocean, I guess it's more free. It's more of a getaway basically. It's an experience that if you haven't been on there, you'd have to take. You have to respect it too as well. You have to respect the ocean a lot more than you do to bayside. But you also have to respect that bayside because water can kill you. One way or another, it can take your life. I like the ocean better because it's different things out there. Up in the bay, I mean, it's fine. You're crabbing. You catch something. Sometimes they might catch a learner or a scallop running up here somewhere. Conchs also come up in here, but not like out on the ocean.

PE: I remember last fall, we went to the Waterfront Festival in New Bedford, Massachusetts. I am not familiar with scalloping at all. They were doing tours of the boats and stuff. I met a guy from [inaudible] who was working on the boat up there. We went there, and again, not knowing anything about scallops, except they are delicious. He said, "You know they swim."

LL: Yes, they do.

PE: I said, "Oh, come on. Look, I am not a scalloper, but I am not an idiot. They cannot swim." He says, "Well, sure. Watch this video."

LL: Yes, they do. What they do is their mouths just, they'll come right off the bottom and just flap it and go. They swim.

PE: I'd never seen that [laughter].

LL: Yes, I didn't know anything about it either until I started scalloping. I didn't know they

could swim.

PE: Now, when you scallop, did you use those scallop dredges that have the – I do not know. What do they call them? That run along the bottom and scare them up?

LL: You talking about the wings on the boat, those outriggers?

PE: Yes.

LL: Not the outriggers, but the doors that...

LL: No. What that does is hold your nets down. I think it also, if they use them on – I've never been on the dredge boat. But I've been on the net boat.

PE: You were netting.

LL: We were netting scouts. Okay. So, the dredge, they throw off the back. The nets, they throw off the siding. When they open up, they just open up real wide. Then they've got the doors that come out that holds the net down the water. As it's running along the water, the doors keep the nets down on the bottom.

PE: So, it is sort of like a shrimp trawl except –

LL: Yes. Well, that's actually what it is basically, in that kind of way. I've never been shrimping. I didn't have that chance to go shrimping. I was going to go do it last year or year before last. The guy took the boat on the railway. I never heard back from them since. But I went also scalloping off [inaudible] too. That's where my second one went. But every time when I go to work up at Ocean City, I always turn my head to the right because that's where I always first started out at scalloping, seeing if there's any more boats in, because I just want to go there. It's in my blood. I want to go.

PE: How is the scalloping industry out of Ocean City doing? Is it surviving?

LL: Right now, I couldn't tell you. I haven't done it in about two years.

FS: The *Miss Peaches* is [inaudible].

LL: Yes. They have certain cost of scallops and stuff. The Elephant Trunk's the best place to scallop at. They have good – but I really don't know what the industry is doing right now. I want to get back into it.

FS: Do you?

LL: Yes, I do, definitely [laughter]. But I'm just trying to find somebody to go out with. Wherever you can catch them in, you either got to be there early in the morning. If somebody goes out to the bar one night and they get really messed up and can't make it to the boat and they

need somebody, you're on. Just like that and they're gone. You're on. They're gone. Down here, when I was, I was hard crabbing out of Cape Charles here with Donnie Porter, about a year ago, a couple of years ago. We did pretty good hard crabbing out of here. I met somebody that was scalloping. They haven't got back up with me. I don't know if he's lost my number or not. But they were at the bar that night. From my understanding, is they didn't make it on the ship. Somebody else had gone and got their spot.

PE: Someone else on the spot. I know my experience working on boats, is we always got to share. Whenever you cull, you have got to share. But is it the same on a scallop boat, or is it salary?

LL: Well, the first boat I was on, they started me out because I didn't know what I was doing. It was one of Tina's friends.

PE: So, you were a greenhorn.

LL: Yes, I was the greenhorn on there. Yes. I was the greenhorn. They started me out at \$100 a day to see how I would do. Next day, I was making 200 because I picked it up so quick. But the other boat that I was on, I can't remember the name of her. They were from out of North Carolina.

FS: The *Lady Caroline*.

LL: Yes, the *Lady Caroline*. That's it.

They started me out at 400. So, they gave me a share. One of my friends, Elvis, he's the one that got me on that boat. But that was that one day. I went out the second day. That's the boat that went down to Carolina and got on the railway. I hadn't heard from him since after that.

FS: [inaudible] boys that drowned up there.

LL: We were supposed to go shrimping right after that. But I never got a chance to do that. I always wanted to try it. They said that's a little hard to do. Well, not really hard, it's just you got to be really quick getting shrimp off the deck, especially in the hot summertime.

PE: Well, I do not know if you have watched it or not, but I know they had a show on television for a while, something like *The Deadliest Catch*, but it was called *Big Shrimping*.

LL: Okay. No, I haven't seen that.

PE: They pull the shrimp in. Apparently, they just dump them on the deck. You have to get down [inaudible] little spools and just –

LL: Yes, and just pick them up. I heard that too. I haven't seen that show. But I used to watch *Deadliest Catch* all the time. I did fill out application for that up there because I wanted to go. I guess you could consider me as an adrenaline junkie [laughter], because I'm all in adrenaline. I

mean, I wanted to do all different types of stuff.

PE: So, you are familiar with *Deadliest Catch*.

LL: Oh, yes.

PE: I have to ask you, who is your favorite boat?

LL: My favorite boat is the – gosh. Now you ask me that question.

FS: Who was the captain?

LL: The white boat, the one that they had...

PE: The *Northwestern*.

LL: The *Northwestern*, yes. That is my favorite one.

PE: Sig Hansen.

LL: Yes. It was the other one until he passed away.

FS: Phil.

PE: Phil Harris.

LL: Phil, yes.

PE: Interesting. So, what is the draw? I mean, you just said a few minutes ago that you would like to get back scalloping. What is the draw?

LL: I don't really know. It's knowing that when you – well, the scalloping deal would be great. I won't mind going out crabbing to help somebody once in a little while. But I really don't want to make it my steady income because it's really hard now than what it used to be. It's harder now than I've ever seen it before in my life. That's what draws me away from it. Because even though if I work with somebody else, I'm making what I'm making. Sometimes I know what they make. Not as being as I could see it or check in their pocket, but it's kind of hard to do an expense. Say if I got \$100 dollars a day and they made \$200, they've lost their expense, especially if they go out. They still pay you. They go out. They've had made a major loss. Then they still pay me, but they have nothing. They also have families too. I had my own boat at one time. It was just a scowl. I remember when I started out on my own. I started out with an inner tube and weighed it in the water with a crab basket on it.

PE: Now with the scowl, was this wooden or fiberglass?

LL: Oh, that was wooden. That was my grandfather's, Lawrence Linton Senior.

PE: How big was the scowl?

LL: Sixteen- foot wooden scowl with a little three horsepower motor on it that I could take and turn and run backwards, reverse. I'd go out there blowing so hard that when I'd go one time over, it'd blow me 4 yards backwards before I'd get to my pots. That's when I started, if I couldn't make it there to it – although over Saxis, you could wade in the water all the way out to the last beacon. It wouldn't be up fast your belly button. So, I'd put an inner tube and put my basket in there and just dump my crabs in, come and cull them. That's how I started out on my own. That's how I started on my own first.

PE: So, what did you do with the crabs when you culled them? Sell them?

LL: Sold them to my father and my grandfather, which back then, I think they were like, I don't know if it was 15 cents or 20 cents a pail, or 25 cents. I can't remember now. I believe it might've been 25 cents.

PE: What did they do with them?

LL: Shed them in the floats. They shed them out for soft crabs.

PE: Did they have a crab house?

LL: Yes.

PE: Where was the crab house?

LL: It wasn't named the street then. It was right behind my grandfather's house over at Saxis. Him and my father were together in it. They joined into it.

PE: Now your dad still works on the wood, right?

LL: Yes, he still works on there. He's carving a lot of decoys now, mostly. But he still works on – I ask him if he needs me to come and help him sometimes, but he's got some – I guess father and son working together, sometimes that just doesn't go well. I should have learned that from when I see them two together.

FS: Your daddy and Don.

LL: No, my dad and my grandfather, when they were working together. Working with family's, just, it's okay, but there's a lot of issues that goes on. [laughter]

PE: Certainly, could be.

LL: Yes, it is.

PE: Is there anything else, any stories, anything else you would like to say? Any thoughts on regulations?

LL: Well, regulations.

PE: Any nice things you have to say about VMRC?

LL: Any nice things about – well, some of the guys I like over there, but it's not the people. Some of VMRC worked on the water before. They know how it is. But they've got to do their job. VMRC police, some of them has got to do their job. Then they have these other ones that come in there that's never been on the water and never seen nothing like it. They don't listen. They've never heard some of the stories. If they do, some of them don't care. They just go by what they were taught and the regulations they have to abide by. They just don't know how hard it is out there to do that. Some of them do because some of them are working on water. But some of them got away from the water to do that. That's George that just flew by. [laughter] VMRC, they're all right. They just have to do their job. But the regulations that they put on, they're getting too hard on the watermen. I think they want to try to get a lot of people off the water. But if they listen to the old-timers and if some other people will listen to the old-timers on doing certain things on the water, I think some of them will come back. Some of the things will come back.

PE: Well, let me ask you another question. Wanda and I, wherever she is, had this debate all the time. I do not know. How old are you?

LL: Forty-three. I was going to say 34. [laughter]

PE: I am 47. So, I am a little bit old, not much. But when I was growing up on boats and stuff, all the old-timers I was around, my family and all, we listened to Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, and Willie Nelson, and that kind of music. Wanda and her, George Smith and Greg Smith and all them, they listened to, apparently, the Eagles. So, what was your music growing up? Tell me about it.

LL: [laughter]

PE: We have got a little debate going.

LL: I've got a mixture of everything, but mine was Kiss, Fat Boys.

FS: [inaudible] it was a mixture of everything. She's actually related to Johnny Cash.

PE: How about that?

LL: But it was Kiss, and the Eagles. I listened to some, not very much country I listened to, but stuff like that. Bad Company, mostly rock. A lot of southern rock, Lynyrd Skynyrd and stuff like that. But country music, I didn't get into country music until later on in life. But I like all of it. I used to listen to Fat Boys, Run DMC, Aerosmith.

My dad wouldn't let me listen to that on the boat. He never had a radio, I remember.

FS: What did you listen to on the boat?

LL: On the boat, I listen to all kinds of stuff. [inaudible] I was listening to, what are they called?

FS: Disturbed.

LL: Yes, Disturbed, hard rock there. What's the other ones? The other group? Metallica and all that, Survivor, and Ivory, stuff like that.

PE: Well, when I was growing up, my dad was very old, did not know radio on the boat. When we crab-scraped, (Buddy Pryor?) to Deep Creek, always had a radio. I always was so happy when we crab-scraped around him because then I can listen to his radio.

LL: Yes. My father never had a radio on the boat until later on where we weren't getting along that much. But that was when he had the *Guns and Roses*, the Gibbons-built boat. I think he did put a radio on her because she was brand new. He wanted to sport her around, I guess.

PE: So, he had an Edward Gibbons boat.

LL: Yes, he did. He had an Edward Gibbons-built boat.

PE: How big was she?

LL: Oh, boy, she was maybe 35, something like that, 35, 40.

PE: Inboard, outboard?

LL: Inboard, outboard. Volvo.

PE: You remember the name of her? Does she have a name?

LL: *Guns and Roses*.

PE: That was her name? Okay.

LL: The *Guns and Roses*. Yes. He had, on the back of her, had it painted in black. She was, what was it, like a varnished back that had *Guns and Roses* and had a gun on one side and a rose on the other side. He named it the *Guns and Roses* [laughter]. I don't know where he came up with that name. But I guess he liked Guns and Roses back then too.

PE: I cannot see your mother liking *Guns and Roses* though.

LL: Oh, you'll be surprised. Really. You'll be surprised at what she likes. I was surprised too.

I was surprised when I'd seen them for the first time. They got drunk one night [laughter]. I'd never seen them like that. They never did that when we were kids. But when she had a party, she turned it on.

PE: Based on her Facebook posts, I would expect the [inaudible] band. That's all I would –

LL: Well, she's changed a lot. She's gotten into church a lot now. That's good. I have too. My dad is the one that kind of shocked me on that issue because I never thought that he would turn that way. But he did. That's good because – I am too. But he's the one that really shocked me. He's changed his life around a lot, especially after he's had a heart problem that time. But he's still going. He isn't going to stop.

PE: Yes, we stopped in there, I do not know, last summer one time and looked at some of the boats he had that is out there. We had our boat – we have an Edward Gibbons-built, 34 -foot, inboard, outboard. We kept her over at Sack's up until last fall. I went Deep Creek to pull her up, [inaudible] and all that and got her back to Hunting Creek. That is where we live.

FS: [inaudible]

PE: She [inaudible] as it should be. But anyhow, is there anything else you would like to add?

LL: No, I believe that's it. There are other things that I probably would need permission.
[laughter]

PE: We do not want anything that can get you...

LL: No. But yes, that's about it.

PE: Well, thank you very much.

LL: You're welcome.

PE: This is Paul Ewell concluding the recorded interview. Let me stop this one.

[end of transcript]